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**Collection Enhancement Report No. 16 for the V&A, Theatre and Performance
Department (January 2013)**

The Rose

NB: Earlier, the ShaLT Collection Enhancement Reports have used the printed collections at the National Art Library (particularly the unique Dyce Collection) to highlight printed texts in terms of issues such as authorship and genre. However, bearing in mind that the key outreach goal of the AHRC funding for the project was to further public awareness about the actual theatre sites (The Theatre, Blackfriars, and so on) it seems highly appropriate for a series of reports to focus on the actual theatre spaces. Thus, this report highlights the Rose. Indeed, it is envisaged that the T&P Department at the V&A might be able to host a small exhibition of Dyce material in terms of the actual Shakespearean London Playhouses. With this in mind, this report picks-out printed work at the V&A that links to the Rose. This topic should prove interesting to visitors to a potential exhibition because often the title page is the only evidence we have for the performance of a play at a certain location.

The Rose was the first of the Bankside theatres south of the River Thames. It was located on the north side of Maiden Lane (now Park Street), west of Southwark Bridge. This playhouse was opened by entrepreneur Philip Henslowe in 1587 and staged plays until 1604, being dismantled soon after. From 1594 to 1600 the Rose was home to the Admiral's Men, who removed to Henslowe's and actor Edward Alleyn's new theatre, the Fortune, near the modern day Barbican area. They staged plays by Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, and early works by William Shakespeare, including some of his *Henry VI* history plays.

By the late 1580s both the Theatre and the Curtain had been operating successfully for well over ten years, the four inns and Newington Butts were still thriving (we know that

two successful companies played there as late as 1594), and there were four main adult companies operating in parallel to the boy actors of St Paul's and Blackfriars: the Queen's, the Lord Admiral's, Lord Strange's, and Pembroke's Men: four dominant companies with either the patronage of the Queen or of various leading aristocrats.

In 1587 a third large outdoor theatre was built. This was undertaken by businessman and entrepreneur Philip Henslowe. The Rose theatre he built was the first playhouse to appear on Bankside, a Southwark suburb of Surrey similar in many ways to the notorious Shoreditch area where the Theatre and Curtain were located. More is known about the Rose than any other London playhouse because of the extensive archaeological work carried out on its discovered remains in 1989.

By 1587 London playing was evidently attracting enough paying customers for a third playhouse of considerable size to be built and patronised, and the Rose was erected alongside the brothels and bear-baiting arenas of the Bankside, making it easily accessible on foot across London's (only) bridge, or by hired wherry from the north river bank. It staged plays until 1604, having become so popular by 1592 that Henslowe enlarged the stage and yard to serve the increasing numbers of fee-paying spectators. Further evidence that the Rose did well can be found in the story of its leading actor, Edward Alleyn, who went on to set up Dulwich College out of his theatre profits.

For many centuries, only Rose Alley remained to show where this historic building had stood. However, in 1989, the extant remains of the theatre were discovered and partly excavated. After a lively campaign to 'Save the Rose', the area has been preserved for future investigation and an exhibition of the theatre's history is now open to the public there. Early modern plays of both Shakespeare and other playwrights are nowadays regularly performed here. When fund-raising permits, the remaining one third of the site on its eastern side to be

uncovered will be excavated, and in due course it is planned for a fuller playing and audience space to be created.

The Rose and the V&A Collection

The image below (courtesy of the V&A Museum) is taken from the collection's titlepage for Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, a play performed at the Rose in the late 1580s or early 1590s. One final point: Ben Jonson was paid to write additions to *The Spanish Tragedy* on 25 September 1601 and 22 June 1602 and many scholars now think that Shakespeare also wrote additions to the play, different from Jonson's, that first appeared in the play's fourth edition, printed in 1602.

The Spanish Tragedie:

Or,

Hieronimo is mad againe:

Containing the lamentable end of *Don Horatio*, and *Belimperia*,
With the pitt full Death of *Hieronimo*.

Newly corrected, amended, and enlarged with new Additions
as it hath of late beene diuers times Acted.



LONDON.

Printed by John White, for T Langley, and
are to be sould at his Shop ouer against the
Sarazens head without New-gate. 1618.