

## Interested in Theatre history? An exciting U3A Shared Learning Project.

A project has started at Kingston University archives to be based on the Cary Ellison Theatre Programme Collection. A local team from the SW London Network of U3As had their first meeting in February and hope to have completed their work for a presentation on U3A Day 3<sup>rd</sup> June.

Cary Ellison was a talent spotter who worked for Spotlight magazine and as part of his work he went on twice yearly tours of repertory performances around the country in order to find up and coming actors, directors and plays. The programmes of these productions, heavily annotated by Ellison, are now at Kingston University. They cover theatre performances from around the UK and the London West End from the 50s to 70s when Ellison was touring the country. He saw up and coming actors and made notes on their performances. Some of these people eventually became famous.

Interested U3A members are being asked to research various aspects of theatre history based on the Cary Ellison programmes and notes. This is an opportunity to include U3A members across the UK because a lot of the information is already archived and can be carried out online at home. If actual images of the programmes are needed Jennifer can provide them if requested.

What is needed is just a written piece to give a brief history of the Theatre and a photo of it as it is now. If the Theatre has gone, what is it now? Now and Then images would be great.

It is envisaged that the research will be split into different areas:

1. "Where are they now" which could include

- A map of the regions showing where the theatres were
- Photographs of theatres at the time Ellison was touring
- Photographs of sites today
- Stories of what happened to the theatres – financial crisis, Society changes, decline of rep theatres?

2. "To be or not to be" Cary Ellison's talent for talent spotting which could include:

- A focus on the plays seen by him in a chosen area between the 1950s-1970s
- A study of the actors Ellison acclaimed in his notes – did they make it?
- A study of the actors Ellison wrote off – did they make it?

To help with the research you can access a spreadsheet showing the Theatres he visited to make sure there are enough to research in your area or U3A region.

For further research you can access the archives at Kingston University in this way

link to the archive catalogue here: <http://adlib.kingston.ac.uk>.

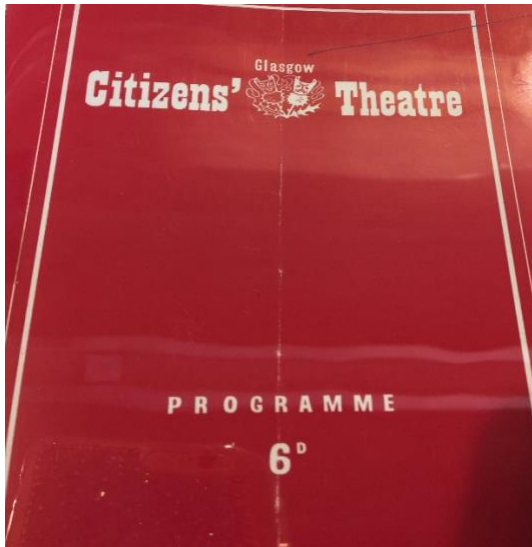
- From the Simple Search page click on **Expert Search**
- Click on the arrow next to **Word(s) from the title** and select **Reference** from the drop-down menu
- In the box next to Reference, type **KUAS75**
- Click on **Search**
- This will bring up a link to the **Cary Ellison Theatre Programme Collection** – click on this
- Scroll down to the Hierarchy browser and click on the **+** button
- This will bring up a list of all the files catalogued so far

- Click on individual files to see details of all the programmes contained within

The spreadsheet of theatres will be attached to the accompanying email you received with this information.

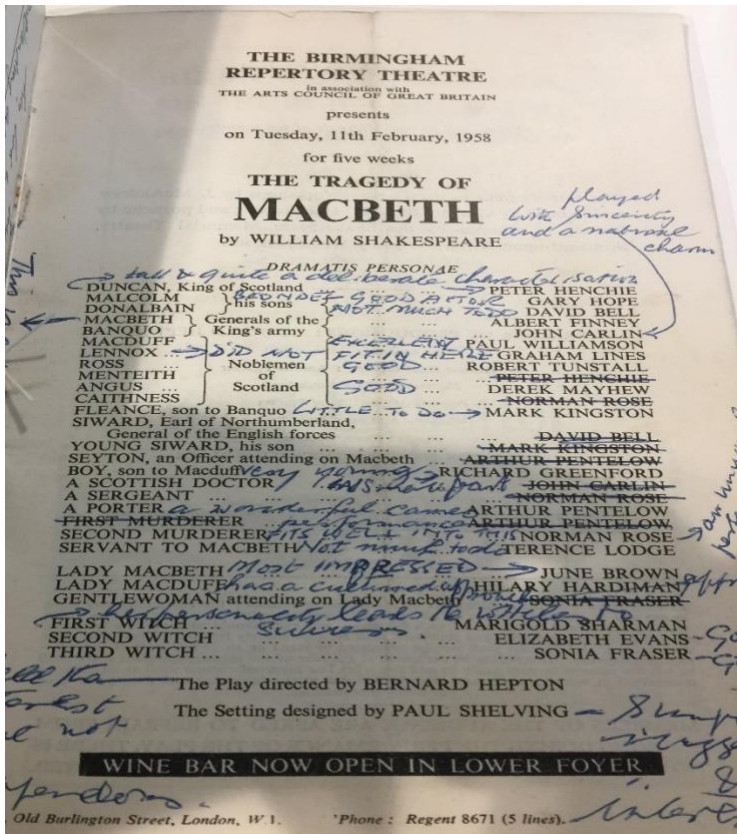
If you think you would like to get involved or for further information please contact Jennifer Simpson, U3A National Shared Learning Project Coordinator. [jsimpson057@gmail.com](mailto:jsimpson057@gmail.com)

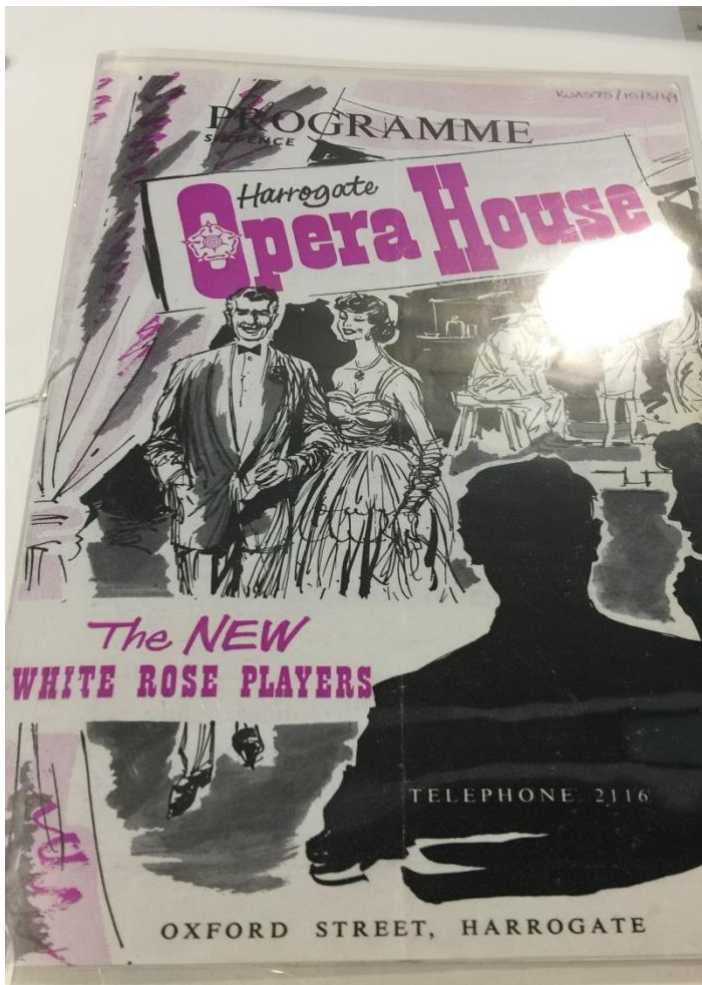
See below for images of the Programmes



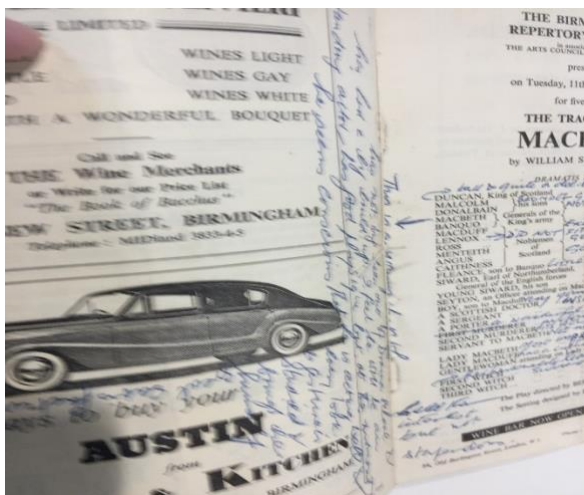
Above Cary Ellison saw a young Annette Crosbie here and noted her good performance

Below he thought Albert Finney had a promising future when he saw him in Birmingham





Interesting graphics for Programmes and local adverts of the 1950s feature



Cary Ellison notates the Programmes with reports on the actors