

## Call for Papers: Popular Theatre and the 'Sister Arts', c.1820-1910

As part of Birmingham and Lancaster's large AHRC-funded collaborative research project on Victorian Pantomime, we are holding a series of colloquia around various topics in nineteenth-century theatre history, particularly pantomime and popular entertainment.

Pantomime was one of the most popular, enduring and influential theatrical forms in Victorian England. It is a given of our national cultural life and has been part of the experience of virtually every generation of English people since the Industrial Revolution. In particular, our project seeks to investigate a series of substantial and significant research questions:

1. To what extent did pantomime dramatise and highlight contemporary political, social, and cultural issues and events (for example, imperial wars, colonial politics, political disputes, Cabinet politics, crime, and trade). This will include the extent of the influence of pantomime in the colonies, particularly Australia.
2. The extent to which, given theatrical censorship by the Lord Chamberlain's Office, it was possible for pantomime to offer a subversive take on topics otherwise proscribed in 'legitimate' theatre.
3. The depiction of, and changing attitudes towards, masculinity, femininity and gender relations, involving such pantomime institutions as the male dame, and the female principal boy.
4. Regional differences: to what extent did provincial pantomime emulate the metropolitan pantomime and to what extent was it largely local in its appeal and reference points?
5. Class differences: to what extent did West End and East End pantomimes diverge in content, character, subject, and appeal? How did pantomime construct and perform class?
6. What can pantomime tell us about theatre audiences in the Victorian period?
7. What is the place of pantomime in Victorian visual culture, and Victorian history of music and dance?
8. How and why did the structure and nature of pantomime change during the Victorian age?
9. The role of pantomime in the Victorian childhood experience and the participation of child performers in Victorian pantomime.

This project will undertake a wide-ranging study of Victorian pantomime in England, looking at pantomime as a rich vein of cultural history and topical commentary about British society and politics in the Victorian period.

Our conference topics will be:

2010: The Popular Theatre and the 'Sister Arts.'

2011: The Cultural Politics of the Victorian Theatre.

2012: Nation and Empire and the Victorian Theatre

**Our first meeting, planned for 8-10th July, 2010, is in Birmingham, around the theme of Popular Theatre and the Sister Arts. We aim to bring together scholars working specifically in fields of dance, music, costume, dress and performance history with those generally with research interests in theatre history and nineteenth-century popular culture.**

Expressions of interest in this years, or future events, can be directed to Peter Yeandle, History Department, Lancaster. Proposed abstracts of no more than 300 words to be received by 30 April 2010.

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Event website: <http://www.drama.bham.ac.uk/pantomime.shtml>