

Drew University
United Methodist Archives and History Center

Collection Summary

Creators: John Spalding Gatton, Dr., 1947-2025

Title: John Spalding Gatton Collection on Lord Byron and Theatre

Dates: 1782-1992, bulk 1790-1890

Abstract: Correspondence, newspaper clippings, engravings, playbills, broadsides, and articles documenting the life of Lord Byron and the theatre of his day.

Extent: 5 Binders, 6 Boxes

Language: English

Repository: Drew University Library, Madison, NJ

Biographical Note

Born in Louisville, KY, Dr. John Spalding Gatton fell in love with theatre at a very young age, performing with the original Louisville Children's Theatre and in early Kentucky Shakespeare productions. In 1969, he earned a Drama degree from Catholic University. He graduated Cum Laude and, subsequently, toured South America as part of a theatrical company. He later earned an MA from Trinity College Dublin, studied Shakespeare, and taught English and drama in Dublin and Paris before returning to Louisville.

John completed his Ph.D. at the University of Kentucky in 1981, specializing in the works of Lord Byron, and went on to teach at the University of Kentucky, the Virginia Military Institute, and ultimately Bellarmine College. At Bellarmine, he taught English for over three decades, earning multiple teaching awards and becoming a revered mentor to generations of students. He directed numerous student productions and served as faculty advisor to Ariel, the university's literary society and magazine.

After retiring as Professor Emeritus in 2018, he continued teaching Shakespeare part-time and remained active in The Byron Society, serving on its board and presenting papers internationally. Throughout his life, John assembled a large collection of ephemera relating to Lord Byron's life, his inner circle, his thoughts on society, and various plays, performances, and actors associated with him and his works. Most of the collection focuses on Byron's connections to 19th-century and 20th-century theatre. Before his

passing in March of 2025, Dr. Gatton promised this collection to the Byron Society Collection at Drew University in Madison, NJ, where it is now housed and available for research use.

Scope and Content Note

John Spalding Gatton Collection on Lord Byron and Theatre contains broadsides, playbills, newspapers, postcards, engravings, correspondence, and magazine reviews relating to the life of Lord Byron and his connections with the world of theatre. There are engravings, personal correspondence, and biographical information regarding Lord Byron, his family, inner circle, education, and people in power during his lifetime. However, the majority of the collection includes broadsides, reviews, articles, autographs and engravings relating to actors, plays, performances, and theatres from the 19th and 20th centuries. Further, the broadsides include plays written by or inspired by the work of Lord Byron, Shakespeare, Mary Shelley, and John Polidori.

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in three series:

Series I - Byron's Life and Related Works

Subseries I - Byron First Additions and Personal Papers

Subseries II - Byron's Education

Subseries III - Byron and Society

Series II - Byron's Inner Circle

Subseries I - Byron and Family

Subseries II - A Quartet of Byron's Particular Friends

Subseries III - House of Murray

Subseries IV - Byron's Circle

Series III - Byron and Theatre

Subseries I - Buildings and Venues

Subseries II - Byronic Plays and Performances

Subseries III - Performers and Their Performances

Administrative Information

Acquisition

Acquired from John Spalding Gatton, Ph.D.

Restrictions

See the container list below for information regarding which items may be restricted due to preservation concerns. Please contact Drew Special Collections at speccol@drew.edu for further information. One photocopy may be made of each document for research purposes. Permission to publish must be obtained from the Drew University Library. The researcher is responsible for further copyright restrictions.

Preferred Citation

[Item, Section title, date]. John Spalding Gatton Collection on Lord Byron and Theatre. Drew University Library.

Processing Information

Dr. John Gatton created his own inventory for this collection that should accompany this finding aid. You can access it using the following link:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1whuezOaawTaYWoYgiOTgPiFdFtuSH3_B/edit?usp=sharing&oid=107190394860293537385&rtpof=true&sd=true

Processors

Olivia Boisnier and Amelia Wohlrob, 2026.

Related Materials

Materials at Drew University Library relating to the John Spalding Gatton Collection on Lord Byron and Theatre can be found in the following collections:

Byron Society of America Archive

Byron Society Collection

Jerome J. McGann Papers and Ephemera

Leslie A. Marchand Paper and Ephemera Tomlinson Collection of Byron and Whitman

Playbill Collection

Other materials relating to the John Spalding Gatton Collection on Lord Byron and Theatre can be found in the following collections:

George Gordon Byron Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas.

George Gordon, Lord Byron Collection, Syracuse University.

Lord Byron Collection, Northern Illinois University.

T. H. Vail Motter Papers, Princeton University
Archive of John Murray, publishers., National Library of Scotland.

Index Terms

People

Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824 (lcnaf)
John Spalding Gatton, Dr., 1947-2025
Kean, Edmund, 1787-1833 (lcnaf)
Kemble, Charles, 1775-1854 (lcnaf)
Kemble, John Philip, 1757-1823 (lcnaf)
Wallack, James William, 1795-1864 (lcnaf)
George IV, King of Great Britain, 1762-1830 (lcnaf)
Clare, John Fitzgibbon, Earl of, 1748-1802 (lcnaf)
Moore, Thomas, 1779-1852 (lcnaf)
Murray, John, 1778-1843 (lcnaf)
Grimaldi, Joseph, 1779-1837 (lcnaf)
Grimaldi, Joseph Samuel William, 1802-1832 (lcnaf)
Bellingham, John, 1770-1812 (lcnaf)
Polidori, John William, 1795-1821 (lcnaf)

Organizations

Newstead Abbey (lcnaf)
Theatre Royal, Drury Lane (London, England) (lcnaf)
Theatre Royal, Covent Garden (lcnaf)
Covent Garden Theatrical Fund (lcnaf)
Greek Committee (London, England) (lcnaf)
Theatre Royal, English Opera House (lcnaf)
Harrow School (lcnaf)
Trinity College (University of Cambridge) (lcnaf)

Subjects

Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824—Biography (lsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824—Family (lsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824—Homes and haunts—England (lsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron Baron, 1788-1824--Homes and haunts--Italy (lsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824—Fictional works (lsh)

Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824--Correspondence (lcsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron,--Baron,--1788-1824--Criticism and interpretation (lcsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron, baron, 1788-1824--Drama (lcsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824--Friends and associates (lcsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron, 1788-1824--Influence (lcsh)
Byron, George Gordon Byron Baron, 1788-1824--Political and social views (lcsh)
Actors and actresses--England--London--19th century (lcsh)
Actors and actresses--England--London--20th century (lcsh)
Pantomime--Great Britain--History--19th century (lsch)

Document Types

Letters (correspondence) (aat)
Clippings, newspaper (aat)
Articles (aat)
Broad­sides (aat)
Reviews (document genre) (aat)
Postcards (aat)
Photographs (aat)
Playbills (aat)
Woodcuts (prints) (aat)
Color Woodcuts (prints) (aat)
Magazines (periodicals) (aat)
Magazine Advertisements (aat)

Container List

Series 1: Byron's Life and Related Works

This series contains correspondence, poems, prints, engravings, and articles related to Lord Byron, his education, and the society in which he was immersed. These items provide insight into the people Byron grew close to during his time in school, as well as the powerful businessmen and politicians with whom he associated in England. Two significant documents stand out: the first is a letter by Lord Byron regarding the authorship of the short story *The Vampyre*, and the second is an article detailing the trial of John Bellingham, the man who assassinated British Prime Minister Spencer Perceval in 1812.

Arrangement: Thematically & Chronologically

Extent: Binder I and Box A

Subseries I: Byron First Editions and Personal Papers

Binder I:

Lord Byron Prints

The Prisoner of Chillon (Non-First-Editions)

Byron's Letter Concerning Authorship of the Vampyre, 1826

Box A

The Prisoner of Chillon (Non-First-Editions) (Oversized)

Subseries II: Byron's Education

Binder I:

Harrow School

The Old Harovians

Cambridge University

Box A

The Old Harovians (Oversized)

Subseries III: Byron and Society

Binder I:

Royals

London Greek Committee

Business and Government in London

Byron and Capital Punishment

Byron and Greece

Box A:

Royals (Oversized)

Byron and Capital Punishment (Oversized)

Series 2: Byron's Inner Circle

This series contains engravings, correspondence, postcards, and carte-de-visite photographs regarding the people closest to Byron. This includes family members, friends, and colleagues who interacted with Byron regularly. Additionally, there are engravings depicting the ancestral

home of Lord Byron, Newstead Abbey, as well as carte de visites of statues of Byron in London and Athens.

Arrangement: Alphabetically & Thematically

Extent: Binder II; Box A and B

Subseries I: Byron + Family

Binder II:

Newstead Abbey

Byron's Statues

Byron, William, 5th Baron Byron

Leigh Hon. Augusta Byron

Byron, Anne Isabella (Annabella) Noel, Lady

Byron, (Augusta) Ada (Countess of Lovelace)

King, William, 8th Baron King of Ockham (from 1838, 1st Earl of Lovelace)

Byron, George Anson, 7th Baron Byron

Box A:

Carlisle, Frederick Howard, 5th Earl of

George Howard, 7th Earl of Carlisle

Subseries II: A Quartet of Byron's Particular Friends

Binder II:

Clare John Fitzgibbon, 2nd Earl of

Hobhouse, John Cam (from 1851, Baron Broughton de Gyfford) (Fragile items)

Kinaird, Hon. Douglas

Moore, Thomas

Box A

Moore, Thomas (Oversized)

Subseries III: The House of Murray

Binder II:

Murray II, John

Gifford, William

"The House of Murray"

Subseries IV: Byron's Circle

Binder II:

Illustrious Ladies

Blessington, Marguerite Gardiner, Countess of
Burdett-Coutts, Angela Georgina, 1st Baroness
Cogni, Margarita
Macri, Theresa
Morgan, Lady Sydney Owenson
Oxford, Jane Harley, Countess of
Spencer, Lady Lavinia (née Bingham)
Webster, Lady Frances Caroline Wedderburn

Writers, Artists, and One Swordsman

Angelo, Henry
Davy, Sir Humphrey
D'Israeli, Isaac
Hook, Theodore Edward
Houghton, Richard Monckton Milnes, 1st Baron
Jeffrey, Frances (from 1834, Lord Jeffrey)
Knight, Richard Payne
Lewis, Matthew Gregory
Parkes, Samuel
Rogers, Samuel
Scott, John
Smith, James and Horace (Horatio)
Southey, Robert
Westmacott, R. A., Sir Richard

Peers and Politicians

Althorp, John Charles Spencer, Viscount (later, 3rd Earl Spencer)
Alvanley, William Arden, 2nd Baron
Bedford, John Russell, 6th Duke of
Brougham, Henry, 1st Baron Brougham and Vaux
Buckingham, George Nugent-Temple Grenville, 1st Marquis of
Burdett, Sir Francis
Burdett-Coutts, William Lehman Ashmead Bartlett
Canning, George
Devonshire, William George Spencer Cavendish, 6th Duke of
D'Orsay, Comte [Count] Alfred
Egremont, Sir George O'Brien Wyndham, 3rd Earl of
Eldon, John Scott, 1st Earl of
Elgin, Thomas Bruce, 7th Earl of
Hardwicke, Philip Yorke, 3rd Earl of
Harrowby, Dudley Ryder, 1st Earl of
Holland, Henry Richard Vassall Fox, 3rd Baron
Holland, Henry Edward Fox, 4th baron

Jersey, George Child Villiers, 5th Earl of
Knatchbull, Sir Edward
Lansdowne, Sir Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Marquis of
Lushington, Dr. Stephen
Lyndhurst, John Singleton Copley, 1st Baron
Malcolm, Sir John
Melbourne, William Lamb, 2nd Viscount
Melbourne, Frederick Lamb, 3rd Viscount
Ponsonby, John, 4th Earl of Blessborough (aka Lord Duncannon)
Romilly, Sir Samuel
Sidmouth, Henry Addington, 1st Viscount
Stanhope, Charles, 3rd Earl
Walpole, Robert
Whitbread, Samuel
Wilde, Sir Thomas, 1st Baron Truro

Box A:

Writers, Artists, and One Swordsman

Phillips, R.A., Thomas (Oversized)
Skeffington, Sir Lumley (Oversized)

Box B:

Illustrious Ladies

Oxford, Jane Harley, Countess of (Oversized)

Series 3: Byron and Theatre

This series contains playbills, broadsides, engravings, carte de visite photographs, and autographs regarding famous performers and playwrights, plays, and venues from the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of the plays were created by Byron himself or adapted from his poems by others. Additionally, there are many broadsides and engravings about the plays of William Shakespeare and the famous actors who portrayed his characters, such as Edmund Kean and John Philip Kemble. Lastly, several broadsides showcase plays based on *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *The Vampyre* by John Polidori.

Arrangement: Thematically & Alphabetically

Extent: Binder III, IV, and Binder V; Box B, C, D, E and F

Subseries I: Buildings and Venues

Binder III:

Theatres [Fragile Item]
Other Buildings with Byronic Associations

Box B:

Theatres and Buildings (Oversized)

Subseries II: Byronic Plays and Performance

Binder III:

Werner, A Tragedy

Alexander, George

Eddy, Edward

Emery, Winifred

Mr Macready

Maude, Cyril

Irving, Henry

Phelps, Samuel

Terry, Ellen

Vandenhoff, George

Wallack, James William Jr.

Sardanapalus, A Tragedy

Bangs, F.C.

Booth, Agnes

Gainsborough, Monta

Goldthwaite, Dora

Kean, Charles

Macready, William Charles

Palladino

Tree, Ellen

Manfred, A Dramatic Poem

Booth, Edwin

Calvert, Charles Alexander

Calvert, Adelaide

Dyas, Ada

Thorpe, Courtenay

Byron's Poems Adapted for the Stage and actors

Don Juan Jr.

Mazeppa

Aldrich, Louis

Fisher, Kate

Menken, Ada Isaacs

Weber, Lisa

Box B:

Marino Faliero, Doge of Venice. A Historical Tragedy

Werner, A Tragedy

Sardanapalus, A Tragedy
Manfred, A Dramatic Poem
Byron's Poems Adapted for Stage

Box D:

Plays Inspired by The Vampyre (1819) by John Polidori & Frankenstein (1818) by Mary Shelley

Box F:

Manfred, A Dramatic Poem (Oversized)
Werner, A Tragedy (Oversized)

Subseries III: Performers and Their Performances

Binder IV:

Arnold, Samuel James
Bannister, John
Betty, William Henry West
Bishop, (Sir) Henry
Braham, John
Catalani, Angelica
Chunee
Coates, Robert
Cooke, George Frederick
Cooke, Thomas Potter
Cooper, John
Davenport, Mary Ann
Egerton, Mrs. Daniel (Sarah)
Elliston, Robert William
Elliston, William Gore
Farley, Charles
Faucit, Harriet Elizabeth Savill
Glover, Julia
Grimaldi, Joseph
Grimaldi, J.S. [Joseph Samuel]

Binder V:

Kean, Edmund
Kelly, Francis Marie (Fanny)
Kemble, Charles
Kemble, Mrs. Charles
Kemble, Fanny
Kemble, John Philip
Kemble, Mrs. John Philip
Lambert, Daniel
Liston, John

Munden, Joseph Shepherd
Naldi, Signor Giuseppe
Orger, Mary Ann
Rae, Alexander
Siddons, Mrs. Sarah
Smith, Miss
Stanley, Miss
Somerville, Margaret
Vestris, Madame Lucia Elizabetta
Wallack, James William (The Elder)
Walstein, Eliza Edwards
West, Mrs. William
Young, Charles Mayne

Box C:

Bannister, John (Oversized)
Braham, John (Oversized)
Brown, Frederick (Oversized)
Coates, Robert (Oversized)
Cooke, George Frederick (Oversized)
Cooke, Thomas Porter (Oversized)
Cooper, John, (Oversized)
Davenport, Mary Ann (Oversized)
Dowton, William (Oversized)
Elliston, Robert William (Oversized)
Farren, William (Oversized)
Kemble, Charles (Oversized)
Kemble, John Philip (Oversized)
Macready, William Charles (Oversized)
Munden, Joseph Shepherd (Oversized)
Wallack, James William (The Elder) (Oversized)
Vining, George

Box D:

Grimaldi, Joseph (Oversized)
Grimaldi, J.S. [Joseph Samuel] (Oversized)

Box E + F:

Edmund, Kean (Oversized)