English Actors in Kassel, Germany, during Shakespeare’s Time

JUNE SCHLUETER

With the sequential publication of the Records of Early English Drama project and its compelling inquiry into provincial touring companies in England, scholars interested in performance in early modern England are recognizing the need for a fuller picture than that provided by the study of the London stage. The argument of R.E.E.D. is that the organization and activities of English companies on tour, as well as those in London, need to be investigated to illuminate both. That argument, in fact, needs to be extended in order to capture the full reach of the activity that was once thought particular to the London stage. For in the years covering Shakespeare’s career, and beyond, English actors regularly toured Europe, performing plays whose titles, in many cases, duplicated or suggested those that were performed in England. In his magisterial The Elizabethan Stage, E. K. Chambers noted the many lacunae in our knowledge of the composition, repertory, and stage practices of these continental troupes. Nearly seventy-five years later, despite the assiduous archival work of a small band of scholars, Chambers’ observation holds.

My own interest in English actors on the continent during Shakespeare’s time has focused on Kassel, Germany, where Landgrave Moritz, an ardent supporter of the arts, regularly hosted English actors at court. The narrative that follows adds to a synthesis of previously published information (much of it in German) the confirmations and insights derived from my work in the Landes- und Munhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel and the Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg. The essay brings together widely scattered primary and secondary historical and dramatic materials, making the information they hold readily accessible to English and American scholars interested in an extended view of performance in Shakespeare’s time.

Moritz the Learned presided as landgrave of Hesse for thirty-five years. At the time of his installation in 1592, the relationship between
that German principality and England was already secure. An extant letter from Ludwig L. zu Hessen to Queen Elizabeth dated Marburg, 12 April 1581, for example, commends one Heinrich Westphal, who, after years of service in the German court, was retiring to undertake foreign travel and to purchase some English horses for the landgrave. The opening lines of that letter speak of the queen’s former hospitality: “Whenever we think, which is often, of your and your father’s kindness to us and our father and our brothers, we cannot but consider how we may show our regard for you. Hitherto we have not been able, though we hope you have no doubt of our good will.” When Count Mümppelgart (Frederick, the duke of Württenburg) embarked on foreign travels in 1592, his first stop was Kassel, where Landgrave Wilhelm IV of Hesse (Landgrave Moritz’s father) provided him with a letter of introduction to the English queen. The count had two audiences with Elizabeth in Reading, then spent three days with her in Windsor, where they hunted and engaged in other amusements and where he was promised the Order of the Garter. In 1590, Landgrave Moritz’s friend Heinrich Julius of Braunschweig, also host to English actors, married Elisabeth, daughter of Frederick II of Denmark, whose other daughter, Anne, had married James VI of Scotland (later James I of England) in 1589.

In 1611, Landgrave Moritz’s son, Otto, traveled to England at the invitation of the prince of Wales, who, like the prince of Hesse, was seventeen at the time. Otto was honorably entertained by the king, the queen, the prince, the earl of Lincoln, and others and received a number of gifts, including a jewel with 120 diamonds, four horses, a crossbow, a buck, and a cormorant for catching fish. A poem written by a Scotsman, William Fennor, “His Maiesties Seruant,” records his regard for both the Prince and his father:

Yong Prince of Hesson is the first must enter,  
to act his vertues on the worlds Theater;  
Tis hard to finde a yong man on earth’s center,  
that is a vertue lover and vice hater,  
Old Landsgraves glasse hath many houres to runne,  
whil’st all his virtues liveth in the Sonne.4

A sure sign of goodwill between Protestant Hesse and England was the gesture on the part of Moritz upon the birth of his daughter, whom he named after Queen Elizabeth and to whom the queen became godmother. In August 1596 the landgrave received the earl of Lincoln (Henry Clinton) as the queen’s representative, along with an entourage
that included one Robert Browne and a "John Webster" (actually George Webster). Edward Monings, an Englishman among the visitors, recorded his impressions of the landgrave, characterizing him as a "perfect man . . . and a most perfect Prince." Wilhelm Dilich briefly describes the tournaments, the fireworks (60,000 rockets), and the pageantry that comprised the baptismal festivities in Hessische Chronica (published 1605), promising (and delivering) a more extensive description in Beschreibung und Abrisse dero Ritterspiel (published 1602).

It is not surprising that the landgrave would indulge in lavish display, for on the Continent, as in England, jousts, tilts, races, pageants, music, dancing, and dramatic performances were a customary part of such noble family affairs. The Fugger Newsletters, for example, document the christening of the daughter of the elector of Saxony in Dresden in 1591, an event cosponsored by Landgrave Moritz, the old duke of Braunschweig (Philip), and a Count von Rolinz. There, the reporter writes, the tilting ground at the palace was "prepared in such magnificent and gay fashion, as I have never beheld before. . . . between the arches and the lists there have been dug into the ground about one hundred mighty and lofty firs. These were daintily hung with fine oranges, pomegranates, large pumpkins and other luscious fruit." Following processions of miners and huntsmen, who made "beautiful music, singing and blowing their horns," the huntsmen released a cage of animals: bears, boars, wolves, lynxes, foxes, hares, other small animals, and fowl; whoever caught an animal was entitled to keep it. Jousts continued for four days, and the "races were run for money." At a royal wedding in Cracow, Poland, in 1592, a masquerade costing over 60,000 ducats was the main attraction. Fifty persons appeared with faces disguised, the queen performed Italian dances, and a masque featuring gold-embroidered robes was presented. The bridal coach, drawn by six black and six white bears (the white bears were "made to dance") and followed by a coach drawn by six stags, was escorted to the palace by burgesses and merchants in colorful German dress and by nobility on horseback. Given Landgrave Moritz's well-known love for music and drama and his patronage of the arts, it is not surprising to find in Dilich's Beschreibung a detailed record of the baptismal event and similar celebrations.

The procession of pageant-wagons at the baptismal event appears to have been comparable to those of Royal Entries or Lord Mayor's Shows in England. Dilich records the theme of each of the eight wagons and the number of people who were part of the display. Wagon 1 presented Jason and Perseus, with twenty-five people. Wagon 2, pre-
ceded by two horses—one whose cover depicted sins of the flesh (card playing, dicing, gaming, drinking), the other whose cover was decorated with deathheads—featured figures of deadly—and other—sins, including Cupid, the dangerous love god. Wagons 3 and 4 showed the four seasons and the four elements, with seventeen and twenty people, respectively. Wagon 5 presented the son and the moon, with twelve people; wagon 6 the Judgment of Paris, with six people; wagon 7 Apollo at Parnassus with the nine Muses. And wagon 8—the most spectacular—presented the four parts of the world, with seventy people.

Landgrave Moritz was involved in entertainments of another kind as well, more germane to our interest. Like his father, Moritz was attracted to the drama, himself having acted as a boy and, as an adult, having written a number of plays. Moritz's major contribution to drama in Germany, however, took the form of patronage of English actors, for whom he provided one of the earliest professional homes on the Continent and for whom, in 1604–6, he built a permanent theater.

Two of Moritz's employment contracts with English actors are extant, one with Robert Browne, the best known of the Continental actor/managers, the other with Philip Kingsman. Though neither is dated, it is likely that they were drawn at the same time, probably in the mid-1590s. Each admits the English actor into his service, "Robertum Braun" as a comedian and musician, "Philipss Kinigsmann" as a comedian. The Kingsman contract is of particular interest in its expression of the landgrave's desire that performances of plays, whether provided by Moritz or by the Englishman, be in English. The Browne contract includes the responsibility of training one or more boys, local or foreign. The agreement specifies that Browne will not travel without the landgrave's permission and that he will be loyal, obedient, and worthy. He and the boys will receive monetary payment (specified in terms of an annual salary) and two special outfits of clothing, as well as food from the kitchen master and the fruit specialist.

It is not surprising to find Browne in the employ of Landgrave Moritz, for the English actor spent a significant portion of his career on the Continent. In 1585, he was part of the earl of Leicester's theatrical entourage to the Low Countries, and his name appears in numerous Continental records between 1590 and 1620. There is a record of a 1590 performance in Leyden, before the mayor; Browne and his company were to perform "verscheyden comedien ende historien" ("divers comedies and histories") as well as "verscheyden sprongen"
("divers leaps"), for which they were to be paid an additional fifteen guilders.\textsuperscript{11} Browne's name, along with those of Thomas Sackville, John Bradstreet, and Richard Jones, "auz leurs consorutz estantz mes Joueurs et seruiteurs" (with their consort of my players and servants) appears on a passport dated 10 February 1591 and signed by the Lord Admiral; the actors wished to travel to Germany, via Zealand, Holland, and Friesland, to perform comedies, tragedies, and histories.\textsuperscript{12} The actors are recorded, by name, in Arnhem in 1592.\textsuperscript{13} On 20 June 1592, a troupe of English actors—Schrickx argues they are Browne's—performs at the Braunschweig court of Heinrich Julius, where Browne's name and others appear in later records (Schrickx believes—and he is probably correct—that Wolfenbüttel was the planned destination of the passport holders).\textsuperscript{14} Shortly afterwards, on 30 August 1592, Browne appeared, with the "etliche frembde Komödi­anten aus England," at the fall fair in Frankfurt, where they performed plays by Christopher Marlowe and \textit{Gammer Gurton's Needle}.\textsuperscript{15} It is these actors whom Fynes Moryson's \textit{Itinerary} characterizes as "some of our cast dispised Stage players," who came out of England into Germany, and played at Franckford in the tyme of the Mart, hauing nether a Complete number of Actours, nor any good Apparel, nor any ornament of the Stage, yet the Germans, nether understanding a worde they sayde, both men and wemen, flocked wonderfully to see therei gesture and Action, rather than heare them, speaking English which they understooode not, and pronouncing peeces and Patches of English playes, which my selfe and some English men there present could not heare without great wearysomenes.\textsuperscript{16}

His attitude does not appear to have been shared by Germans, who apparently enjoyed the entertainment. Balthasar Paumgartner the Younger, from Nuremberg, wrote to his wife on 13 September 1592, praising the English comedians' performance; he was greatly impressed with their music and their talents at leaping and dancing.\textsuperscript{17} Similar approval is expressed by the writer of a 1597 poem, who delights in the fool's excellent jokes, the skill of the clown, and the leaper's art; though the writer admits that not everyone is disposed to such entertainment, he observes that many take pleasure in seeing the English play:

\begin{verbatim}
Dann nicht alle, versteht mich recht,
Hineyn zu diesem Spiele gehn,
Die lustige Comedien Zsehen.
Oder der Music vnd Saitenspiel,
\end{verbatim}
ENGLISH ACTORS IN KASSEL, GERMANY

Zu gefallen, sonder jhr viel
Wegen des Narren groben Bossen,
Vnd des Springers gatten Hosen.

[For all men, understand me right,
Do not unto this play repair
At merry comedies to stare,
Or for the music and the lute,
But very many of them do't
To see the fool's coarse jokes and blows
And leaper's tightly-fitting hose.]18

"Robert Braun, Thomas Sachsweil, vnd Johan Bradenstreit et Consorten" reappear at the Frankfurt fair in August 1593, petitioning to perform, in English, "die Comödia von Abraham und Loth und vom Untergang von Sodom und Gomora beneben andersen Künsten."19 Browne returned to England, apparently upon receiving word that his wife and children had died of the plague in Shoreditch in September 1593. On 7 March 1593/94, Browne remarried one Cicely Sands.20

Until this time, there is no mention of Browne's being associated with Landgrave Moritz or of the landgrave's keeping a company of English actors. But it is probable that by 1594—and surely by 1595—Moritz was hosting such a group and that Browne had a Kassel connection. Chambers brings attention to a warrant dated 16 April 1595 permitting the export to Kassel of bows and arrows that Browne had been sent to England to fetch.21 In 1594, "englische Komödianten" performed at Wilhelmsburg in Schmalkalden, which was under the landgrave's jurisdiction.22

In 1595, Moritz wrote to John Lucanus, his agent in Prague, that his Komödianten were travelling and that they should be welcomed should they come to Prague.23 In 1597, actors claiming to be in the service of the landgrave of Hesse appear in Groningen "to the great satisfaction of the authorities of that city."24 Also in 1597, Landgrave Moritz lent Landgrave Ludwig of Marburg costumes and properties in order that the comedy of the Old Potentates might be performed, noting that he himself might attend their performance.25 Moreover, account books from 1597 and 1598, when Moritz stayed in Weisenstein, Rotenburg, Melsungen, and other neighboring courts, reveal purchases of various items for the English Komödianten, including boards for the stage, white woollen cloth for the Englishmen, white clothes for the clown, and shoes for the Fool, as well as payments to George Webster and other English actors.26 And Erhardus Cellius noted, in 1595, that English companies in Germany that had arrived
a few years earlier "remained for some time at the courts of great princes; their skill both in music and in the histrionic art having procured them such favour that they returned home liberally rewarded, and loaded with gold and silver." 

Moritz's Komödianten may well have been the Browne troupe destined for Germany (Wolfenbüttel?) in 1592 and/or the Browne troupe referred to in the contract, but, absent the date of the employment agreement, it is difficult to say with certainty when Moritz engaged him. Between Browne's remarriage in March 1594 and mention of him and John Wobster in conjunction with the earl of Lincoln's visit to Kassel in August 1596, Browne is cited in connection with the bow and arrow consignment of 16 April 1595, and his name appears in a Wolfenbüttel reference dated 18 August 1595. That entry speaks of Browne's having left behind in Wolfenbüttel an English youth, one Anthony Jeffes.

Wholly aside from the valuable information about the presence of English boy actors on the Continent, which this entry and the Browne contract provide, the reference raises the question of when Browne left Jeffes behind. Was Jeffes with Browne at Wolfenbüttel in 1592 (assuming the English actors at court were Browne's troupe), and did Jeffes remain there at least until 1595? Or might the reference hint at a stop at Wolfenbüttel in 1594 or 1595 to deposit Jeffes at the court of Heinrich Julius before he himself headed to Landgrave Moritz's court in Kassel (where he appears for the August 1596 baptism festivities for the landgrave's daughter)?

Henslowe's Diary includes another provocative item: the record of money lent since 14 October 1596 to Edward Alleyn, Martin Slater, James Donstall, and Juby "to feache browne." If this is the Robert Browne who was in the service of the landgrave, then where were these men to fetch him: did Browne return to England shortly after the August baptism, to be fetched upon landing?

If the Henslowe's Diary reference to Browne in late 1596 is to the Continental actor Robert Browne, then Browne was apparently back in England by then. If Browne returned to England, it may have been to recruit actors for Landgrave Moritz's court. This could help explain the 1597 appearance in Groningen of actors claiming to be in the service of the landgrave of Hesse. The Browne troupe referred to in the 1591/92 passport intended to pass through Zealand, Holland, and Friesland en route to Germany and, as the Arnhem record confirms, they performed along the way. Browne may have followed a similar route upon his return to the Continent in 1597. Or, depending on the date of the employment agreement, Browne's task may have been to
fetch the two boys referred to in the contract. Browne’s whereabouts in 1597 and his connection to Landgrave Moritz are memorialized in a warrant dated Greenwich, 11 July 1597, “for an order to the officers of ports to suffer Rob. Browne, servant to the Landgrave of Hesse, to transport 100 long-bows, 2,000 bow-strings, and 3,000 arrows for the Landgrave, without payment of custom.” In addition, there is a cryptic reference to Browne in a 22 October 1597 letter from Georg Webster to the landgrave; the reference suggests that Webster, who, with others in the service of the landgrave, was fleeing an outbreak of the plague in Germany and writing from Amsterdam, had been in recent contact with Browne.

The “fürstlich hessischen Komödianten und Musikanten,” a letter of recommendation from Landgrave Moritz in hand, appeared in Frankfurt for the Easter fair in 1600. Browne is not named, but “Georg Webster” is, along with “Johann Hüll” and “Reichard Machin.” The same three appear in the Frankfurt record one year later, in March. On that occasion, three English troupes asked for and received permission to perform: one was Webster’s (identified as the “fürstlich hessischen Komödianten”), a second consisted of “Robertus Browne,” “Robertus Kingmann,” and “Robertus Ledbetter”; “Johannes Buscheten (Johan Bouset)” [Sackville?] is also mentioned as a member of the company whom the others were expecting. The “fürstlich hessischen Komödianten und Musikanten” (actors’ names not recorded) reappear at the Frankfurt fall fair in 1601, remaining for four weeks.

In the early years of the seventeenth century, the actors identified with Moritz’s sponsorship were apparently touring in splinter groups. According to E. Herz’s map of the travels of the English actors between 1590 and 1620, Browne’s troupe appeared in Leyden, Wolfenbüttel, Frankfurt, Cologne, Nuremberg, Kassel, Schmalkalden, Prague, Augsburg, Milchsungen, Heidelberg, Stuttgart, Strasburg, Munich, Ulm, Memmingen, and Nordlingen; other researchers have added Passau, Regensburg, Groningen, Ghent, Lille, Gdansk, Graz, Vienna, and a number of other locations. These and other municipal records indicate the presence of actors once identified with the Hessen court—with or without Browne.

Several entries at Frankfurt further confuse the question of troupe composition and the landgrave’s sponsorship. In September 1602, Robert Browne is at the Frankfurt fair with his company and “Robert Jonas.” In 1603, he shows up at Easter with a troupe in Frankfurt, as does Webster. “Richard Mackum,” “Georg Webster,” and “Rudolphus Reeffe” are clearly identified as Hessen actors, but Browne is not—
unless the appellation was intended to refer to both groups. Browne is referred to in an entry for the fall fair that year, when “Thomas Blackreude” and “Johannes Fheer,” identified as actors who had been in Browne’s company the previous year, petitioned on their own to play. If Browne is to be identified with the “alten Komödianten,” then he was at the fall fair in Frankfurt in early September of 1604. Two weeks later, he appeared with a troupe of English actors at Fontainbleau and in Paris, performing for Henry IV and the four-year-old dauphin and remaining for at least three months. (It should be noted that Browne, along with John Green and Robert Ledbetter, also showed up in Lille in 1603, a city to which Browne, with unnamed others, returned in 1605.)

In August 1606, “Robert Braun,” with fifteen persons, including “Johan Grün,” “Robert Ledbetter,” and “Andere Fürsliche Hessische Commoedianten” who had appeared at previous fairs, applied to play in Frankfurt. Similarly, in March 1607, the appellation was used once again when “Robert Braun vndt Johan Grün, Fürstliche Hessische Comoenianten von Cassel,” requested permission to perform in Frankfurt. In 1608 and 1609, the Frankfurt record indicates that those “so von Cassel kummen” actors under the direction of “Rudolphus Riweus” played at both the Easter and the fall fairs. And in 1610, 1612, and 1613, the entries for the Frankfurt fairs once again read “fürstlich hessischen Komödianten und Musikanten.”

After 1613, Mentzel finds no specific reference in Frankfurt to the Hessen troupes. Browne and company, for example, appear at the fair in 1618 and 1620, but the record does not identify them with Hesse. The 1618 entry, just before the fall fair, speaks of Browne’s having returned from London with new plays. A later reference—almost certainly after Browne’s death (see Appendix)—speaks of Englischen Komödianten who were previously under the direction of Robert Browne and who, in 1626, despite the dangerous war [The Thirty Years War, begun in 1618], came directly from England, performed in Cologne, and wished to be received in Frankfurt.

The fluid composition of the troupes may, on the one hand, suggest ad hoc grouping necessitated by waning patron support. Or, on the other, it may suggest that Landgrave Moritz kept an unusually large cadre of actors, who, depending on the repertory or even on personal preference, would reconstitute themselves. Two entries in the Strasbourg record in 1605 speak to the size of the Kassel companies, both referring to groups—one led by “Richardus Mechimus” and the other by “Rudolphus Riuius”—that had been at the court of Landgrave Moritz for four years. Since the entries on Machin’s company, dated
11 May 1605, and Reeve's, dated 19 June 1605, each refer to twenty-four comedians and to the troupe's four years' service with the landgrave, they may have been the same company.41

In Kassel during these early years of the seventeenth century, there is conflicting evidence regarding Landgrave Moritz's patronage. The Chronik of August [Wilhelm?] Buch of Hesse-Darmstadt contains a reference, dated 1625, that suggests the landgrave had dismissed costly English dancers and jumpers in 1602.42 A second reference, a letter dated 1 March 1607 to Moritz from Johann Eckel, an official at his court, speaks of the dissatisfaction of the English actors (whether genuine or in jest he could not say) with their pay and their plan to make Of the Two British Kings at War, of Whom the One Takes the Son of the Other, but the Latter the Daughter of the Former, Prisoner their last Kassel production if the compensation was not improved.43

But in 1609, John Sigismund, elector of Brandenburg, asked to borrow Landgrave Moritz's comedians for four weeks in order that they might participate in the marriage ceremony of his brother from Strasbourg,44 confirming that the landgrave still kept a company of actors at court. Moreover, a number of other references to the Hessen comedians still appear. In 1609, “Hessische Musikanten und Comödianten” were recorded in Stuttgart. In October 1612, English comedians “so mit herrn landgraff Moritz von Hessen” appeared in Ansbach at the wedding festivities of Markgrave Joachim Ernst of Brandenburg; later that month, “etliche Engelländer Landgrafen des zu Cassel in Hessen bestallte Comödianten” performed in Nuremberg.45 And in 1612, Landgrave Moritz, while in Frankfurt to attend the coronation of Kaiser Mathias of Hungary, warmly recommended the “fürstlich hessischen Comödianten und Musikanten”; in order to respect a mourning period for Kaiser Rudolf, the town delayed granting the permit until the fall fair, giving permission for the company to perform at the Easter festivities the following year as well.46 That Landgrave Moritz maintained actors at court as late as 1612 is confirmed by Thomas Heywood's “Apology for Actors”:

At the entertainment of the Cardinall Alphonsus, and the Infant of Spaine in the Low-countryes, they were presented at Antwerpe, with sundry pageants and playes: the King of Denmarke [Christian IV], father to him that now reigneth [Frederick II], entertained into his service, a company of English Comedians, commended vnto him by the honourable the Earle of Leicester: the Duke of Brounswicke, and the Landsgrafe of Hessen retaine in their Courts certaine of ours, of the same quality.47
The best evidence of Moritz's commitment to the English actors would seem to be his construction of the Ottoneum. That theater, which still stands as a museum of natural history, although in altered form, was Germany's first permanent theater, built for performances by students of the Hof- and Ritterschule and by English actors in Landgrave Moritz's service; it was named after the landgrave’s son Otto. There are several references to the theater from the seventeenth century. The first, from 1611, records Humpert von Langan’s experience:

Auf den Abend (Montag den 2. Decbr.) ward wine Komedia von Tarquinio und Lucretia, in einem schönen Theatro, so sonderlich auf die alte Römische Art darzu gebauet, und etliche tausend Menschen darinnen sein, und alle Zusehen können, agirt.

[That evening (Monday, December 2) a comedy, Tarquinio and Lucretia, was acted out in a beautiful theater, which was designed very much according to the old Roman style and several thousand people were within it and all were able to watch the play.] 48

Martin Zeiller’s Topographia Hassiae, et Regionum Vicinarum (1646/1659) describes the building:

Ferners ist das Ottonium, oder comoedi Hauß / so sehr hoch von Steinen / inwendig gleich einem in die runde gebauten Schauspiel-Platz / ohne Säul / oder Pfeiler / auffgeführt / daß aber nunmehr / in dem Kriegswesen / eines theils zur Soldaten Kirche / das ander aber zum Gießhauß gebraucht worden.

[The Ottoneum or comedy house is constructed so very high, of stone-work, the inside like a place of drama built in the round without columns or pilasters. But now, in warfare, one part was being used as a church for soldiers, the other as a foundry.] 49

Following a visit to Kassel, the marquis de Monconys described the palace area in a journal published in 1666:

au deuant du Palais, il y a vn tres beau manegge découuert, au fond duquel, il y a vn couuert, & vn grand bastiment à droite fait pour les Comedies, & qui sert de Temple à present.

[In front of the palace, there is a very beautiful tiltyard, beside which there is a shelter and a large building made for comedies, and which serves as a temple at present.] 50
Finally, Rudolf Roth, a magistrate from Ulm, describing the Ottoneum before its remodeling in 1696, speaks of

Die Reit-Schul / welche an das Schloß stösset / ist herrlich / mit 2 Gallerien / eine über die andere umfangen / so in Form eines halben Mondes gemacht / und vergüldet / davon man das Ringel-Rennen und Pferd Thurnier sehen kan. Um dieselbe herum seynd allerhand schöne Brunnen / und dahinter ist der Sall / für die Comodedianten und Balleten / mit einem Amphi-Theatro für sehr viele Leute.

[The riding school adjacent to the palace is splendid, with two galleries, one enveloping the other, in the form of a half moon, and gold trimmed, wherein one can see riding at the ring and horse tournaments. In this same round are beautiful fountains and behind it is a hall for players and ballet dancers with an amphitheater for a great many people.]51

Graham Adams has done an excellent job of reconstructing the Ottoneum verbally and pictorially through the numerous surviving construction orders, reports, letters, and maps in the Kassel and Marburg archives. Adams describes the theater as an odd-shaped trapezium, with interior space measuring 9,095.89 square feet. The exterior height of the south wall was 29 ft. 11 in. At its greatest width, the inside ceiling spanned an impressive 88 ft. 11 in., with no supporting pillars. There were four arched rows of benches and an orchestra. The theater had three entrances, one for the lords, one for the players, and one for the commoners, the latter accessible after a twenty-three step climb. The stage, which was at the east end of the building, measured 43 ft. 1½" wide and 21 ft. 6¾" deep. Above it was an attic with two traps, below a cellarage accessible from the stage through a trap door. A surviving letter from Landgrave Moritz to Hans Heinrich von Siegerodt and Adam Müller, dated 21 February 1605, establishes the presence of trapdoors, a scene wall, and a backstage area between the scena and the players’ entrance:

Im Theatro sollet Ihr zwo Lauchen machenn lassenn davon die erste zwolff schuh lang undt 6 schuh breidt angelegt undt hinden uber der Scena an der wandt gemacht werdenn soll, die zweite soll mitten uber daß prosce­nium funff schuh in die Vierung gemacht werdenn . . .

Gebenn zu Marpurgk den 21n Februarij Ao 1605

[In the theater you are to have two trapdoors made, the first of which should be designed twelve feet long and six feet wide and placed at the
wall at the back above the scene, the second should be placed midway above the proscenium five feet into the intersection.

Given at Marburg the 21 February anno 1605

The floor of the stage was wooden, the ceiling above the stage, with its traps, was made of canvas, the remaining ceiling was covered with a canvas velarium; 475 amphitheatrical bench seats were covered with red stone tiles; approximately 150 seats in the orchestra were covered with white stones.

Landgrave Moritz, accomplished as an artist and in city planning, apparently assisted in the design of the building. On a trip to France in 1602, he visited the “monumens d'architecture,” including the sites of Roman amphitheaters as well as theaters at Arles, Nîmes, Orange, and Paris. It may well be that he also consulted descriptions of English theaters or even a plan for one of them, for, as Adams points out, there are distinct similarities between the Ottoneum and the Fortune—and the landgrave did, after all, have the English actors in mind.

Built by Dutch architect/builder Wilhelm Vernuken, who had been in the employ of Landgrave Wilhelm since 1577, the Ottoneum respected Vitruvian precepts of symmetry; the interior circle is evident in Adams's drawing. Adams concludes that this is “essentially an English theater which a fortuitous set of circumstances caused to be erected in Germany.”

Given the uniqueness of the theater in Germany, one would expect the performance record to be reasonably full. But as yet, relatively few references to plays performed there have been uncovered. The English actors' complaint about salary in 1607 refers to The Two British Kings at War, which may or may not have been presented at the Ottoneum, and von Langan's travel account speaks of a performance of Tarquin and Lucrece. Two plays written by Landgrave Moritz, Otto the Protector and The Reward of Fear of God, were performed in Kassel, but the record does not clearly place them within the Ottoneum. Plays in the repertory of Browne and others associated with Kassel, including those of Green's company, which later performed in Graz, and those plays included in a 1620 anthology at Leipzig may have been performed at Kassel as well, but here inference, for the time being, must satisfy. Christiane Engelbrecht has prepared the following inventory of plays definitely, probably, and possibly performed in Kassel; I offer it not necessarily as the most reliable catalogue but as the most conveniently arranged. (As needed, I have provided translations in brackets.)

Definitely performed:
Comoedia von Abraham und Loth und vom Untergang von Sodom und Gomorrah [Comedy of Abraham and Lot and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah]

Fortunatus
Comoedia vom König auss England und Schottland wie die beiden gegen einand krieg führten, ca der eine des Andern Sohn der Ander des andern tochter gefangen hatte [Comedy of the King of England and Scotland, how the two waged war against each other, and the son of one and the daughter of the other were imprisoned]

Von einem König aus England, der sich in eines Goldschmidts Weib verliebte und sie enführte [Of a King of England who fell in love with a goldsmith's wife and abducted her]

Comoedie vom verlorenen Sohn [Comedy of the prodigal son]

Von einer frommen Frauen von Antwof [Of a pious woman of Antwerp]

Von dem doctor Faustus

Von ein Herzog von Florenz, der sich in sines Edelmanns Tochter verliebt hat [Of a duke of Florence who fell in love with a nobleman's daughter]

Von Niemandts und Jemand [Of Nobody and Somebody]

Von dem Juden [Of the Jew]

Von den zwei Brüdern König Ludwig und König Friedrich von Ungarn. Hats der König Friedrich als errstochen und ermordet [Of the two brothers King Ludwig and King Frederick of Hungary. King Frederick had all stabbed and murdered]

Von ein König Friedrich von ein Herzog von Venedig [Of a King Frederick, of a Duke of Venice]

Von dem reichen Mann und von dem Lazarus [Of a rich man and of Lazarus]

Comoedi aus dem Amadis [Comedy of Amadis (of Gaul?)]

Probably performed:

Comoedia Otto Schutz [Comedy Otto Schutz (written by the Landgrave Moritz)]

Die Belohnung der Gottesfurcht [The Reward of the Godfearing]

Ariodante und Ginevra

Komedia von Tarquinio und Lukretia

Speculum aestheticum

Perhaps performed:

Vincentius Ladislaus, Satrap von Mantua (written by Heinrich Julius of Braunschweig)
Romeo and Julia
Viel Lärm um Nichts [Much Ado About Nothing]
Komödie der Irrungen [Comedy of Errors]
Spanish Tragedy
Sidonia und Theagenes
Julius und Hypolita
Titus Andronicus

Clearly, more research is necessary to expand our knowledge of the repertory of the fürstliche Hessischen Komödianten, both at Kassel and on the road, and to produce greater texturing of Landgrave Moritz's patronage. This is an area of scholarship that thrived in Germany from the mid-nineteenth century through the early twentieth century but seems to have been severely interrupted by the World Wars. Recently, non-German scholars have developed an interest in the English actors on the Continent not only to recover information about their activities there but to arrive at a fuller picture of English actors in England during the reigns of Elizabeth and James. My own feeling is that there is much municipal archival material across the Continent—in Germany, the Netherlands, Scandinavia, Belgium, Austria, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and France—that is yet unexamined. I also suspect that the secret hope of any of us working on Continental material is to find the entry that will place Shakespeare on the continent during the lost years.

Notes

Research for this essay was supported by grants from the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service) and Lafayette College. To the extent that manuscripts associated with the Landes- und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel or the Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg are still available there, I have examined the primary documents. In identifying the location of other manuscripts, I have relied on scholars who have examined them, some more than a century ago, and caution that the location of some of these manuscripts may have changed—and some documents may well have been lost or destroyed.

documents the duke’s lengthy attempt to receive the Garter (or the Insignia), reprinting portions of relevant primary materials.

4. Rye quotes the entry in Stow’s *Annals*, fol. 1631, that chronicles the visit, as well as the Fennor poem (*Descriptions*, 1616), 143–44, 145.


12. The passport, which is preserved in the General Archives, The Hague, *Lias* England of 1591 (Staten-General 5992 I), was first published in L. Ph. C. van den Bergh’s *Gravenhaagsche Bijzonderheden* 1 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1857), 41–42. Riewald points to imperfections in the printed transcript, which omits the reference to the “consort of my players and servants.” Relying on the imperfect document. Chambers conceded that the actors may have been old Admiral’s men but argued that Charles Howard, Lord High
Admiral from 1585 to 1619, signed as warden of the seas (vol. 2, 138, 274). Riewald believes that the travelers were in the Lord Admiral's Company. Willem Schrickx, who provides a fresh transcript of the passport in "English Actors at the Courts of Wolfenbüttel, Brussels and Graz during the Lifetime of Shakespeare," Shakespeare Survey 33 (1980): 153, agrees with Riewald. Schrickx also points out that it was the practice in England to retain the old style of dating; had the passport been drawn in Holland, it would have borne the date 20 February 1592, reflecting the new calendar.

13. The manuscript, which is in the archives of the Gelderse Rekenkamer at Arnhem, is reprinted in Hartleb, 16. The appearance of Browne and Jones at Arnhem, along with the suggestion that the passport bearers were Lord Admiral’s men, strengthens the possibility that the often-reprinted undated letter from Jones to Edward Alleyn, in which Jones asks for a loan in order that he might redeem his clothes before traveling abroad, was referring to the 1591/92 journey.

14. Schrickx, 155. The Kammerrechnungen of the Wolfenbüttel court are in the Niedersächsisches Hauptstaatsarchiv in Hanover (Ms. Hann. 76 c A).


18. The poem is reprinted in Albert Cohn, Shakespeare in Germany in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: An Account of English Actors in Germany and the Netherlands and of the Plays Performed by them During the Same Period (1865; New York: Haskell House, 1971), lx.


23. Hartleb, 26, relies on a copy of the original manuscript in the Hes-
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24. Riewald, 71–72. The certificate issued to the players is in the Groningen Archives, *Rechterlijke Archieven IIIb*, f. 244v; it is reprinted in H. O. Feith, “Eeneige Comedianten te Groningen in 1597,” *Bijdragen tot de Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde, inzonderheid van de Provincie Groningen* 2 (1865), 162f, and in Riewald, 72n.

25. Christoph von Rommel, *Geschichte von Hessen* 6 (Cassel: Frederich Perthes von Hamburg und Gotha, 1837), 402n, offers a modernized transcript of Landgrave Moritz’s letter, which he says is to an unidentified princely person. Hartleb, relying on the manuscript in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg, “Correspondenz L. Moritz mit landgr. Ludwig IV. 1597,” identifies the addressee as Landgrave Ludwig IV of Hessen-Marburg and fixes the date as February 1597. Both Rommel, 401f, and Hartleb, 30–31, refer to Landgrave Ludwig’s return of the borrowed items after Graf Hans Ernst von Solms and his company had seen the performance.

26. Rommel, 445, 448. For a translation of many of the account book entries, see Cohn, iviii. Hartleb, 37f, discusses particular entries.


29. Henslowe’s *Diary*, 50.


34. Mentzel, 49–51.


36. Schrickx, 161–62; Riewald, 73–74. Both Schrickx and Riewald reprint the 1603 entry from *Comptes de la Bourse commune*, fol. 473. Schrickx’s is the more reliable. Riewald, relying on Prosper Claey’s *Histoire du Théâtre a Gand* (Ghent: J. Vuylsteke, 1892), 3:75, speaks of a private “qualifying performance” before city councillors and others as being customary.

37. Johannes Meissner, *Die Englischen Comoedianten zur Zeit Shake-
39. Mentzel, 60–61. (There are subsequent references to Browne on the continent through 1620.)
42. Hartleb, 47–48. The manuscript is in Darmstadt, a copy in the Landes- und Murhardsche Bibliothek der Stadt Kassel as “Ms. hass. 2° 154.”
43. Hartleb, 53. The manuscript is in the Hessisches Staatsarchiv Marburg, “ Hess.-Kass. Personalia.”
44. Rommel, Geschichte, vol. 6, 402f.
46. Mentzel, 56.
49. Hartleb, 87, quoting Martin Zeiller, Topographia Hassiae et Regionum Vicinarum: das ist, Beschreibung vnnb engentliche Abbildung der vornehmsten Stätte und Plätze in Hessen vnnb denen benachbarten Landschaften als Buchen, Wetteraw, Westerwaldt, Lohngaw, Nassaw, Solms, Hanaw, Wittgenstein vnd andern [1646] [In deiser ander edition mit sonderm fleiss durchgangen von vorigen Fehlern corrigirt, gebessert und vermehret] [1659] (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1959), 34. Portion of English translation in Adams, 3; balance is my own. Zeiller, 32, gives a second reference to the theater not noted by Hartleb or Adams, which suggests that construction was begun by Landgrave Moritz’s father: “das Theatrum, oder Comödien-Haus / u. beisichtget; so theils von Landgraff Wilhelmen / theils von seinem Herren Sohn / Landgraff Moritzen / erbewet worden” (the theater or comedy house was built partly by Landgrave Wilhelm, partly by his son Landgrave Moritz).
Appendix

Will of Robert Browne, the actor’s son

Because Robert Browne played a principal role among English actors on the Continent and, particularly, in Kassel, identifying the “proper” Robert Browne—that is, the actor of foreign tours, as distinct from the Boar’s Head Browne who died in 1603 or the son of the Boar’s Head Browne described as a haberdasher in his brother William’s November 1634 Will or the nephew of actor Edward Browne mentioned in his uncle’s 6 July 1622 Will or the puppet theater Robert Browne who was in Coventry in 1638 and Norwich in 1639—I am reprinting below a transcript of the 1623 Last Will and Testament of Robert Browne, son of the actor, which helps establish genealogy and a probable death date for the senior Browne. The Will, which I have examined, is in the Public Record Office (PROB II 145, fol. 4, p. 30). It came to my attention through the work of Peter Brand, whose 1978 Magisterarbeit, or master’s thesis, at the University of Heidelberg, “Der englische Komödiant Robert Browne, (1563–ca. 1621/39),” is a rich and responsible source of information on the actor who spent
much of his career on the Continent. Although Willem Schrickx (cred-iting Brand) reprinted the Will in *Foreign Envoys and Travelling Play-ers in the Age of Shakespeare and Jonson*, that book, with a run of seven hundred copies, has not received wide circulation in this country.¹

The Will presented here was signed in 1623 and proved by Cicilie Robins, matrix, in London, on 20 January 1625. In it, the younger Browne bequeaths his Shoreditch house to his mother, Cissalie Rob-ins, and forty shillings to his father, William Robins, whom his mother married in 1622 (July 30—“William Robins & Cisley Browne; lic’ mar. St. J.C.”). He remembers as well his sisters and brother: Jane Re-naldes, Elizabeth, James, Judith, and Awdrey.

In the name of god Amen. I Robert Browne of the Parish of St. Leonard, Shorditch in the countie of Middlesex yeoman beinge sicke of bodie but of perfect remembrance thanks be given to Almightie god And knowinge that nothinge is more certayne than death and nothing more uncertayne then the houre of death doe therefore make my last will and Testament in manner and forme followinge. Ffirst bequeath my soule to Allmightie god my maker hopinge for remission of my sinnes by the death and passion of Jesus Christ myne only saviour and redeemer for his mercy onely and by [my] bodye to the ground from whence it came to be buried in Christian buriall in the Church of St Leonards Shorditch if I die in Clarkenwell. And If I die ellswhere then in the discretion of my Executor hereafter named and touching the disposition of lands goods and chattells I give devise bequeth and dispose them in manner and forme followinge that is to say I give power and authoritie to my trusty and welbeloved mother Cissalie Robins my executor to give those legacies hereafter mentioned. Item I give unto my mother Cissalie Robins her heires executors and assignes all that one house messuage or tenement situate lying and being in the Parish of St Leonhards Shoreditch in the countie afore said. Item to my sister Jane Renaldes Tenn pounds to be paid a yeare after my decease. Item I give and bequeath unto my sister Elizabeth Browne Tenn pounds to be paid at the day of her marriage. Item to my Brother James Browne Judith Browne and my sister Awdrey Browne Tenn pounds to be devided equallie amongst them at the day of Theire marriages. Item to my ffather William Robins forty shillings to buy him a ringe to weare for my sake after my decease all which legacies to be paid by my executor after my decease. In witness thereof I have hereunto put to my hand and seale in the yeare of our Lord god one thousand sixhundred and twenty three. The marke of Robert Browne, Miles Hill. The marke of Katherine Swainestone. The marke of Elizabeth Hill.

The Will helps untangle two theatrical families named Browne. The first is that of the Robert Browne who was in Landgrave Moritz’s
service. That Robert Browne, son of William Brown of Shoreditch, was baptized on 21 November 1563. In 1593, he lost his wife and children to the plague, and, in 1594, he married Cicely Sands, daughter of Anthony Sands, who was baptized on 10 April 1576. Their children, according to the 1623 Will, were Robert, Elizabeth, Jane, Judith, James, and Awdrey. In addition, there were apparently two late-comers to the family: Christopher and William. A 1620 St. James, Clerkenwell, entry indicates their lineage: “Xpofer & William sons of Robart & Cicily Browne.” The family connections identified in the 1623 Will confirm those in the Will of William Sly, dated 4 August 1608: Sly leaves his house to “Jane Browne, the daughter of Robert Browne, and Sisely his wife,” “his part of the Globe” to Robert Browne, and nearly all of the remainder of his estate to Sisely Browne, whom he names his executrix. A later Will, that of Thomas Basse, dated 11 September 1634, St. James, Clerkenwell, names “Mr. William Robins & Cicely his wife” as his friends and beneficiaries. (Cicely’s husband was probably the “Robinson the player” killed at Basing House in October 1645.) Daughter Jane married Robert Reynolds, an actor who was on the Continent with his father-in-law from 1618 to 1620 and who established an acting career of his own there: twice in 1629, Jane applied for a license to go abroad to be with her husband.

The second theatrical Browne family is that of the Browne of the Boar’s Head Theatre, who was memorialized by Joan Alleyn in a 21 October 1603 letter to her husband in which she reports that “Browne of the Boares head is dead & dyed very pore”: he was buried on 16 October 1603 in Whitechapel. Lawsuit documents from earlier that year indicate that the Browne of the Boar’s Head was also named Robert. The wife of the Boar’s Head Browne was Susan, who, after Browne’s death, married Thomas Greene (1604) and, after his death, married James Baskervile (1613) (she herself died in 1648). In his 25 July 1612 Will, probated on 10 October 1612, Thomas Greene names his wife Susan; his natural daughter, Honnor Green; his sons-in-law (i.e., step-sons), Robert and William [Browne] (neither yet twenty-one); and his daughters-in-law Susanna, Elizabth, and Anne (none yet fifteen). The disposition of Greene’s property, with his interest in the Queen Anne’s Company going to his wife, was responsible for the Baskervile lawsuit several years after his death in 1612. The names of three of the Boar’s Head Browne’s children—William, Robert, and Susan—are confirmed by William Browne’s Will, dated 23 October 1634 and probated on 10 November 1634. William, who, like his step-father, Thomas Greene, was a sharer in the Red Bull Playhouse, names his mother, “Susan Greene also Baskervile” or “Susan Baskervile als
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Greene,” executrix and wills her his interest in the Red Bull Company. He mentions “my father Greene”; his brother Robert Browne, a haberdasher, who has three children, none yet twenty-one; and his sister Susan and her husband, Thomas Bond. (He also mentions his son-in-law, Phillipp Massam, who was not yet twenty-one.13)

Brand, 117, also offers a transcript of the Last Will and Testament of an Edward Browne—“Eduart Browne van Outwod in Essix in Engelant”—drawn in the Netherlands, in Dutch, on 6 July 1622. In it, Edward Browne names his brother Peter and sister [sister-in-law?] Jan and their children, Robert and Adriana. The family connections here have yet to be established.

Finally, Brand teases the idea that Robert Browne did not die between ca. 1620 and 1622, when Cicely remarried, but gave up the stage for the puppet theater, citing a November 1638 performance in Coventry by Robert Browne, George Hall, and Richard Jones, players, and a 9 October 1639 record in Norwich of Robert Browne and George Hall being denied the privilege of showing an Italian motion when it was decided that the piece was made in London. Though the scenario seems unlikely, particularly absent any record that Robert and Cicely Browne divorced, it is possible: the Robert Browne who had served Landgrave Moritz would have been seventy-six in 1639.

Notes to Appendix


3. Brand, III. Guildhall Library, London, St. Leonard Shoreditch, Ms. 7493 Marriages, fol. 17: “Robert Browne and Cicely Sands, were maryed the vijth day of March” (register for 1593/94).

4. Brand, 33, 96, reports the following baptismal dates for the Browne children: Robert, 19 October 1595, St. Saviour’s, Southwark: “Rbt. Browne son of Rbt. A stageplayer” (Greater London Council, P92/SAV/3001, X9/1); Elizabeth, 1 December 1599, St. Saviour’s, Southwark: “Elizabeth Browne d of Robert a Player” (Greater London Council, P92/SAV/3001, X9/1); Jane, 13 January 1599/1600, St. Leonhard, Southwark: “Jane Browne ye daughter of Robt. Browne was baptised ye same daye at Stebinheth [Stebney]: (Guildhall Library, London: MSS. Dept., Ms 7493); Judith, 28 October 1611, St. James, Clerkenwell: “Judeth d of Roberte Browne” (Robert Hovenden, ed., a True register of all the Christeninges, Mariages, and Burialles in the Parish of St. James, Clerkenwell from the year of our Lord God 1551, vol. 1, Christenings: 1551 to 1700 [London: The Publications of the Harleian Society, 1884], Reg.
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-vol. ix, 62; James, 24 December 1612, St. James, Clerkenwell: “James s of Roberte Browne” (Hovenden, vol. 1, 73). He was unable to locate a record for Awdrey [Andrew?]. Judith was probably the “Judith Brown alias Robins” who, on 6 May 1627, married Hugh Clarke, a player with Queen Henrietta’s men at the Cockpit and, later, with the King’s men (see Gerald Eades Bentley, “Players in the Parish of St. Giles in the Fields,” Review of English Studies 6.22 [1930]: 155). The dates of Elizabeth’s baptism (1 December 1599) and Jane’s (13 January 1599/1600) need to be reconciled.


12. Berry, The Boar’s Head Theatre, 196–97, cites the following baptismal dates for four of the Boar’s Head Browne’s children: Susan, 23 December 1600; William, 25 April 1602; Elizabeth, 13 February 1603; and Anne, 22 January 1604 (after her father’s death). Although he has not located a record for Robert, he assumes a birthdate of the winter of 1599–1600.