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**Collection Enhancement Report No. 19 for the V&A, Theatre and Performance  
Department (April 2013)**

**The Hope**

**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 Hope. 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 Hope. 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 Hope was the last outside theatre to be built and the first to have a dual purpose (playing and bear-baiting). It was located at Bankside, Bear Gardens and staged various plays, including Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*. The Hope opened in 1614, seemingly set up by Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn to compete with the newly constructed second Globe in the Jacobean period. However, the idea of an auditorium sharing playing and bear-baiting does not appear to have been successful for too long.

After about 1610 the theatre industry went through a period of stability. The King's Men were well set up with their two playhouses, the Globe and the Blackfriars, while a different type of playing continued to do very well at the Fortune and the Red Bull. The days of the boy companies were numbered, whilst the older Curtain and Swan playhouses

continued in business, unlike the dismantled Theatre and demolished Rose. All of the companies were now patronised by royalty, with a perception developing that the monarchy was protecting and supporting the interests of London theatre.

After 1603, the King's Men had undisputedly gained greater security and status due to their leading position as players to the English monarch, and gave nearly fifty per cent of the court performances. Overall a genuine sense of a successfully consolidating, mature theatrical industry now existing must have prevailed in the capital. Indeed, the subsequent decision of Edward Alleyn and Philip Henslowe to build the Hope in 1614 on Bankside demonstrates a considerable plan to extend their dramatic horizons, since the Fortune was still clearly doing very well. The Hope was the first dual-purpose theatre building: it was a replacement for the old bear-baiting house next door and built for both baiting and theatrical performance. The nearby Globe had burned down in 1613 when the roof thatch caught fire at a performance of Shakespeare and Fletcher's *Henry VIII*, and the contract for the Hope was signed within a month of the Globe's demise, clearly an opportunistic move on the part of Henslowe and Alleyn.

No doubt to their dismay, the King's Men promptly built a new and better Globe theatre on the same site that would remain playing successfully there until 1642. With their success ensured at the Blackfriars, the company had no need to rebuild their amphitheatre playhouse; but the fact that they did suggests that the playhouse was too popular and financially successful not to rebuild it. In its turn, built with a removable stage to facilitate bear-baiting entertainments as well as plays, the Hope began to encounter problems with the dangerous animals and their accompanying smells, so that in the longer term it was withdrawn from playing and remained only for bear-baiting use.

## The Hope and the V&A Collection

The image below (courtesy of the V&A Museum) is taken from the collection's copy of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, a play performed at the Hope in 1614.

