



Contemporary prints of two London theatre disasters, reproduced as Theatre Museum Postcards: (above) The start of the Covent Garden Fire of 1856 and (below) The collapse of the Brunswick Theatre in 1828, caused by the walls being too weak to support the iron roof.



designs,, photographs, programmes, critiques, posters, ephemera generally. These are the sort of items that would set the costume designs more clearly in the context of the ballets and their performances.

When a costume print includes some small stage details it seems to gain impact. For example, the print of Auguste Vestris (with scenic wings and backcloth) gains reality from a luminous quality that conveys the precise effect of low lighting angles from close sources. And another print comes to life because it includes enough pit to show the faces of three wind players. Rowlandson's *The Prospect Before Us* sets Georgian ballet precisely in its architectural and social perspective.

An enjoyable afternoon and I shall return before the exhibition's July 26th closure.

Although the Theatre Museum collections are not currently accessible to casual visitors, the V & A's shop is an obligatory

theatric tourist trap. Lots of low price, high quality postcards of delightful prints. And *Theatre Museum Cards* – a series of A4 cards which were published in 1976-78 on such varying subjects as The Music hall, Restoration Drama, German Experimental Theatre, The Old Price Riots, Ivor Novello, Revue, Garrick's Contemporaries, and theatres such as the Lyceum, Drury Lane, Royal Court, Haymarket, etc, etc. Good basic information, illustrations and suggestions for further reading. My own collection goes as far as number 70.

Roll on the Theatre Museum opening day in Covent Garden. I shall be standing there, waiting for early doors.

P.S.

As a theatre manager, I can confirm that the Theatre Museum's archivists are persistent in their collection of today's theatre programmes on behalf of tomorrow's historians.

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