

A LIFE IN THE THEATRE



THE BEERBOHM TREES
AND THE MAKING OF
HER MAJESTY'S

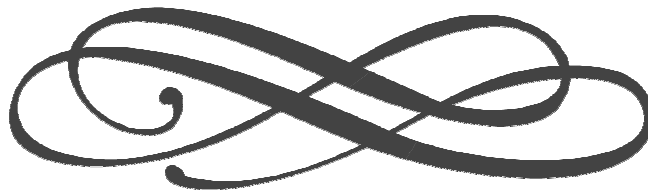
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INTRODUCTION



Herbert Beerbohm Tree – brilliant businessman and theatre manager, alluringly popular character actor, and charismatic public celebrity – has gone down in history as one of the preeminent actor-managers of Victorian and Edwardian London. His theatrical career began with a solid and impressive ten years of management at the notorious Haymarket Theatre where he worked with the likes of Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. But it was the work he produced at Her Majesty's Theatre (renamed His Majesty's Theatre after Queen Victoria's death in 1901) – the imposing and opulent theatre he had specially built – that exemplified his theatrical career. Her Majesty's would be the site of some of Tree's most successful and most extravagant stage spectacles.

Although the Theatre's inaugural production, *The Sights of the Mighty*, was less than successful, Tree and his wife Maud – his partner in life, in business, and on stage – saw great success within just a year. In 1898, Tree's production of *Julius Caesar* was a triumph. It was the first financially successful production at Her Majesty's, it was well received by the public and the press, and it enjoyed a record-breaking run. At a special event commemorating the show's 100th performance as well as the Theatre's first anniversary, Tree announced his intention to produce *The Musketeers* in the upcoming season. Our exhibit focuses on these two productions and this pivotal moment in Tree's career, couched as it is within a turning-point in theatre history. Although *The Musketeers* received more ambivalent criticism and was less successful than its predecessor, it was no less of an extravagant production. Both productions, in fact, exemplify Tree's propensity to take risks and test new ideas. Examined side-by-side, they exhibit how some risks fared better than others, or how the same tactics may have worked only for some productions and not for others.

The objects in this exhibition, the majority of which have never been on public display before, are all from the Beerbohm Tree collection, one of the most extensive acquisitions of the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. The collection is primarily comprised of two archives – the Herbert Beerbohm Tree Archive and the Tree Family Archive. We made use of both archives, in an effort to trace the impact of the theatrical lifestyle on Tree's public and private lives. Although Tree lived a public life, it was important to us to highlight the less visible aspects of his art, business, and family. In this enterprise, as students of History of Art and Performance Research, we practised the process of engaging with a dense archive, of identifying points of interest for public consumption, and of locating supporting material for our academic arguments. Perhaps one of the most delightful aspects of working with a focused and unified collection such as this, is the ability to piece together bits and pieces – from both onstage and offstage aspects of production – to approach a recreation of what the historical performances may actually have been like. In that respect, this exhibition differs somewhat from more traditional art exhibitions, in that in one respect that actual things being

displayed are the very things we cannot possibly display: two productions from over a century ago, and the life and persona of one man.

Tree was charismatic. He never shied away from bold or even controversial statements. He was dedicated to his art and his business – and although he sought always to please his audiences, he refused to underestimate their ability to appreciate something new or daring. All of these aspects of Tree’s public persona are evidenced in the short speech he made on the night celebrating the success of *Julius Caesar* and *Her Majesty’s*, which was quoted in nearly every newspaper the following day:

Ladies and Gentlemen. – We are to-night celebrating the first birthday of Her Majesty’s Theatre in a fashion worthy of its name, for this evening is the one hundred and fifth performance of ‘Julius Caesar.’ This means that in a theatre of this size at least one hundred and fifty thousand people have listened to, and I hope, enjoyed, Shakespeare’s great play, so long banished from the London Stage. I am proud that such an achievement should have crowned the first year of my management, a result which is due in so great a measure to those who are surrounding me on the stage at this moment, on whose behalf I thank you for the congratulations you have showered upon us all to-night. This record of one hundred nights is not only a tribute to our work, it is a tribute to the genius of Shakespeare. It is more, it is a tribute to the public taste of to-day. But for the support of the great public our worthiest ambitions are sometimes dashed. I am glad I did not reckon without my hosts – the public. If we fail in the future, it will be, I hope, through rating public taste too high rather than by rating it too low. All the pledges made a year ago we have carried out, and I hope that in future years I may be able to give as good an account of my stewardship. Meanwhile I may promise that in the year before us we shall present to you another Shakespearean play—I mean ‘King John.’ I have another announcement, which I hope may be welcome. I have this week read and accepted a drama by Mr Sydney Grundy, based on Dumas’ joyous novel, ‘The Three Musketeers.’ This will be submitted to you in the course of my Autumn season.

It is telling that Tree credits his production’s success to the ‘public taste of to-day,’ a taste, it seems, that preferred sumptuous, large-scale productions – a trend that was epitomized in *Julius Caesar* and *The Musketeers*, and which is evidenced throughout this exhibition. Tree was known for his individualism and innovation – for choosing *Julius Caesar* despite its previous lack of popularity, and for producing it during Lent, a particularly difficult time of year to expect a production to make money; for choosing to produce Sydney Grundy’s new adaptation of *The Musketeers* rather than the more well-known version; for casting star ensembles rather than relying on one celebrity actor in one star role; and especially for demanding historical accuracy and extreme attention to detail in the sets and costumes for his productions.

MEDIUM CASE



1-2. Commemorative text and dinner menu for event celebrating the 100th consecutive performance of *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

On the 28 April 1898, Herbert Beerbohm Tree celebrated the first anniversary of Her Majesty's Theatre, as well as 100 consecutive performances of *Julius Caesar*. This auspicious event marked many successes for Tree: the first full year of running his very own theatre, the first financially successful production at that theatre (its inaugural production, *The Seats of the Mighty*, had got off to a rocky start), and the enormous success of *Julius Caesar* as evidenced in its lengthy run.

This booklet was one of a limited number of specially produced 'acting editions' of *Julius Caesar* that were distributed at the theatre that evening. The event was highly publicized, and many publications, such as *News of the Week* on 23 April 1898, described this special memento as 'a specially prepared copy of [Tree's] own acting edition of Shakespeare's great Roman tragedy elegantly bound in vellum, lettered in bronze' and took pains to note that 'Only enough copies to supply this particular audience will be published, so that these little books should always possess a unique interest for the collector of theatrical curiosities'.

The dinner menu most likely comes from a private dinner event hosted by Tree that evening. Tree was notorious for hosting lavish dinner functions at the theatre, many of which were directly on stage in the midst of the spectacle of the extravagant sets. Theatre historian David Schulz notes how the Edwardian banquets hosted by London actor-managers were often civic in nature, and the guest lists were almost always exclusively male. It is interesting to note, therefore, that this particular artefact was discovered amongst memorabilia belonging to Viola Tree, the eldest of the Trees' daughters (and some of whose letters are on display in the small case). It is possible Tree brought it home for his daughter as a small gift.

Julius Caesar helped establish Tree as a commercially successful theatre manager, and cemented his reputation for extravagantly sumptuous, highly detailed, and spectacular productions. At 100 performances, *Julius Caesar* was already setting records – it ran for approximately 50 more performances after that, establishing itself as the longest-running Shakespearean production in London. The long run, as opposed to the repertory model, marked a turning point in theatre history, of which Tree was arguably at the centre. With an increasing focus on creating large and unique productions that would continue for weeks if not months on end – instead of relying on a core company of actors who performed stock character roles in a rotating repertory of fairly standardized plays – there was more creative freedom for actors (to perform more nuanced and realistic roles), playwrights (to create plots with larger and more diverse casts, as well as more demanding scenery),

and theatre managers (to produce large, lavish, and expensive productions, as they did not need to be able to be taken down night after night).

3. Souvenir programme, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's theatre, 1898

This specially-bound programme of *Julius Caesar* would have been presented to each member of the audience at special performances (usually opening nights), and would later on be available for purchase. This programme contains sketches of characters and scenes, as well as articles on history and other factual information about the production.

For this play, Tree invited the Dutch painter Lawrence Alma-Tadema, known for his highly detailed paintings of the Roman Empire, to oversee the costume and set design in an effort to recreate Imperial Rome on the stage. In Tree's view, Rome was an integral aspect of *Julius Caesar*, and therefore had to be convincingly and accurately presented on the stage. Set illustrations in the souvenir programme are mainly painted by Arthur Jule Goodman, and include The Forum, A Public Place, Caesar's House, and A Public Street. These sketches are less diagrammatical, and more similar to Alma-Tadema's depictions of real places. Alma-Tadema's efforts to create a real Rome on the stage of Her Majesty's Theatre made the audience feel as though they had travelled back to the period of the Empire, or in the words of architect-designer E. W. Godwin, that they were 'spectators of the original scene'.

Costume illustrations in this programme are mainly by Herbert Railton, and can be seen on Screen One. The inclusion of so many illustrations in this programme is evidence of Tree's attempt to present his production of *Julius Caesar* as a work of art in itself, and emphasises the inherent role of art in the creation of the stage spectacle.

4. Letter from Ethel Barrymore to Maud Tree, regarding *Julius Caesar*, 1898

Ethel Barrymore, renowned actress and major celebrity in her day, sent this quick correspondence to Maud Tree in 1898 thanking her for her invitation to come and see *Julius Caesar*. She writes, 'Shall I ask at the box office as I go in[?]', indicating that Mrs Tree would have left her complimentary tickets. Providing complimentary tickets to fellow members of the theatre community, celebrities, and other people of high society who are desired as patrons of the theatre was and is a common practice. This letter is exemplary of Maud Tree's ability to circulate in the highest of social circles, and the Trees' propensity to use private networks to bolster the public success of the theatre – a difficult but mandatory skill for the actor-manager.

5. Press cutting, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

This is one example of the press cuttings that were meticulously collected in large, bound books (an example of which is on display in this same case). This clipping, from 22 January 1898, was written about the opening night performance of *Julius Caesar*, and echoes the concerns of many

that Tree was taking a gamble in producing a play that had not previously been popular on the London stage, but also expresses optimism that if anybody could revive interest in the Roman tragedy, it would be Tree.

For example, on 24 January 1898, *Vanity Fair* said:

One cannot but admire the bravery in producing “Julius Caesar” at enormous cost and on the very threshold of the theatrical managers’ bugbear—Lent. We do not feel sure that this bold step will be justified by results, but if ever man deserved to make “Julius Caesar” pay that man is Mr Herbert Beerbohm Tree. He is the personification of pluck.

Julius Caesar was popular and widely praised – minor criticisms focused on the stage design, *The Magazine of Art* taking issue with the accuracy of the sets, and *Vanity Fair* asserting that the production was so immersive, that it almost distracted from an understanding of the plot. Nonetheless, the 100th consecutive performance was much celebrated, and Tree credited for the production’s commercial success stemming from the very spectacle of the enormous production.

On 5 April 1898, *Man of the World* commented that:

It is really a fine feather in Beerbohm Tree’s cap that Julius Caesar should have lasted out a hundred consecutive performances. He richly deserves his success. He is first among the actor-managers to recognise that the public does not go to the theatre to see any one performer only; he has given us an entertainment which is pictorially superb, as a Shakespearian production must be these days—for nobody wants Shakespeare ‘neat’ on the stage—and he has brought together a very good company. I have been told by a member of the staff of the theatre, who is keeper, as he says, of the manager’s conscience, that Tree has recognised that the policy of the one-part play is a mistaken policy.

The success of *Julius Caesar* reflects changing trends in the theatre industry and Tree’s ability to recognise and exploit those trends – such as the long run, lavish and historically accurate scenery, and ensemble casting – in order to achieve great commercial success.

6. Book of press cuttings – collection of reviews and articles of Herbert Beerbohm Tree’s productions, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1899–1900

The Trees, and later their employees, collected press articles and reviews, from small references to extended articles, which included portraits, stage photographs, and caricatures. Combined, they form a large collection of press cuttings, which subsequently have been put together in various books.

This example is just one of many press cutting books which are today housed in the University of Bristol Theatre Collection. The book displayed, with its burgundy hardcover, is 153 pages long. In it, press cuttings have been pasted in from not only *The Musketeers*, but also from Shakespeare’s

King John and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Australian-born dramatist Charles Haddon Chamber's *Captain Swift* and *Carnac Sahib*. In an effort to help orientate the viewer, an index has been inserted at the beginning of the book. Chronologically, the index lists nearly every newspaper in which articles regarding Tree's theatre and productions were published from the period of April 1899 to February 1900. Additionally, a register of the plays with corresponding page numbers can be found after the general index. The paper and the ink are still in decent condition and allow scholars and visitors to go through the books, read the articles, and get a solid impression of how Tree's productions were received by the press and the public.

The pages on display here show some of the reviews that were written on *The Musketeers*, each cutting annotated with the name of the newspaper and the date of publication. Also included is an illustration of Maud Tree as Anne of Austria, the role she played in the stage-adaptation of Dumas' novel. Going through the various articles on this page, one might notice the mixed reviews the play received. *The Court Circular*, an official record established by King George III that lists all the engagements of the Royal Family, reported on 1 July 1899 that Tree's production of *The Musketeers* 'is a poor play, [which] no one who has read Dumas' great book, or seen *The Three Musketeers*, will for a moment, deny'. In contrast, *The Whitehall Review* stated a couple of days earlier, on 24 June 1899, that especially the beautiful pictures would carry away audiences: 'We realised more than, perhaps, we had previously done, the lavish magnificence and splendid generosity with which Mr Tree has staged the play. Nothing has been left undone.'

Considered alongside the souvenir programmes of *Julius Caesar* and *The Musketeers*, the precision and accuracy of this press-cutting book highlight the importance of the media, critical response, and the public eye for the Trees and Her Majesty's Theatre. Although the books are witnesses of Tree's public presentation and notoriety, it is interesting to note that this relationship with the media was the one over which he had the least control.

7. Souvenir programme, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1899

The tradition of distributing programmes to theatre audiences dates back to the eighteenth-century. Usually freely distributed to audience members, these short booklets function as souvenirs and public promotions, and often include cast lists, photographs, and general background information about the production. This hard-bound special edition programme would have been produced for a special event and/or available for purchase.

The programme on display was produced for Tree's 1898–1899 production of *The Musketeers*, a stage adaptation of Alexandre Dumas' 1844 novel. This programme book was printed by the London-based publishing house The Nassau Press in 1899. The front cover is simple in its appearance, and harmonious and sober in its design. The title is printed in black on the dark green paper cover. Golden and green ornaments frame the left and top sides of the book. The only figurative element is a picture placed in the top left corner depicting a man seated on a horse. The back of the programme has a simple design, the only decoration being the words 'Her Majesty's Theatre' printed in gold lettering in the centre of the back cover.

A look inside the book reveals more information about the play. The title page acknowledges Herbert Beerbohm Tree as the producer, and Sydney Grundy as the playwright of this particular adaptation of Dumas' novel. A full-page portrait of Tree as d'Artagnan is testament to Tree's self-creation and importance in the theatre both on-stage and off. The title page is followed by the cast list and a list of scenic tableaux and their respective scene painters: Walter Johnstone, William Telbin, Joseph Harker, and Walter Hann. The programme also includes a short forward by Tree, which can be seen on display on the wall in this exhibition.

This souvenir programme includes a letter to Alexandre Dumas from his son, opening with the words: 'My Dear Father'. His son recalls an occasion when his father was visiting him at his home in Puits, near the town of Dieppe, and wondered whether any of his work would survive him. Dumas' son's response was *yes*, as nearly thirty years after Dumas' death, Tree's stage-adaptation of *The Musketeers* served to bring his literary legacy back to life.

This souvenir programme and Tree's engagement with Dumas serves to illustrate further Tree's successful use of marketing and publicity, as well as how broad the public machinery of Her Majesty's Theatre already was, even within its first few years.

WALLS



1-4. Production photographs, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

Although these production photographs are carefully staged and arranged – and not candid captures from the live performance - the images give an impression of how detailed and lavish the set designs at Her Majesty's Theatre were. These four photographs show selected settings from Tree's production of *The Musketeers* (1898-9); beneath each image is a quotation from the corresponding dialogue. The black and white images have been printed, like the portrait photographs of the cast on display in the small case, by the London-based Stereoscopic Company.

The set designs for *The Musketeers* were credited to four popular and well established painters – Walter Johnstone, William Telbin, Joseph Harker and Walter Hann. Having four separate painters working on one play was unusual – traditionally only one designer would be responsible for all of the scenery for one play. For instance, this choice contrasts with the unifying oversight of Alma-Tadema on *Julius Caesar*. Whether this choice was because of economic reasons, or due to the fact that four famous painters might attract more publicity and prestige, remains speculative.

Photograph 1, bearing the caption 'Holy Virgin, whom have we here?' is staged in a rural setting. A large tree, wooden tables and benches, faces of buildings, and a man sitting on a horse surrounded by a crowd of people create an authentic recreation of mid-seventeenth-century Paris. This scene is attributed to William Telbin – an English scene painter who worked at many of the main London theatres, including Drury Lane under MacReady's management, and at the Lyceum under Henry Irving and where his son would succeed him as one of the outstanding scene painters of his generation.

In contrast, photograph 2 is staged in an interior space; wooden panelling and a chimney are markers of wealth. The order 'I am directed to escort Monsieur to the Palais' captions the image and describes what is happening in the scene in the photograph. Both the interior set designs on display were created by Walter Johnstone, who was responsible for the majority of the scenic designs for *The Musketeers*.

Photograph 3, bearing the caption 'My soul's ideal' appears to be in the same setting as the first, but contains the impressive spectacle of a carriage towed by two real horses.

Photograph 4 is placed in an interior room, and the design is much simpler and cleaner. It shows two people, one seated on a chair and the other one standing next to a desk. The caption beneath the image identifies the characters as 'The King and the Cardinal'. Greek fluted columns and ornaments frame the scenery, and tapestries with floral and figurative motifs add to the set's authenticity.

'Tree's repertoire, in addition to society dramas, favoured enormous historic spectacles overflowing with props and supernumeraries', attests theatre historian David Schulz. Indeed, as the manager of Her Majesty's Theatre, Tree spared neither trouble nor expense in recreating seventeenth-century Paris for this production. Different settings, whether rural or interior, demonstrated the versatility of the stage and bore witness to the impressive skills of the set designers. From ancient Rome in *Julius Caesar* to seventeenth-century France in *The Musketeers*, the Trees never disappointed an audience hungry for spectacle.

5. Forward excerpts from the *Julius Caesar* programme (left) and *The Musketeers* souvenir programme (right), Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

Here displayed are the forwards written by Tree for the *Julius Caesar* programme (see item 19 in the large case and item 1 in the small case), and the souvenir programme for *The Musketeers* (item 7 in the medium case).

LARGE CASE



1. Script contracts – correspondence between Herbert Beerbohm Tree and playwright Sydney Grundy, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1898

Tree’s adaptation of *The Musketeers* could not have emerged without the skills of playwright Sydney Grundy, who was hired by Tree to adapt Alexandre Dumas’ original adventure for the stage, and to appeal to audiences of nineteenth-century London. This correspondence details the agreed terms and conditions regarding the rights for the play which was scheduled to open at Her Majesty’s Theatre in the autumn season of 1898. The rights also provide provisions in case Tree had decided to tour the production further than the ‘English provinces’, to America or Australia. Grundy’s letter confirms Tree’s terms and conditions, and further stipulates that ‘if upon completion of the first act, my adaptation does not meet with our mutual approval, the agreement shall be contested as null and void.’

From archival records it is evident that Grundy wrote many adaptations for the stage, as similar contracts exist for a variety of plays. Tree’s decision to produce Grundy’s version of *The Musketeers* was certainly a gamble, and one that ultimately did not work in his favour, as highlighted by critical responses in the newspapers. For example, *The Court Circular* (press cutting on display in the medium case), noted that audiences’ familiarity with the original novel by Dumas would mean little alteration could be made without their awareness. Thus it was ‘a thousand pities’ that Tree had not chosen another, and more popular, stage adaptation. This evidence of Tree’s non-public business transactions with Grundy is here juxtaposed against the public reception of a well-loved story that did not please every critic. Here we can see how Tree’s attempts at individualism sometimes met with praise and sometimes with cynicism from the public.

2. Promptbook, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1898

Production promptbooks were used by stage managers, lighting technicians, and other crew hands on the production. These were complete scripts annotated with blocking, prop and set notes, lighting cues, and other necessary information pertaining to the smooth running of the production. Many of the annotations in this book, for instance, dictate the positions of various characters and the necessary lighting required for the scene. The book is opened to the beginning of the play and a hand-drawn stage sketch for the first scene: ‘Rough scene and furniture plot Tableau I [Vicarage at Vitray]’. This sketch was most likely drawn in the early stages of rehearsal in order to record changes during the rehearsal process and to provide continuity for when rehearsals moved onto the stage proper. Because of Tree’s ambitious realism in his production designs, every set would have

been planned in great detail. Changing scenes, therefore, would have been a difficult task, and necessitated the careful attention to detail evidenced in this promptbook. Furthermore, the production and rehearsal process would have been a challenge, especially as Tree was known to mount his spectacular productions in as little as a month.

3. Partbook of Mrs Brown Potter (for the role of Anne de Breuil), *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

Partbooks were an essential item for every member of the cast of a production. As full scripts for each cast member were too expensive to produce, partbooks were used instead – abridged versions of the script that contained only the scenes in which the individual actor appeared. These books were continuously edited throughout the rehearsal process, and changes to the production were often even made once the show had opened, in order to accommodate reactions and responses from audiences and critics.

This partbook belonged to Mrs Brown Potter, an American socialite who played the minor role of Anne de Breuil in *The Musketeers*. Her book was marked with an address for its return in case of loss, but the book would still have been the property of Tree and Her Majesty's Theatre. Inside, the book is marked with Mrs Brown Potter's personal annotations – in red ink as well as in pencil – as to her blocking, stage business, and cues. This artefact presents a unique insight into the non-public rehearsal process and the individual personalities as well as the hidden, private aspects that go into mounting a theatrical production.

4. Personal notebook of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, regarding *Julius Caesar*, 1898

Herbert Beerbohm Tree made a habit of always carrying a personal notebook in which he could jot notes and ideas. After his death, his daughter Viola remembered how he often had his best ideas and created whole productions in his head 'while he was driving through the streets, or carrying on a polite conversation'. This notebook from around 1898 is filled predominantly with notes about Tree's plans for the production of *Julius Caesar*. The pages on display here pertain to the scenes immediately following Caesar's murder.

On the first page, Tree notes that Antony ought to look 'at [*Lewis*] *Waller* to emphasise "by our permission"', and later writes "'I do desire no more" – looking into *Brutus*' eyes' (emphases added). It is interesting to note this common conflation of the actor and the role – and how it further emphasises the blurring of the public and private aspects of the theatre for Tree.

The second page contains notes about the moments after Antony is left alone onstage with Caesar's body. Tree writes:

*Take out his sword – the point down – then very slowly "over thy wounds"
or "utterance of every tongue" rise very slowly and majestically – speaks in
an unearthly voice – like an avenging angel.*

These staging notes refer to the famous speech ‘O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth’ – the same speech represented by one of the production photographs and the promptbook on display on the shelves below. The value in rich archives such as the ones held here at the Theatre Collection is evidenced in that by examining various memorabilia from diverse aspects of the production process, we are able to piece together an image of what it may have been like to experience Tree’s performance as Marc Antony in 1898.

5. Music score for *Julius Caesar*, Op. 16, by Raymond Roze, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1898

Raymond Roze (1875-1920) was the son of renowned English soprano Marie Roze. It was through his mother that Raymond made the acquaintance of Herbert Beerbohm Tree, as well as Henry Irving. Roze became the musical director at each of their theatres in London and composed incidental music for many of their stage productions.

Sir Henry Wood did not have a high opinion of Roze as a composer, and wrote in his autobiography *My Life of Music*:

He [Raymond Roze] began to fancy himself as a composer, but on looking through his songs (which his mother sometimes showed me) I could detect no talent for composition. His writing for orchestra was hopeless, for it was evident from his score that he did not know the correct compass of the instrument for which he wrote, at this early stage.

Sir Henry Wood was of the opinion that Roze only got the job as Tree’s musical director and composer because of his mother’s friendship with Tree. But one cannot deny that the production of *Julius Caesar* was a huge success and the music was an essential part of the production.

6. Music score cards, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty’s Theatre, 1898

By the time Raymond Roze composed the music for Tree’s 1898 production of *Julius Caesar*, he was already well known in London as a conductor of opera. His own opera, *Joan of Arc*, and the music for *Julius Caesar* had very successful performances – especially the latter, which had the honour of being given ‘by command’. Roze first began collaborating with Tree in 1895, when Tree produced *Henry IV, Part I* at the Haymarket Theatre. Afterwards, Roze also composed the music for Tree’s productions of *Julius Caesar* (1898), *Antony and Cleopatra* (1906), and *The Merchant of Venice* (1908) at Her Majesty’s Theatre. Roze’s preludes and incidental music were reminiscent of older musical styles, and consisted chiefly of gavottes, minuets, and bourrées. He was the resident musical director at Her Majesty’s Theatre, and also composed the music for *The Musketeers*.

7. Production photograph, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, c. 1898

The Musketeers, adapted for the stage from the novel by Alexandre Duma, is set in seventeenth-century France, and recounts the adventures of a young man named d'Artagnan who leaves his home to travel to Paris in order to join the Musketeers of the Guard. This photo is of the three musketeers whom d'Artagnan is aspiring to join – Athos, Porthos, and Aramis. The three were inseparable friends and lived by the now-legendary motto: 'All for one, and one for all!'

This photo of the three musketeers – portrayed by Frank Mills, Gerald du Maurier, and Louis Calvert – is a stunning depiction of the intricate costumes, as designed by C. Karl. The dress described as generally worn by a musketeer during the mid-seventeenth-century included: a black or gray hat with red plumes and gilt trim, a blue musketeer tunic with a white cross and flames in the angles of the cross and at the edges, a blue jacket and breeches with gold trim, black musketeer boots with red heels, an embroidered shoulder belt from which their sword would be slung, and a cuirass that would be worn under the tunic. Costume designer C. Karl was faithful to this historical description, and it is apparent from this photograph that the impressive costumes were made with great care and attention to detail. Karl did take some aesthetic licence, however, and in addition to creating many leather garments, he did not seem to incorporate the musketeer tunic, the blue jacket, or the red heels on the boots.

8. Letter from E. J. Broadfield to Maud Tree, 1899

On the 2 January 1899 E. J. Broadfield sent a letter to Maud Tree regarding *The Musketeers*. In the letter, he wishes the Trees a happy New Year, and mentions the death of his niece Mary Hughes. This letter also reveals that Broadfield took credit for urging Tree to produce *The Musketeers*. He expresses particular admiration for the costumes, writing: 'But I need to tell you that I have the costumes of *The Musketeers* with great interest.'

9. Costume design renderings, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

These costume design renderings provide a glimpse into the often hidden aspects of production – these are the original design sketches of the costumes that can be seen in the production photograph on display here. A comparison of the sketches and the photo allows us to see how certain elements of the design were fully realised in the final product, as well as where other aspects may have been altered. Costume designer C. Karl created these renderings with watercolour, gouache, pencil, and ink on card. The sketches also include the original fabric swatches, which give us a better sense of what the costumes may have actually looked like, especially in colour – we can see that for these designs Karl had a preference for gold, and otherwise used a palette of blacks, reds, and browns.

10-11. Character portrait of Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Marc Antony, glass plate negative, *Antony & Cleopatra*, His Majesty's Theatre, c. 1906 & colour illustration of Tree as Antony from *Play Pictorial*, 1907

Tree created continuity between his productions when he again played the role of Marc Antony in 1906, but this time in *Antony and Cleopatra*. We have included in this exhibit two portraits of Tree in *Antony and Cleopatra* in order to highlight this casting, as well as Tree's devotion to historical accuracy and exquisite detail in his stage productions. In the glass plate negative, we can see the entire ensemble of the Roman soldier uniform in all its detail. Antony wears a helmet, a suit of armour, a coat, and high laced sandals, exemplify the costume designers' reconstructions of Roman dress. In the colour illustration, taken from the pages of *Play Pictorial* on 1 February 1907, Antony stands proudly against the spectacular background of the Forum Romanum.

12. Photograph of Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Marc Antony – 'O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth', *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

This official production photograph – from a series taken by the Turner & Drinkwater studios – depicts Herbert Beerbohm Tree in the role of Marc Antony at the scene of Caesar's death. In Tree's production, after Brutus exits leaving Antony alone onstage with the body of Caesar, Antony raises his sword and shouts, 'Peace, freedom, and liberty!' He then raises himself on one knee, uncovers Caesar's face, and begins the famous speech:

*O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man
That ever lived in the tide of times. (Julius Caesar III.i)*

Originally, Tree requested Alma-Tadema to incorporate the work of the French artist Jean-Léon Gérôme into his scenic designs. Edwin Booth's 1871 production of *Julius Caesar* in New York had famously based the staging of the assassination scene on Gérôme's painting 'The Death of Caesar', in which Caesar's body lies in front of a statue of Pompey. Eventually, however, Tree rejected Gérôme's configuration, and instead placed Caesar in the centre of the stage with two statues on either side.

As seen in this photograph, Antony's Roman dress, as designed by Lawrence Alma-Tadema, was a white toga with a crimson border, with red silk in two shades draped over the toga.

13. Photograph of Herbert Beerbohm Tree as Marc Antony – 'Friends, Romans, countrymen', *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

This photograph represents another iconic moment in *Julius Caesar*, in which Antony makes the famous 'Friends, Romans, countrymen' speech, and here presents Caesar's mantle and displays the various places where it had been torn and stained with blood when he was attacked. Tree's facial expressions are particularly vivid in these photographs. Shakespeare presents Antony as a loyal

friend and a noble person. His speech in this scene is both eloquent and passionate, and he skilfully condemns Brutus and the other conspirators.

Maud Tree later wrote about the role she played in persuading Tree to cast himself as Antony rather than as Brutus, as well as in helping him learn his part. In a touching memoir written after Tree's death in 1917, Maud fondly recounted:

Herbert did actually study Marc Antony; spurred to this unusual effort by Louis Calvert, who urged 'tradition', and by me, who thought that I knew every intonation that the part required. But it all ended in Herbert going his own way, and we, his would-be teachers, had to acknowledge in the end that his own way was best.

14-15. Photographs of Herbert Beerbohm Tree as d'Artagnan and Maud Tree as Anne of Austria, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, c. 1898

The spectacular costumes of Tree's productions were not just designed to be realistic for the stage, but were detailed with such fine embroidery and accuracy that even the most scrutinising eye would feel them to be sincere. In these portraits the husband and wife team are shown in their roles in *The Musketeers* – d'Artagnan, a young man from Gascony, and Anne of Austria, Queen of France. Tree's costume is a flamboyant yet accurate interpretation of a seventeenth-century infantry man. However, it is interesting to note that he is not carrying a musket, the key accessory from which the musketeers gained their name.

The costume of Anne of Austria is certainly of the correct period. Its volume and royal regalia, which would in actuality have only been worn for special occasions, are flaunted for the sake of the audiences' identification with the character. These elaborate costumes reflect the bold qualities of the characters. Tree's d'Artagnan is suave and sumptuous in his layers of lace and velvet. Similarly, the rich and majestic robes of the Queen of France exaggerate the power and control of royalty that is necessary for the audience to appreciate even at a distance.

Indeed the costumes could also be said to reflect the actors, as the roles in which they were cast were portrayed with an air of superiority due to Tree's off-stage role as actor-manager. These portraits are a prime example of the leading roles chosen by the Trees that publicly advertised their marriage and how such a relationship dictated the casting, which often took precedence over who would otherwise be most suitable for the role. Thus, the Trees' private relationship became part of their public persona.

16. Script excerpt – dialogue between d'Artagnan, the Queen of France, and the Duke of Buckingham, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, c. 1898

In *The Musketeers*, Mr and Mrs Tree's characters had little direct interaction, although they often shared the stage. This excerpt from the script shows one of the few instances of dialogue between their characters. In it, d'Artagnan (played by Tree) attempts to warn the Queen (played by Maud

Tree) and the Duke of Buckingham about a plot that the Cardinal Richelieu has devised in an attempt to reveal their secret affair. The King of France had sent a diamond necklace to the Queen as a gift – a gift which she subsequently gave to Buckingham as a token at their parting. Knowing that she has given the necklace away, and in an attempt to reveal her relationship with Buckingham, Richelieu plans an event for which he encourages the King to request that the Queen wear the necklace.

The grand personas of the characters of d'Artagnan and the Queen of France are reflected in these portraits, which evoke a sense of control over the audience. The off-stage relationship of the Trees is certainly reflected in their on-stage roles – not in the relationship between the characters, but in the dominant, royal roles they took, and for which they were able to cast themselves.

17. Promptbook, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

This promptbook from *Julius Caesar* is open at Marc Antony's 'O, pardon me' speech. The promptbook would have belonged to a stage manager or other member of the production staff, and contains a full script and detailed annotations for each scene regarding sets, props, costumes, and other technical details. Other artefacts from this particular scene can be found on the shelves above, and include a photograph and one of Tree's personal notebooks.

An invaluable first-hand account about everything that went into creating the extravagant production can be found in a piece written by Maud Tree, and included in Max Beerbohm's book *Herbert Beerbohm Tree: Some Memories of Him and of His Art*:

*The play was, I think, perfectly acted. Caesar (Charles Fulton), Marc Antony (Herbert), Brutus (Lewis Waller), Cassius (Franklyn McLeay), Casca (Louis Calvert), Portia (Evelyn Millard), Calpurnia (Lily Hanbury); even all the little parts, such as Lucius, for which I cast myself (at the same time casting my shoes and skimming barefoot all over the stage); these made up an ensemble that can never, should never be forgotten. Sir Alma Tadema not only designed and with his own hands draped every dress in the play, but also with his own hands made phalerians, shields, armour and insignia. I can see him now, in the Property Room, showing exactly how the faggots borne by the red lectors should be bound; I see him drawing the letters of the S.P.Q.R. that were lifted aloft by the Roman Guards. What happiness it was to see the gradual growth to perfection of so much beauty! [...] Nothing more noble and splendid can ever have been seen upon the stage than Herbert's production of *Julius Caesar*, and it met with all the appreciation and enthusiasm that it deserved. The gorgeous pageantry of the opening scene, instinct with a life and meaning that made doubly beautiful the fateful, sonorous speeches; the mystery and loveliness of Brutus' Orchard, with its terror of gathering storm even as gathered the storm in Brutus' tortured heart, even as gathered and muttered the storm of conspiracy; greatest of all, the wonder and horror of the scene in the Capitol, enhancing as it did, by the mere force of its staging and grouping,*

the wonder and horror of the immortal words – how memorable were all these!

18. Letter from Edward Burne-Jones to Maud Tree, regarding *Julius Caesar*, 1898

The Pre-Raphaelite painter and sometimes-theatre designer Edward Burne-Jones wrote this letter to Maud Tree in 1898, shortly before his death. This piece of writing reveals much about the Trees' affluent lifestyle, as well as about the 1898 production of *Julius Caesar*. The letter begins with Burne-Jones playfully scolding Maud for having driven past his house without stopping to visit. 'But then your husband was with you, and men are tyrants – it must have been his fault,' he quips.

The wealth and extravagance of the Trees' public lifestyle is alluded to in the following passage:

Now I should send a messenger with this [letter] to call at every hotel in Brighton, for I don't know where you are. I should tell him to begin with the most sumptuous hotel, the most costly and superb. – And if you are not there to graduate slowly down the scale until he finds you.

A lovely note on *Julius Caesar* and Maud's role onstage follows:

Phil [Burne-Jones' son] told me heart rending stories of the part you take in Julius Caesar – he says you are even ordered about and bidden to do things – and he agreed it was hard to bear.

In contrast to her previous celebrity as a leading-lady, Maud cast herself in this production as Lucius – Brutus' serving boy. One of the many reasons *Julius Caesar* was a surprise success was that it required a male-dominated cast; a play with only two female roles was not expected to be popular with audiences. It is therefore surprising that Maud chose not to cast herself in either of the leading lady parts. It is most likely that this was due to the fact that Iris Tree, the youngest of their daughters, was born just the year before, and Maud was increasingly spending more time at home dealing with domestic matters.

19. Cast list – programme excerpt, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

One of the elements that made Tree's production of *Julius Caesar* an unprecedented success was its use of an all-star cast incorporating not just one star actor, but many popular names and faces. On display here is the cast list printed on the front page of the programme.

Charles Fulton was lauded as the century's best Caesar. His features were particularly suited to a convincing portrayal of the emperor, and he also explored the psychological aspects of the role with considerable insight. Although many eighteenth-century depictions of Caesar had been regarded as travesties of Shakespeare's character – particularly the absurdly pompous puppet depicted by Egerton at the beginning of the nineteenth-century – the *Times* celebrated Tree's production, writing 'the Caesar of Mr Charles Fulton is dignified, and dignity is all important'. Fulton depicted Caesar with 'resolute coolness and reserved force', making the character irreplaceable.

As Brutus, the central role of the play, Lewis Waller was regarded as a competent performer by the standards of the time. His performance truly reflected the struggle of the conflicting demands of honour, patriotism, and friendship. In fact, in his book *Julius Caesar on Stage in England and America, 1599-1973*, John Ripley asserts: '[Waller] appears to have been a better tragedian than Tree, endowed with a fine physique, classic features, and a good voice. He looked a Roman patrician and spoke the verse with a feeling for its music.'

Maud Tree frequently appeared in Tree's productions, and appeared in *Julius Caesar* as well, in a minor role. Her marriage to Tree established a partnership that existed in the home as well as in the theatre – in addition to often appearing on stage, Maud provided a great deal of administrative and managerial assistance in the running of Her Majesty's.

Lily Hanbury, in the role of Calpurnia, was also very well known in London. She performed in numerous London productions, and even toured in New York with Tree's company in the mid-1890s.

SCREEN 1



Photographs and illustrations from programmes and the Theatre's collection of press cuttings, *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

On this screen are images taken from the regular and souvenir programmes for the 1898 production of *Julius Caesar*, as well as images from newspapers and magazines collected by the Theatre.

This small collection of photographs, illustrations, and caricatures from various sources gives an impression of the impressive scenery, as well as providing a closer look at the exquisite costuming. It is important to note that in his commitment to historical accuracy Lawrence Alma-Tadema introduced a new style of toga for this theatrical production: he replaced the inaccurate, thin, flimsy togas worn on stage with much more substantial garments of heavy cloth, which could be worn in a variety of styles, and which would have kept the body cool during the hot days and warm during the chilly nights.

In these images, Marc Antony can be seen dressed in a white toga with a crimson border, with red silk in two shades of red draped over the toga – his costume changed slightly in the Forum scene with the addition of a scarf of black crepe twisted about the shoulders. The conspirators and senators wore crimson robes and white woollen togas with crimson borders, which gave the impression of affluence without luxury. Caesar's costume, on the other hand, was much more bold and colourful, consisting of a robe of 'claret-red silk, shot with violet' over which was worn a 'long, winding cloak [...] of vivid amethyst-hued brocade' according to theatre historian John Ripley. The plebeians' costumes were similarly historically accurate, but were made of less delicate material than the costumes of the principal characters.

The garments for the female characters were no less impressive. Calpurnia wore a 'clinging gown of pale electric "soie ondulée"' with 'rich drapery [...] of sapphire blue, brocaded with upright clusters of gold lilies, rather after the Morris style.' Portia, was equally regal and ethereal, 'clad from head to foot in pearly white draperies of some soft, cloudy substance, [with] a rare old turquoise and silver clasp, with a pendant attached to it, worn on the left breast.'

SMALL CASE



1. Illustrations of set (programme excerpt), *Julius Caesar*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

Julius Caesar was an enormous success, and its exquisite sets and costumes were singled out for particular praise. George Bernard Shaw acclaimed Lawrence Alma-Tadema as 'the real hero of revival', and suggested that 'the scenery and stage colouring deserve everything that has been said of them'. The illustrations included in the production programme depict various scenes from the play in a factual, diagrammatic style and show four of the grandest sets from the production: The Forum, A Public Place, Caesar's House, and A Public Street. The style of drawing – ruled lines, no shading, each building neatly labelled – resembles Alma-Tadema's studies of Pompeii, many of which were based on photographs from the site. Therefore the four images appear to be actual representations, rather than artist's creations, heightening the realism of the production's design. Accuracy of stage design was evidently taken very seriously. Alma-Tadema's work in the Victorian theatre set an example for future classical-subject productions, and attention to archaeological detail became commonplace from the 1890s to the second decade of the twentieth-century.

However, it is interesting to note that many of Alma-Tadema's designs incorporate archaeological details taken from different historical periods. Although Alma-Tadema was known for the precision of his historical recreations, he often preferred to challenge the viewer's knowledge and certainties about the appearance of the ancient world through changing the size, material, and function of sculptural subjects and combining objects of widely different dates in the same composition. At the same time, these objects were chosen to add meaning and significance to the given scene. Although most of the ancient settings depicted in this production of *Julius Caesar* were accurate, in the Public Place and Forum scenes Alma-Tadema embellished the buildings with ornamentation that was not historically accurate. As a result, theatre historian John Ripley points out that these scenes bore traces of 'those Greek and Eastern ornamentations which so decisively transformed it [Rome]'. When criticism arose, particularly in the April 1898 edition of *The Magazine of Art*, Her Majesty's Theatre issued an official apology, but defended Alma-Tadema's design choices, declaring that:

The pieces of Eastern-style architecture, although admittedly anachronistic, in no way violated the luxury-loving spirit of Julian Rome; indeed, the Eastern influence was felt in Roman manners, if not in architecture, long before the death of Caesar.

For Tree, recreating the wealth and opulence of imperial Rome was of the utmost importance – a goal that was achieved through historical accuracy as well as some degree of aesthetic licence.

Indeed, Tree's decision to revive *Julius Caesar* for the stage centred on his conviction that the spectacle of Rome was the most important attraction of the play:

[At] Her Majesty's it is not the historic band of conspirators that strikes the key note of the play. It is not even the mighty figure of Caesar treacherously brought low. It is the feverish pulsing life of the imperial city.

2. Letters from Viola Tree to Maud Tree, regarding *Julius Caesar* and *The Musketeers*, 1898

This sampling of letters from Viola Tree to her mother Maud Tree are a delightful glimpse into the domestic life of the Trees, and exemplifies how the theatre business effected everyone in the family. At the time these letters were written, Viola, the eldest of the three Tree daughters, would have been around fourteen years old. In the first letter, Viola tells her mother that 'Chief R.' was asking after the production of *Julius Caesar*.

At the same time, *The Musketeers* was in rehearsals and preparing for its opening. In the centre letter, Viola talks about playing at fancy dress, a common childhood game that in the Tree household was directly affected by the theatrical lifestyle: Viola recounts how she enjoys dressing up in the fashion of George I, and claims that she 'can make up [her] eyes better than Daddy'. She includes her own drawing of the costume, which is a faithful representation of the costume worn by Tree in the role of d'Artagnan, as can be seen in the photographs in this case.

The third letter – this one including a drawing of a building, presumably a setting from *The Musketeers* – indicates that there may have been some initial difficulties with the set construction, as she inquires 'tell me what [Daddy] said about the flopping towers in "Three Musketeers."'

3. Production photographs, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

These production photographs are here displayed in postcard format. Art historian Veronica Kelly notes how advances in photographic technology in the late nineteenth-century lent themselves to an 'international craze for picture postcards [which] distributed millions of images of popular stage [actresses and actors] around the world.' This longing for photographic images influenced publicity efforts at Her Majesty's Theatre. Tree never failed to be at the forefront of any new trend. These postcards – like the larger photographs on display on the walls – were produced by the London Stereoscopic Company, which provided photographs of every conceivable subject. The postcards would have been bought, sent, and collected both by people who saw the spectacle onstage, and by those who were unable to see the production and for whom the photographs represented their only contact with live theatre. While the photographs are an invaluable representation of the production, the postcard medium is no less significant. As Kelly asserts: these 'mass produced photographic portrait postcards of theatre identities are material documents of a significant social articulation.'

The first image is a staged character portrait of Tree in the role of d'Artagnan. This close-up, detailed photograph reveals how important the aspect of (self-)staging and pathos was for Tree.

The second image shows the American actor and director Herbert Ross in the role of King Louis XIII, casually leaning on a building and holding a cane in his left hand. The last two images show Frank Mills as the Vicomte de la Fère, and Scottish stage actor and writer Norman McKinnel as Rochefort. On the back of each picture postcard is the coat of arms of the British Monarchy and the words 'Dieu et mon droit' ('God and my right').

SCREEN 2



Production photographs and programme excerpts, *The Musketeers*, Her Majesty's Theatre, 1898

This collection of production photographs exemplifies the production's commitment to detail and authenticity in design. Cast photographs show the men in great, elaborate costumes with long and wavy hair. They wore French mid-seventeenth-century dress: long capes, robust boots, trousers with wide legs, shirts with quillings and lace, and hats with feathers. These details were en vogue at the time and were appropriated by the production's costume designers to create a realistic recreation of the period. Coloured costume designs with attached material (item 9 in the large case) suggest how lavish the costumes must have been. These photographs demonstrate how accurately the designers created every single costume, and also how important it was for Tree to present his cast to the public eye in an authentic manner. Together with the larger stage photographs (on display on the walls), these evoke a great impression of how the costume and stage design looked and how much effort went into creating them. Certainly, Tree's commitment to spectacle and authenticity was celebrated by the press; *The Whitehall Review* remarked on 24 June 1899, 'Nothing has been left undone; nothing has been permitted which could in any way dispel the illusion that we were not in the period.'