

Global Shakespeare: A Guide to the Shakespeare Collection



Posters from the Shakespeare Collection

Introduction

The Shakespeare Collection was envisioned from the start as being global, both in outlook and contents. Private donations, purchases from booksellers and ongoing work by past Shakespeare Librarians (often involving British diplomats) has led to a collection that today holds material in around 100 languages and dialects from across the globe. The extraordinary inclusivity of the Shakespeare Collection is what makes it so important both within the UK and internationally, and resonate with the super-diverse city of Birmingham today.

It also speaks however to the challenge of exploring Britain's colonial legacy within archives. The Shakespeare Collection's diversity has its roots in the British Empire and this is an unavoidable part of its history. There is a lot of work still to do to explore this, discovering the untold stories and gaps in the records.

This guide gives an overview of the material represented in the Shakespeare Collection's holdings. Alongside translations, there are adaptations, performance material such as programmes, posters and production photographs, scrapbooks and commentaries. Together it shows us how Shakespeare has been used, performed, adapted and remade in different cultures and countries at different times over the past 400 years.

Building a diverse collection

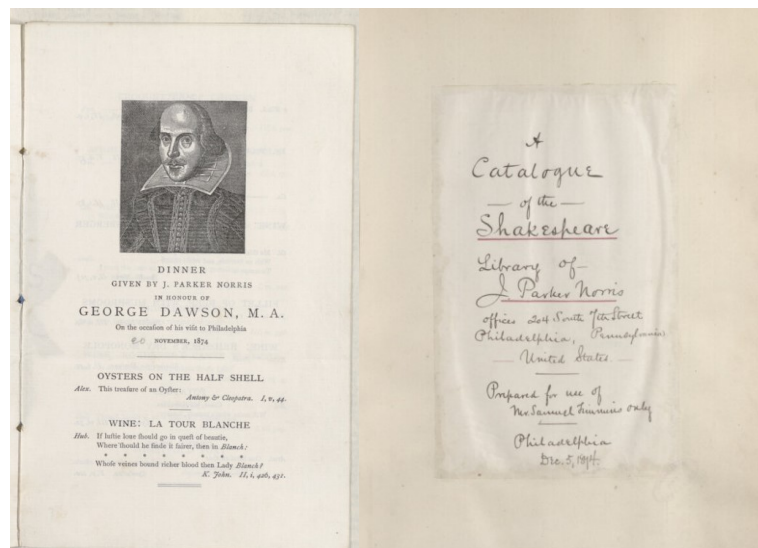
There are around 100 languages currently represented in the Shakespeare Collection – from Abkhazian to Zulu. The collection is arranged according to language, with German and French the most represented. The vast majority of material from outside Europe are from countries formerly occupied as part of the British Empire and current commonwealth countries. This includes translations and production material from across South Asia and Africa, Canada, and Australia.

The direct link between the Collection and the legacy of Empire is apparent when looking at how items were acquired. Many items were received as governmental donations and through national and international appeals. 19th century translations of Shakespeare's plays printed in India in Tamil and Marathi were among the first items added to the collection in 1864, with the British Council becoming directly involved in the 20th century. In the 1930s British Foreign Office staff were involved in sourcing Shakespeare translations from across Europe.

During the Cold War era (the 1940s to the 1990s), a system of cultural exchanges provided a route for the Shakespeare Librarians to acquire Eastern European translations and production material at a time when communications between the East and West were nearly impossible.

The Shakespeare Collection and North America

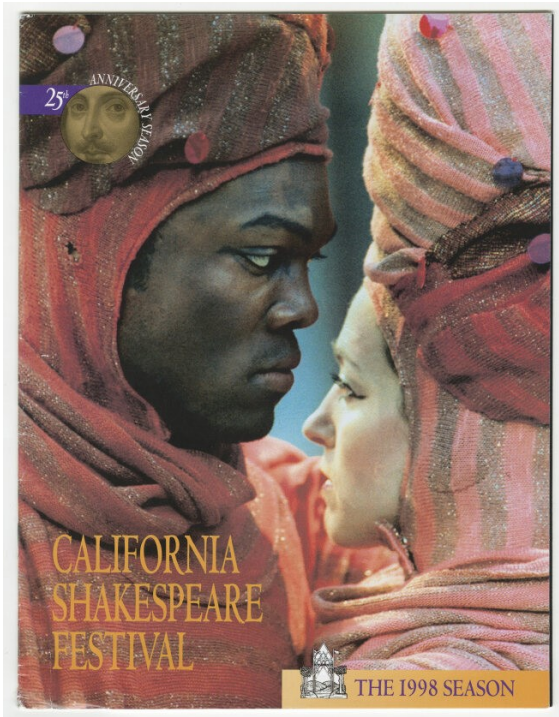
Samuel Timmins, one of the founders of the Shakespeare Memorial Library, made an appeal in 1873 for Shakespeare books published in America to be donated to the library. American Shakespearean Joseph Parker Norris seized the initiative, and the two men regularly exchanged letters. Today a handwritten list of books that Joseph Parker Norris kept in his library is one of the treasures of the Shakespeare Collection, representing a transatlantic friendship based on a shared commitment to Shakespeare.



(right) Dinner menu in honour of George Dawson, Philadelphia, November 1874. MS 3085/2

(left) Handwritten catalogue of J Norris Parker Shakespeare catalogue, 1874. S 090.1 Q

The Shakespeare Collection today has copies of nearly all the major American editions of the playwright's work, in addition to thousands of examples of stage performance material. These include programmes, posters and photographs from Shakespeare Festivals across the country, documenting local interpretations, stage innovations and the social and political change that spans nearly a century.



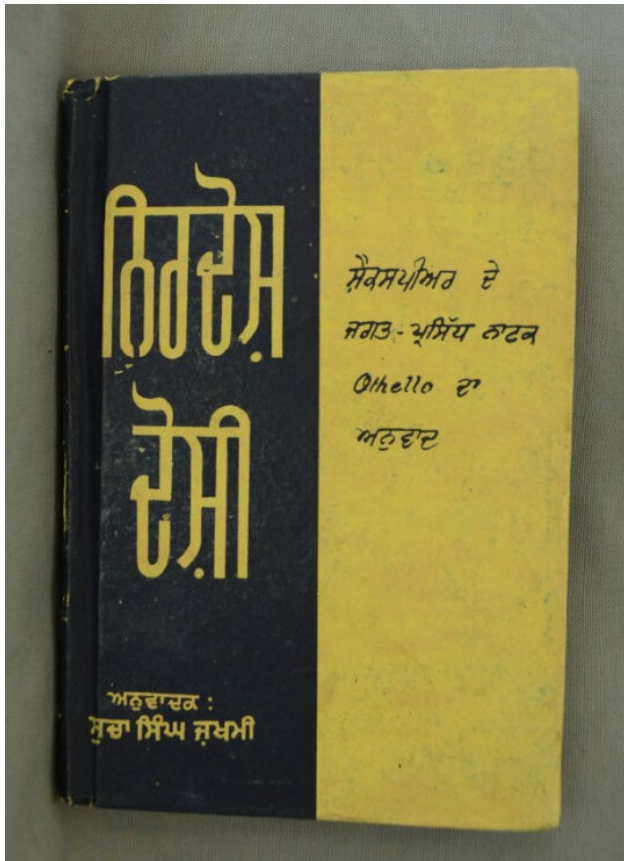
(right) Poster for California Shakespeare Festival, 1998. S 676 Q

(left) Photograph from American production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, 1983. S 601.37

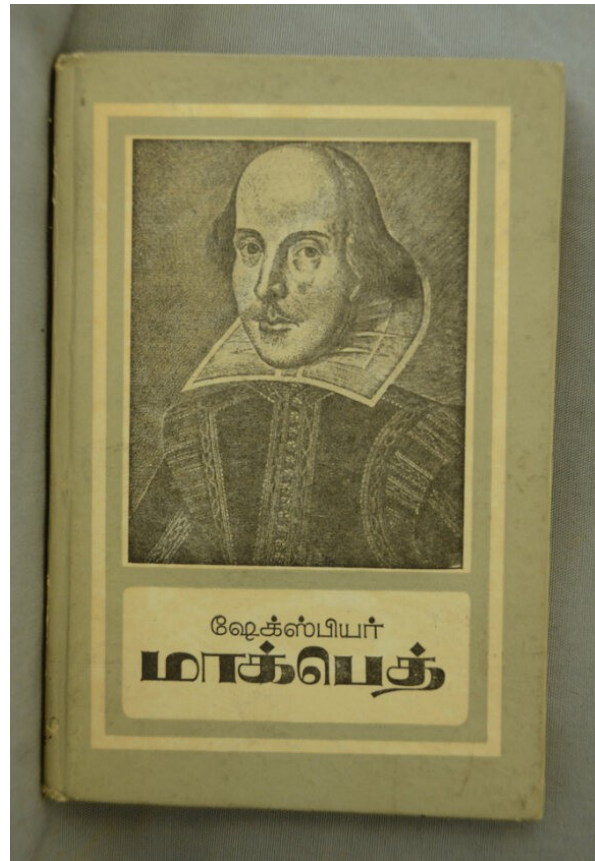
The Shakespeare Collection and Asia

The Shakespeare Collection has rich holdings of material from South Asia published over the last 150 years, including translations in Hindi, Bengali, Burmese, Gujarati, Konkani/Goya, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Sinhala, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu. The most popular play from this region is *Macbeth*, closely followed by *Hamlet* and *The Merchant of Venice*.

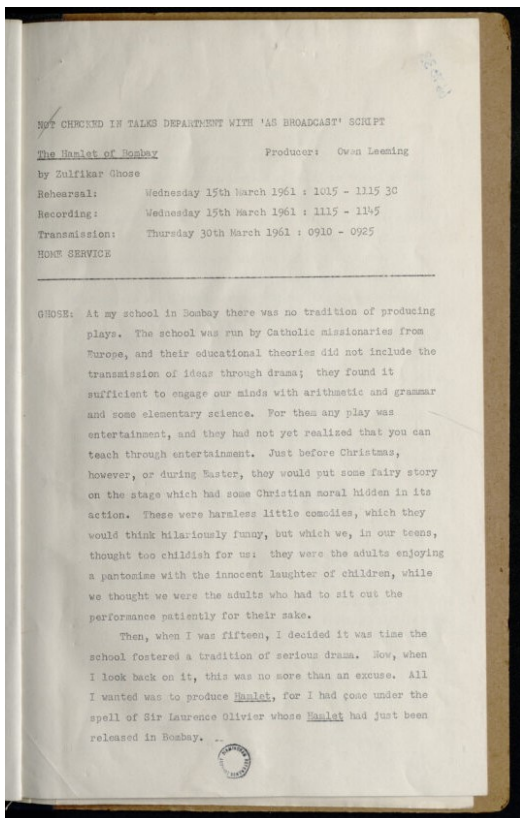
There are also posters, production photographs, newspaper clippings and additional writings that illustrate how Shakespeare was used by the British as part of colonial expansion, and how the plays have been reinterpreted since independence. These include a translation of Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* printed in Hindi in 1920, a newspaper clipping of the British military performing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in New Delhi in 1943, and photographs of an Urdu production of *King Lear* from the 1960s.



Othello in Punjabi, 1954. S Pu 341.1954



Macbeth in Tamil, 1962. S Tam 334.1961



Script for Hamlet of Bombay BBC broadcast by Zulfikar Ghose, 1961. S 689.9 Q

নাগরিক ও থিয়েটার-এর যৌথ প্রযোজনা

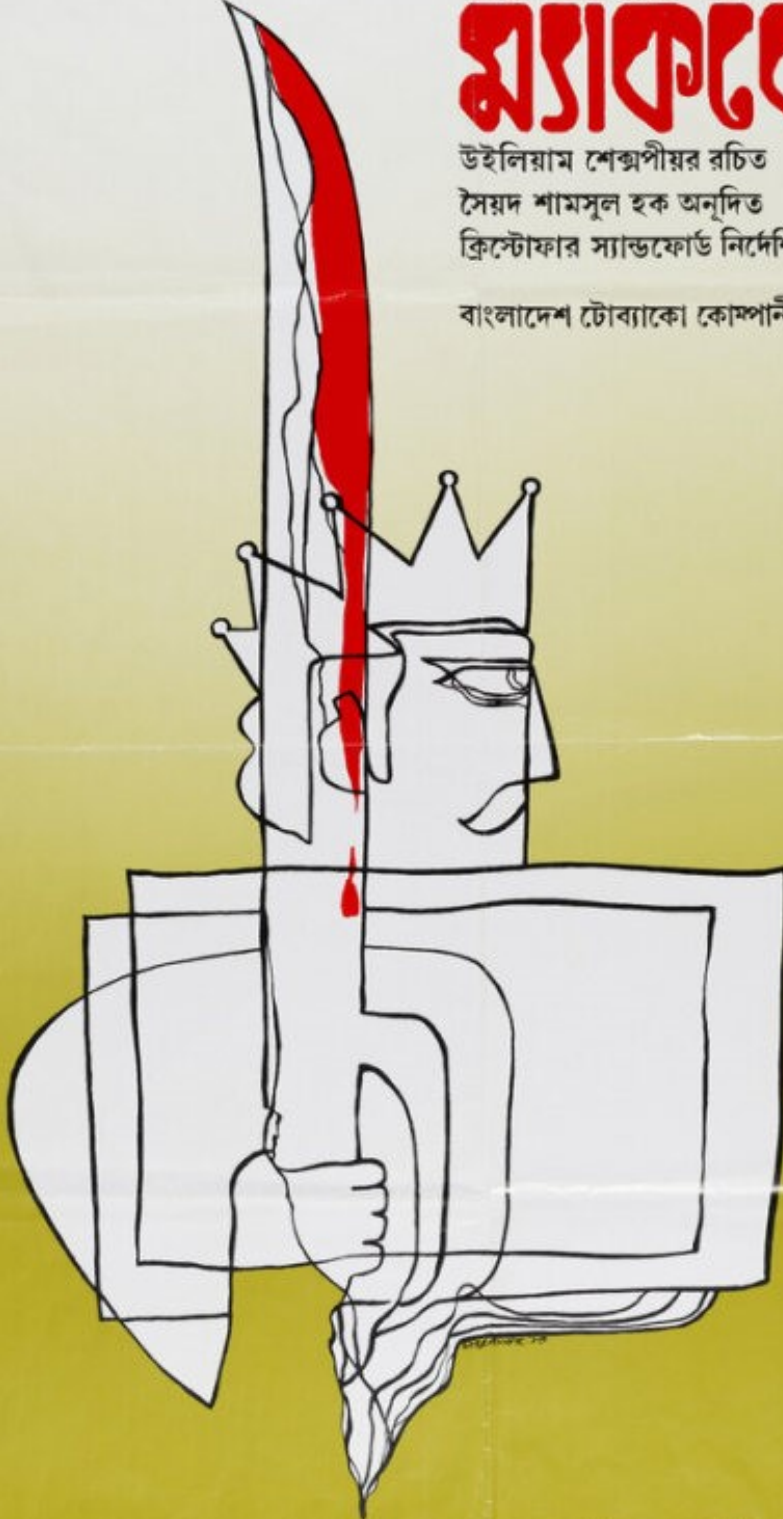
ম্যাকবেথ

উইলিয়াম শেক্সপীয়র রচিত

সৈয়দ শামসুল হক অনূদিত

ক্রিস্টোফার স্যান্ডফোর্ড নির্দেশিত

বাংলাদেশ টোব্যাকো কোম্পানীর সৌজন্যে



Nagorik-Theatre joint production of Shakespeare's MACBETH in collaboration with The British Council, Dhaka
Sponsored by Bangladesh Tobacco Company Limited

Poster for Bengali production of Macbeth, 1984. S Be 699.134



Photograph from Urdu production of King Lear in Delhi, 1964. S Ur 601.325

演 员 表

(以出场先后为序)

奥赛罗(摩尔族贵族, 供职威尼斯政府).....	朱艺(特邀)	王富国
苔丝狄梦娜(奥赛罗之妻, 勃拉班修之女).....	姚梅娟	刘瑾
伊阿古(奥赛罗的谋臣).....	冯肇强	冯肇强
洛德力哥(威尼斯绅士).....	冯 速	冯 速
勃拉班修(元老).....	宋蓝波	宋蓝波
凯西奥(奥赛罗的副将).....	张家齐	张家齐
公爵(威尼斯公爵).....	李邦高	李邦高
蒙坦诺(塞浦路斯总督, 奥赛罗的前任).....	李 伟	李 伟
爱米丽亚(伊阿古之妻).....	吴婷婷	吴婷婷
比恩特(凯西奥的情妇).....	舒力生	舒力生
罗多雅特(勃拉班修的女儿).....	王文治	王文治
葛莱西安诺(勃拉班修之弟).....	倪鸿仪	倪鸿仪
众元老.....	张 铮 倪鸿仪 蔡志理	张 铮 倪鸿仪 蔡志理
众军官.....	唐培奇 杨惠民 蔡志理	唐培奇 杨惠民 蔡志理
侍童(奥赛罗的侍童).....	朱翠芳	朱翠芳
士兵 侍从 杂役等.....	广州青年业余话剧团演员	广州青年业余话剧团演员

音 效	化 妆	服 道 服	灯 光	音 乐	后 台	舞 台	职 员
黄海音	夏志民	何明松	林德毅	张金堂	梅广平	许伟雄	王文治
	陆伟潮	陈天安	郭振辉	郭振辉	郭振辉	郭振辉	王文治
			郭振辉	郭振辉	郭振辉	郭振辉	王文治
			郭振辉	郭振辉	郭振辉	郭振辉	王文治

剧 团 简 介

广东话剧院实验剧团即原广东话剧团普通话演出队, 创建于五十年代初期。剧团成员来自北京、上海等地高等艺术院校的毕业生和从事话剧工作多年的老同志以及本团培养的青年同志。其中有观众十分熟悉的姚梅娟、冯肇强、张家齐、宋蓝波等主要演员。

该团建团以来, 在广州和全国各地上演了《霓虹灯下的哨兵》《甲午海战》《最后一幕》《灰姑娘》《红岩》《年青的一代》《枫叶红了的时候》《万水千山》《广州掠雷》《泪血樱花》《二二二》《里外外》和最近排演的莎翁名著《奥赛罗》及反映特区生活的《特区人》等八十多个古今中外的剧目, 其中不少剧目在全国和广东地区的文艺专业汇演中获奖和受到广大观众的欢迎。剧团在坚持舞台话剧演出的同时, 还参加了不少电影、电视剧的拍摄和配音工作, 其中由该团配音的电视剧“排球女将”“能元甲”“海蒂”“血疑”等都给观众留下了深刻的印象。

经过体制改革后建立的实验剧团致力于繁荣演出现代题材剧目为主, 有计划地上演中外古今优秀剧目和各种流派的代表性作品, 在导、表演艺术和舞台美术方面力求探索、革新, 并进行实验性演出, 以丰富广大群众的文艺生活, 为人民服务, 为社会主义服务, 为繁荣广东话剧事业和建设社会主义精神文明而努力。

鸣 谢

本剧排演中, 承
中央戏剧学院 上海戏剧学院
上海青年话剧团 广州外语学院
广东电视台 中山图书馆
广州市青年业余话剧团等单位热情
协助, 谨致谢忱。
1984年10月



(英) 莎士比亚

奥赛罗



广东话剧院实验剧团演出

Programme for Chinese production of Othello. S Ch 699

The Shakespeare Collection and Africa

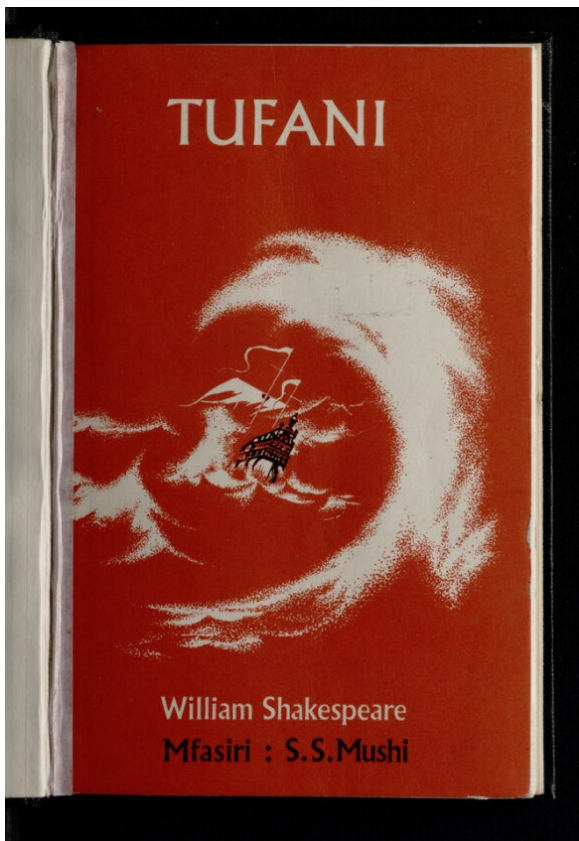
The Collection includes translations in both Afrikaans and Zulu, acquired in the late 1940s. Notably the translations in Afrikaans are printed and published, however the Zulu items (from the South African Broadcasting Corporation) remain in typescript. There are also translation of *Julius Caesar* in Yoruba (from the 1930s), and a complete set of the plays in Arabic (translated in Egypt in the 20th century).

The Collection is rich in performance materials from across the African continent. These include a series of programmes for Shakespeare plays performed in Kenyan schools during the 1950s. Of particular note are performance materials chronicling productions of *Othello* from during and after the apartheid period in South Africa.

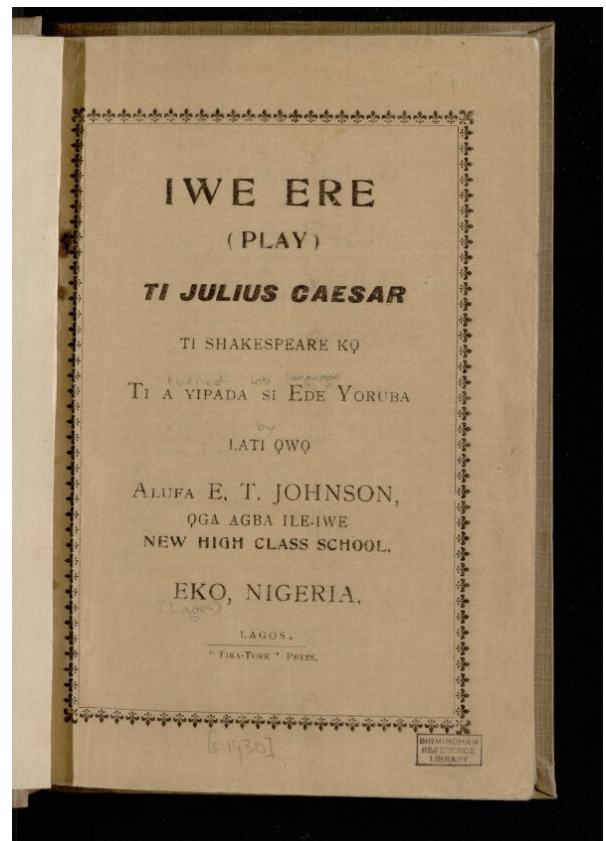
The collection also includes creative adaptations of Shakespearean works (including *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*) by Nigerian writers and dramatists Wale Ogunyemi, Chuck Miko and Femi Osofisan.



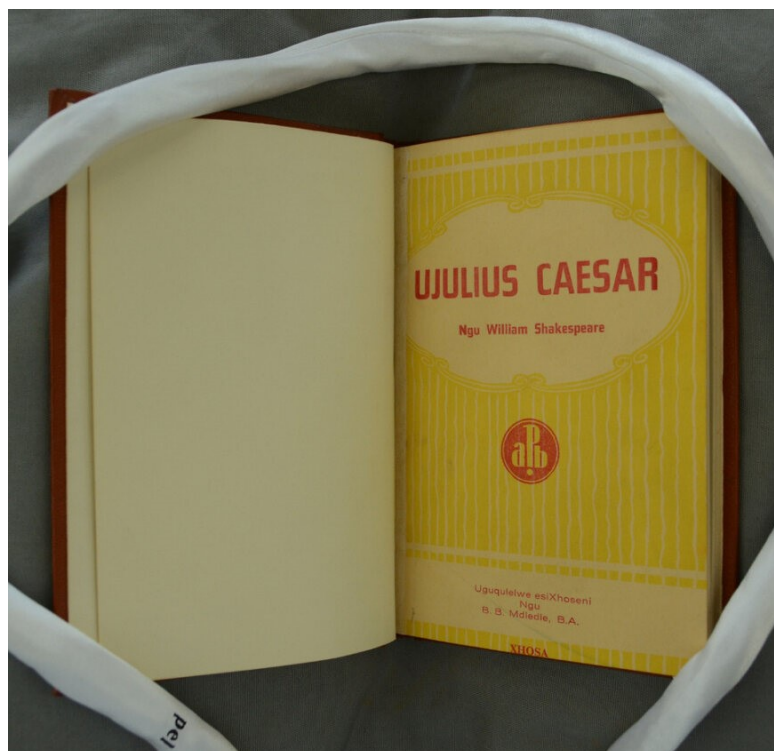
Othello, photograph from Kenyan production, 1980. S 601.41



(right) Swahili translation of The Tempest, 1969. S Swa 347.1969



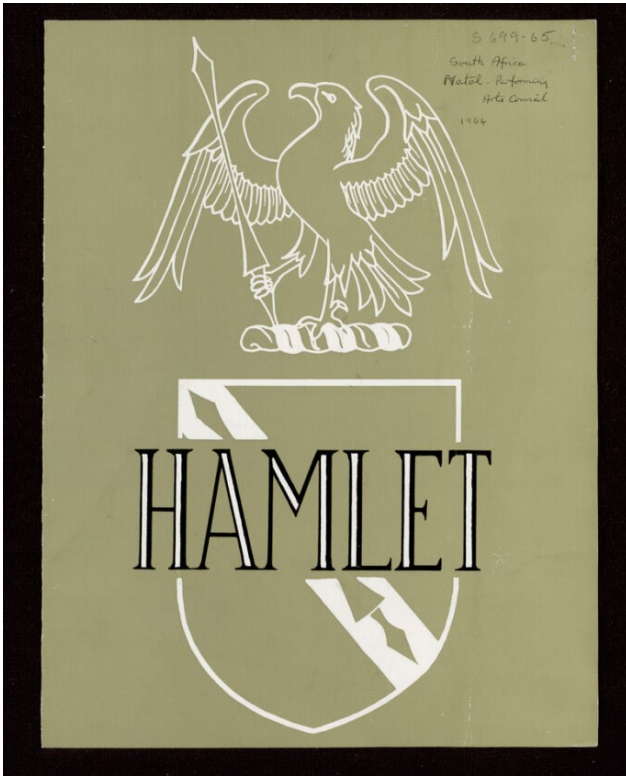
(left) Yoruban translation of Julius Caesar, 1930. S Yo 329.1930



Xhosa translation of Julius Caesar, 1956. S X 329.1956



University of Ibadan Travelling Theatre poster for Shakespeare Festival, 1964. S 699.1



(left) South Africa programme for Hamlet, 1964. S 699.65



(right) Royal Shakespeare Programme for South African production of The Tempest. S 667 F



Arabic poster for Anthony and Cleopatra, 1977. S Ar 699.112



Anthony and Cleopatra in Arabic, 1945. S Ar 312.196

The Shakespeare Collection and Europe

From its founding in 1864 the Shakespeare Memorial Library (as the Collection was formerly known) and its staff had a strong connection with Shakespearean scholars and enthusiasts in Germany. This is reflected in the vast holdings of German material in the collection. The German Shakespeare Society in Weimar was also founded in 1864, and there were regular exchanges, donations and other engagement between the two institutions. Items obtained through this relationship include early volumes of the Society's Shakespeare *Jahrbuch* (the oldest Shakespeare journal in the world), and the German 'People's edition' of Shakespeare's collected works that was published by the Society in 1867.

There were also many personal gifts from German writers and scholars. One of the most interesting examples is the album of "German Shakespeareans", donated by Professor Frederick August Leo in 1878 as a thank you for the warm welcome he had received at the library a few months previously. The lavishly decorated album, made of leather and metalworks, contains portraits of Germans who contributed to raising Shakespeare's profile in Germany and beyond, including writers, scholars, musicians, scientists, painters, and composers. The portraits are a fine example of early photography and many of them are autographed.

Amongst the extensive European material are scrapbooks of production material from different countries, collated by librarians over many years. The materials in the scrapbooks include newspaper articles, photographs, theatre programmes and reviews. The scrapbooks chronicle – in real time – societal and political changes across Europe through the late 19th and 20th centuries as reflected in approaches to and performances of Shakespeare. A striking example of this is the Nazi party's use of Shakespeare as a figure of white nationalism, as can be seen in the programmes and iconography present in the 1930s German scrapbooks.

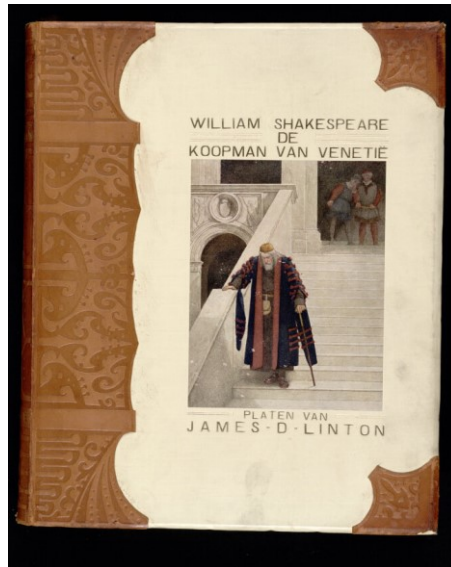
In addition to scrapbooks and translations, there are hundreds of posters and wider production material from across Europe. Key items include a Russian 1964 poster advertising Gregory Kozintsev's film *Hamlet*, and the stage and costume drawings for the Alma Ata Drama Theatre in Kazakhstan from the 1960s. There are also many Polish holdings in particular, including translations that date back to the mid-19th century, stage designs from the 1920s, and several visually striking posters from the Polish School of Posters dated from the 1950s to the 1970s.

During the partition of Germany after the Second World War, the Shakespeare Collection kept open the channels of communication with both East and West Germany. This led to the acquisition of some unique material such as a book-length communication by the East German GDR Kulturbund Institution offering instructions on how to celebrate Shakespeare in Communist style.

Many volumes in the collection illustrate the effective use of Shakespeare by writers seeking to avoid censorship during the 20th century, such as the 1944 Russian translations of *Anthony and Cleopatra* and *Romeo and Juliet* by Boris Pasternak.



Yiddish translation of *The Merchant of Venice*, 1911. S Y 336.191



(right) Russian translation of Anthony and Cleopatra, 1944. SR 312.1944

(left) Dutch translation of Merchant of Venice translation, 1910. S Du 336.191 Q



German album 1878. SG 990 E

How to see items from the Collection

Anyone who is interested in Shakespeare is welcome to view items from the Shakespeare Collection. Due to the size and value of the collection it is essential to decide what you would like to see in advance by searching our catalogues.

This can be found by visiting our website:
www.birmingham.gov.uk/ShakespeareCollection

From 2020-2023, the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council collaborated on a £1.7 million plan to revive the city's almost-forgotten Birmingham Shakespeare Memorial Library, housed in the iconic Library of Birmingham – the first great Shakespeare library in the world and one which, from the very beginning, has belonged to all the people of the city.

The Everything to Everybody Project united this Shakespeare archive with the George Dawson Collection, also held at LoB. This neglected treasure-trove documents the career of the radical preacher, lecturer and activist, who founded the Shakespeare Library as part of a pioneering 'Civic Gospel' in 19th century Birmingham.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded the Everything to Everybody Project funding to open access to the collections and deliver an exciting programme of engaging events for people and communities across the city. The project was also generously supported by History West Midlands.



Using Birmingham's forgotten past to inspire our future:
Unlocking the world's first great people's Shakespeare Library for all



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM | COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND LAW



Birmingham
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HERITAGE
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WEST MIDLANDS
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