

Actors' role books

Ms. Coll. 1143

Finding aid prepared by Rive Cadwallader.

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University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 December 21

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Anderson, Philip Augustus, 1845-1919
Title	Actors' role books
Call number	Ms. Coll. 1143
Date	[1870]-1878, undated
Extent	0.4 linear feet (1 box)
Language	English
Abstract	This collection of about sixty handwritten actors' role books (1870-1878, undated) provides a glimpse into the world of nineteenth century theater in the United States. The role books seem to have belonged to the actor Philip Augustus Anderson though some were copied by, or on behalf of, other performers of the day including Lotta Crabtree, Laura Keene, Annie Lewis, John Lester Wallack, John Edward McCullough, Joseph Proctor and Lucille Western. Nearly all of the role books are annotated with production notes.

Cite as:

Actors' role books, [1870]-1878, undated, Ms. Coll. 1143, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, University of Pennsylvania

Biography/History

This collection provides a glimpse into the culturally significant world of late nineteenth century American theater. The collection seems to have been composed primarily by Philip Augustus Anderson (1845-1919), an actor who lived first in Philadelphia and then New Jersey. Anderson was married twice (to Annie Jennings in 1869 and Matilda Haines Hagard in 1889) and had eight children. Charlotte Crabtree (1847-1924), more popularly known as Miss Lotta, is mentioned several times in this collection and probably toured with Anderson. A 1909 issue of *The Green Book Magazine* claims that “dear little Lotta, in spite of her unromantic name of Crabtree, charmed McVicker audiences in the ‘70’s and ‘80’s. She possessed a shrewd mamma, and it is due to her management of Lotta’s earnings that the erstwhile soubrette is now ending her days in plenty and peace.” Indeed, Miss Lotta was considered one of the greatest stars of the day, and died with a fortune of \$4,000,000. Other actors whose role books are in this collection include Laura Keene, John Lester Wallack, Annie Lewis, John Edward McCullough, Lucille Western and Joseph Proctor. Laura Keene was present at the assassination of Abraham Lincoln and Lucille Western’s sister was at one point the girlfriend of John Wilkes Booth.

Sources: Lotta Crabtree (1847-1924) San Francisco History. Accessed December 14, 2015

Lotta’s Rival, *The Green Book Magazine* vol. 2 (1909). Accessed December 14, 2015

Philip Augustus Anderson, Ancestry.com. Accessed December 14, 2015,

Scope and Contents

This collection contains nearly sixty actors' role books, which provide the relevant cues, lines and stage directions for one character in a play. The earliest role book in the collection was probably copied on September 9th, 1870 and the latest date of transcription is October 4th, 1878, although there are many undated role books in the collection that could have been completed outside of this timeframe. Almost all of the role books are handwritten, and many are signed by Philip Augustus Anderson ("P. Aug. Anderson" or "Pialphalpha"), a performer who was active in several large cities in the North East of the United States. Other role books were copied by, or on behalf of, about seven celebrated actors of the day. Almost all of the role books include notes and annotations such as phonetic pronunciations of non-English words (found in "Victor Delpius"), two sketches of faces in profile (found in "Adelanta" and "Jacob McCloskey"), lists of props and costumes with their prices (found in "Leveret"), definitions of unusual words (found in "Norfolk"), notes on costume design (found in "The Softy"), and historical information relevant to the play (found in "King Creon" and "Marcus Crassus"). Additionally, most of the role books include symbols like small circles with dots, dashes and crosses to indicate stage directions (for more information, see: Langhans, Edward A., *Eighteenth Century British and Irish Promptbooks: A Descriptive Bibliography*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.) A great many of the role books include the signature of their transcriber, a date, and the city in which they were copied (most commonly Boston but also Baltimore, Albany and Philadelphia). Some books have the name or address of the theater in which the

play was performed, as well as information about other performances that ran simultaneously. The only typewritten book is stamped "H. A. Richardson, Type Writer. 24 West 9th St. N.Y." and has a piece of stationary paper from Merrimac House, a hotel and theater in Lowell, Massachusetts, tucked into it. The role books are arranged alphabetically by character name. The first folder in the collection contains a piece of pasteboard with "A Catalogue of Written Parts" written on it, and an inventory of some of the role books. There is an untitled page of notes (lines in French with their English translations underneath) and an untitled role book at the end of the collection.

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts

2015 December 21

Finding aid prepared by Rive Cadwallader.

Access Restrictions

This collection is open for research use.

Use Restrictions

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Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Prompt books

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Annie Lewis, 1869–1896
- Crabtree, Lotta, 1847-1924
- Keene, Laura, 1826-1873
- McCullough, John, 1832-1885
- Proctor, Joseph, 1816-1897
- Wallack, Lester, 1820-1888
- Western, Lucille, 1843-1877

SUBJECT(S)

- Actors
- Theater rehearsals
- Theater--United States--19th century

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
"A Catalogue of Written Parts", undated.	1	1
"Adelanta" in <i>Musette</i> , copy 1, [1870] September 9.	1	2
"Adelanta" in <i>Musette</i> , copy 2, 1878.	1	2
"Alfred Marston" in <i>Plazer Queen</i> , undated.	1	2
"Anatole Latour" in <i>Husband to Order</i> , undated.	1	2
"Barry Mallison" in <i>The Little Detective</i> , undated.	1	2
"Blackburn" in <i>Poverty Flat</i> , undated.	1	2

"Bobstay" in <i>Spitfire</i> , undated.	1	2
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"Captain Grindley Goodge" in <i>Flying Scud</i> , 1875 November 4.	1	3
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"Colonel Cavendish May" in <i>Rosedale</i> , 1875 March 12.	1	3
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"Colonel Chateauroy" in <i>Fire-Fly</i> , undated.	1	3
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"Cortier" in <i>Louis XI</i> , undated.	1	3
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"Count de Lagrange" in <i>Fascination</i> , copy 1, undated.	1	3
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"Count de Lagrange" in <i>Fascination</i> , copy 2, undated.	1	3
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"Dunstan" in <i>The Span of Life</i> , copy 1, undated.	1	3
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"Dunstan" in <i>The Span of Life</i> , copy 2, undated.	1	3
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"Duverne" in <i>Dominique the Deserter</i> , undated.	1	3
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"Giametta" in <i>Viva</i> , undated.	1	4
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"Ham Peggotty" in <i>Little Emily</i> , 1875 November 14.	1	4
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"Harold Hawk" in <i>Harold Hawk</i> , undated.	1	4
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"Harris", undated.	1	4
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"Horace Holmcroft" in <i>The New Magdalen</i> , 1878 October 4.	1	4
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"Jacob McCloskey" in <i>The Octoroon</i> , undated.	1	5
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"Jasper Lago" in <i>House with Green Blinds</i> , undated.	1	5
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"Jessie Gray" in <i>Harold Hawk</i> , undated.	1	5
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"Joe Neckett" in <i>Romany Rye</i> , undated.	1	5
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"John Leigh" in <i>Hunted Down</i> , undated.	1	5
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"Joseph Darlington" in <i>Youth</i> , undated.	1	5
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"Jules Galletti" in <i>Zip</i> , 1878 July.	1	5
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"King Creon" in <i>Medea</i> , undated.	1	6
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"King Henry" in <i>Ambition</i> , 1872 November 5 or 6.	1	6
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"Laube" in <i>Folline</i> , undated.	1	6
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"Leveret" in <i>Harold Hawk</i> , copy 1, undated.	1	6
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"Leveret" in <i>Harold Hawk</i> , copy 2, undated.	1	6
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"Lord Fitz Arnold" in <i>Metamora</i> , 1876 January 22.	1	6
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"Lord Mount Severn" in <i>East Lynne</i> , undated.	1	6
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"Lord Say in <i>Jack Cade</i> , copy 1, 1876 January 11.	1	6
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"Lord Say in <i>Jack Cade</i> , copy 2, probably 1878.	1	6
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"Marcus Crassus" in <i>The Gladiator</i> , 1876 January 13.	1	6
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"Mordy" and "Allcraft" in <i>Lottery of Life</i> , undated.	1	6
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"Noah Learoyd" in <i>The Long Strike</i> , copy 1, undated.	1	6
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"Noah Learoyd" in <i>The Long Strike</i> , copy 2, undated.	1	6
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"Norfolk" in <i>Henry VIII</i> , undated.	1	6
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"Philip Darcy" in <i>Musette</i> , undated.	1	7
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"Philip Hastings" in <i>Farmer Hathaway's Daughter</i> , undated.	1	7
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"Pierre" in <i>The Two Orphans</i> , undated.	1	7
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"Prince Gonzague" in <i>The Duke's Motto</i> , 1878 August 29.	1	7
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"Prince Perousky" in <i>Ours</i> , 1875 March 17.	1	7
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"Rene" in <i>Paola</i> , undated.	1	7
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"Simon Renard" in <i>Twixt Axe and Crown</i> , 1875 February 20.	1	7
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"Sir Edward Ashton" in <i>Sam</i> , 1875 May 4.	1	7
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"Smailey" in <i>Charity</i> , undated.	1	7
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"The Softy" in <i>Aurora Floyd</i> , undated.	1	8
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"Uncle Peterkill" in <i>On a Lark</i> , copy 1, undated.	1	8
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"Uncle Peterkill" in <i>On a Lark</i> , copy 2, undated.	1	8
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"Uncle Peterkill" in <i>On a Lark</i> , copy 3, undated.	1	8
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"Walter Wilding" in <i>No Thoroughfare</i> , undated.	1	8
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Untitled French phrases with translation, undated.	1	9
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Untitled role book, undated.	1	9
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