VICTORIAN POPULAR CULTURE

AN ONLINE RESOURCE

Adam Matthew
Primary sources for teaching and research
Welcome to Victorian Popular Culture, an essential resource for the study of popular entertainment in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

This innovative portal invites readers into the darkened halls, small backrooms and travelling venues that hosted everything from spectacular shows and bawdy burlesque, to the world of magic and spiritualist séances.

**Music Hall, Theatre and Popular Entertainment**

- Features material on music halls; theatre (legitimate and illegitimate); pantomime; pleasure gardens; exhibitions; scientific institutions, and visual delights such as magic lantern shows and dioramas.
- Material has been selected for its rarity and unavailability elsewhere, and covers Britain and America. British material emphasises venues outside London such as Bristol, Birkenhead, Manchester and Glasgow.
- Includes rare books; periodicals aimed at industry and fans; hundreds of titles from the scarce popular series ‘Dicks’ Standard Plays; posters and playbills; visual ephemera; and the marvellous archives of May Moore Duprez, the American music hall star who topped international bills with her ‘Jolly Little Dutch Girl’ act.

**Circuses, Sideshows and Freaks**

- Focuses on the world of travelling entertainment, which brought spectacle to vast audiences across Britain, America and Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries. From big tops to carnivals, fairgrounds and dime museums, it covers the history of popular shows and exhibitions from both audience and professional perspectives.
- Strongly visual in focus, featuring hundreds of posters, postcards, photographs, cabinet cards and illustrations. There are also handbills, pamphlets, manuscripts, printed ephemera and memorabilia. Rare books, children’s literature and memoirs of celebrity showpeople complete the wide-ranging selection.
- Broad subject coverage encompassing circuses, including clowns, contortionists, aerial acts and animals; world’s fairs; Barnum and Bailey; Buffalo Bill and Wild West shows; freaks and oddities; fairs, including Nottingham Goose Fair and Bartholomew Fair; and fairground rides, including the unique photograph archive of fairground manufacturers Orton and Spooner.
Moving Pictures, Optical Entertainments and The Advent of Cinema

Explores the cultural history of optical entertainments from the 18th century to the early 20th century, illuminating the rich cultural and scientific history from which cinema was born. From shadow puppets to dioramas, and from zoetropes to Hollywood, the long and varied evolution of visual entertainments is represented through objects, ephemera and printed works.

Source material drawn from the outstanding collections of the Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture at the University of Exeter.

Features remarkable video clips of original archive footage from the earliest days of cinema, from the renowned archival collections of the BFI National Archive.

Embraces innovative digital technologies, including 360-degree views of objects, bringing to life the trickery and magic of many of the optical illusions and toys included here.

Watch remarkable original film footage from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Featuring:
- Mitchell and Kenyon films
- Pioneering usage of close-ups, editing and special effects
- Topical news films
- Music hall footage
- Actualities

Spiritualism, Sensation and Magic

Explores the relationship between the popularity of Victorian magic shows and conjuring tricks and the emergence of séances and psychic phenomena in Britain and America.

Features material from the Harry Price Library of Magical Literature, one of the world’s great collections on magic. This unique library contains the works of the foremost magicians, mediums and psychical researchers, as well as biographies, reports, pamphlets and rare journals such as The Sphinx, Light, Borderland and The Zoist.

Includes material from the unique Harry Houdini Collection at the Harry Ransom Center, comprising a number of his fascinating scrapbooks, packed with details concerning the stagecraft of performers such as Houdini, Maskelyne and Dr Merlin, as well as providing insights into his disputes with Arthur Conan Doyle and leading spiritualists. There are also numerous photographs and over 100 magnificent posters.
The Victorian Popular Culture portal is an essential resource for the study of popular entertainment in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Features include:

- Four self-contained sections, arranged thematically and available to purchase individually
- A wide range of primary source material, mostly digitised in colour, dating from the 18th century to the 1930s
- Full-text searching
- An emphasis on visual sources, with a useful slideshow gallery for teaching and presentations
- Innovative 360-degree technologies to bring objects to life
- Video clips of original archive footage from the 19th and 20th centuries
- Secondary resources, including an interactive chronology, biographies, glossary and bibliography

Consultant Editors

- Professor Vanessa Toulmin, Research Director, National Fairground Archive, University of Sheffield
- Professor Peter Otto, Head of English, University of Melbourne
- Professor Nadja Durbach, Department of History, University of Utah
- Phil Wickham, Curator of the Bill Douglas Centre for the History of Cinema and Popular Culture
- Dr John Plunkett, Department of English, University of Exeter
- Bryony Dixon, Curator of Silent Film, British Film Institute National Archive
- Dr Ann Featherstone, Lecturer of Theatre and Performance History, University of Manchester

Overview

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