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THEATRE TRADITIONS

The theatre is one of the most superstitious places and professions in the world. Most of the traditions are practical but some are based on early Pagan superstitions.

An example of a modern day tradition takes place at the Royal National Theatre at Upper Ground, South Bank, London SE1. It started its own custom or traditions connected with the first night of a new play at the building. Inspired by an idea from Sir Ralph Richardson who suggested it at the opening of the theatre in 1976. Just before the lights go down for the first performance a first night rocket known as "Ralph's Rocket" is set off from the roof of the building.

Theatre professionals do not like to tempt fate but sometimes it is unavoidable. It is then that you must suffer the consequences as this example shows. It took place in the early history of the "Gielgud Theatre" (Previously known as the Globe and the Hicks theatre opened in 1906) in London. When the theatre staged "The Clock Goes Round", a play written with 13 Characters, one of which carried a fan of Peacock Feathers and wore a Green Dress, superstition triumphed: the play only ran for 13 performances.

Another tradition in the Theatre Royal London is all to do with Christmas it is unique to that theatre. The tradition is that of the "Twelfth Night Cake" which was started by the estate of Robert Baddeley in 1794 after he died. In his Will he left money to provide cake and wine for the Green Room every year on Twelfth Night (6 January). This tradition continues to this day although the money may have run out by now.

Below is a list of as many of the traditions I have been able to find.

STEWART GREEN.

ABRACADABRA

This magical term comes from the Hebrew words Ab (The Father), Ben (The Son), and Ruach Acadsch (The Holy Spirit). A Jewish traditional charm it was used against ague, flux, tooth ache the word was originally written on parchment and hung from the neck by a linen thread, in the following format.

ABRACADABRA
ABRACADABR
ABRACADAB
ABRACADA
ABRACAD
ABRACA
ABRAC
ABRA
ABR
AB
A

The word Abracadabra was originally taken seriously as a Magical chant but today it is used as a cheap joke set of words by magicians.

ACTRESS

Thomas Coryate in 1611 wrote of seeing for the first time a Woman acting in Venice. He also mentioned that it was known to him that this practice was also being done in London.

Female parts were usually played in the stage by boys until the restoration period. The oldest known actress in England was between the 1st and 4th Century BC the first known British Actress was put onto a piece of pottery. Her name was "Verecenda" and was described on a piece of redware Pottery found in Leicester as a "Ludia" or Player.

The first recorded Englishwoman in the modern theatre was on the 8th December 1660 in the Play Othello at a theatre in Clare Market London.

The actress Ellen (Alicia) Terry was born on the 27 February 1847 (.d. 21 July 1928) and became a leading light of the Lyceum Theatre, London and was the first actress to be made a Dame. Her Grand-nephew was Sir John Gielgud. She was Married to Sir George (Frederick) Watts an English painter for a year.

BLUE (Colour)

This like green is considered an unlucky colour . Many ballet dancers would not wear blue without another trimming in Silver or another colour being added to ward off the evil.

BLUE (as in Blue Movie etc.)

The term "Blue" referring to something naughty comes from the stage . In the days of Burlesque when theatre's had Nude women on stage the Government brought in the Lord Chamberlain's office (1737-1968) to make sure that it was done tastefully. They insisted that women shave off their pubic hair and that they stay absolutely still when they were on stage to make them look like Greek statues. Tableau of Greek statues were made famous by Paul Reymond and by famous Nude's like Phyllis Dixey who were forced to stay still as any movement would cause the venue to be closed down. To make this easier a tinted spotlight was put onto the nude to soften the edges. The best colour for this turned out to be blue. Later when the Nudes were allowed to move in strip shows the Blue light was employed to create a more dignified image.

"BREAK A LEG"

The tradition of not wishing an actor good luck before he went on stage . The proper greeting should be "Break a Leg"

The expression comes from America . On the 14 April 1865 in the "Ford's Theatre" Washington, John Wilkes Booth an actor shot President Abraham Lincoln while he was watching a show at the theatre. After shooting the President the actor stood on the edge of the Presidential box and made the speech in Latin for effect "Thus ever to tyrants !" before jumping onto the stage spoiling the effect by breaking his leg on landing . He then had to hobble off 'stage left', losing the effect he had wanted from his performance. John Wilkes Booth was later cornered in a barn on the 26 April 1865 outside Washington and shot dead while his accomplice, Harrald, was captured alive.

CATS

- 1) It is considered good luck to have a theatre cat . But if the cat runs across the stage during the action then misfortune will come to the production.
- 2) It is considered bad luck to kick the cat. (Not just in the theatre)

CLAPTRAP

Not a term I would associate with the stage but that is where it came from. It started life as two words to describe a device used in the theatre to induce the audience to applaud (Often used in American comedy Shows on Television) thus making them feel that they enjoyed the production . One ploy used by Magicians is to bring on a scantily clad Woman assistant who hands the magician his props and then puts her arms in the air as if she has just finished her own act, to which the audience will applaud. However bad the act is when the audience goes home they remember applauding so much that it really wasn't that bad after all. (see Clique)

CLIQUE

This was the name given to professional people who go along to theatre's to start the applause or laughter . They go back as far as the Ancient Greek Theatres but it wasn't till 1820 in Paris that a Monsieur Anton Sauton opened an agency to supply such people . They gained the nickname "Claqueurs" From the word Claque (to Clap or Slap) . Because they were considered to be the lowest of the Theatrical profession they eventually formed their own society on the edge of town called "Le Clique" (French for a Drum & Bugle band). In the 1940's The same ploy was employed at Frank Sinatra concerts. Young people were paid to scream at Sinatra starting a trend to make him even more popular.

CORPSEING (The Art of Making an actor laugh when they are supposed to be serious)

The term "To Corpseing" or "To Corpse" comes from the early days of the modern theatre when there was a predominance of Murder mysteries on the stage . The first act would usually start with a character being killed off very soon after entry. They would then fall to the floor and it is there that they would stay for the rest of the act. The actors on stage would then, as a joke try to make the corpse laugh knowing that they had to be quiet because dead bodies do not move. If however the corpse was able they would die behind a piece of furniture where they would be safe to move a little. They would then get their own back by trying to make the actors looking over the body laugh by tickling then or doing things to distract the actor from what they were supposed to be doing.

Today the term refers to any actor on Stage or Tv who laughs for no apparent reason while in the middle of a performance.

COSTUMES

- 1) Vaudeville performers consider it bad luck to change the costume that first brought them success.
- 2) Certain wigs bring good luck , some actors even wear a wig even if the part doesn't call for one.
- 3) If an actors shoes squeak when they make their first entrance it is a sign that they will be well received by the audience.
- 4) When an actor kicks off their shoes on stage if they land on their soles and remain standing upright it will bring good luck however if the shoes land on the uppers (Leather bit not the sole) this will bring bad luck.
- 5) Placing shoes on a chair in the dressing room will bring bad luck especially if they have been kicked over and landed on their uppers (See 4 Costumes) .
- 6) If an acrobat throws his cuffs on the stage in preparation for his act , if they remain fastened together then the act will go well however if they separate then the act will go wrong.

CURTAIN

Many managers and actors consider it very bad luck for an actor or member of the stage crew to look through parting of the curtain at the audience or what is known as the wrong side of the curtain. Many consider the wrong side to be the prompt side of the theatre, because of its association with the devil's entrance (See pantomime Traditions) this will bring bad luck on the play. To overcome the superstition many theatres have placed a small peep hole in the centre of the stage curtain so the actor can look at the audience without bringing down the wrath of the devil.

DAME (a Man)

This started possibly when the elderly female parts were given to men because women didn't want to appear on stage "Ugly". The Dame in Pantomime came from the Music hall comedians taking the parts of the elderly women.

DAMES COSTUMES AND PROPS

- 1) Everything must be out sized for the stage performance, Large Combs, Powder puffs, Large Lipstick, Enormous hand mirror.
- 2) The costume should have effects like light bulbs that light up on one of the dresses.
- 3) The more outrageous the costume the better.
- 4) Shoes must come in all sizes and shapes. This goes back to the days of "Harlequin" and "The Clown" who all wore large boots etc. Grimaldi the most well known of the early Dames wore coal scuttles on his feet for one costume in the 1806 production of Mother Goose.
- 5) It is traditional that the actor who plays the DAME must never wear the costume he is going to wear during the run of the Pantomime until the first night. When the Actor does the photo call it must always be in another costume to the one he will appear in at the venue.
- 6) Usually it is traditional that the first costume the actor wears on the first night of the pantomime must be a new costume made especially for the production as this will bring good luck.

DOOR HANDLES

When an actor sees the manager of the theatre or an agent it is considered an omen of failure if the actor then tries the door handle of the wrong door to which room they wanted to enter.

DOUBLE ROLE (Hidden Name in the Programme)

When an actor doubles a role it is usually to play two parts in a production. In most productions it is quite easy to do this as some characters are not on stage long enough to make an impact. Like the body in the opening sequence, an actor can then take on another role in the second act without anyone suspecting it is the same actor. However sometime the producers want to keep the name of the second character a secret. This is where "Walter Pinge" (Walter Plinge) is brought in. It is the usual name given to an actor who does not wish to be identified until they appear on stage.

Another way of concealing a role is to do an anagram of the original actor's name or to use parts of an actor's name e.g. Dicken Ashworth becomes Dick Worth. I know of at least one company who wrote a

whole biography for the extra actor. So convincing was the production I didn't work out it wasn't two actors until I suddenly spotted the anagram.

EVIL (SIGNS OF EVIL)

- 1) The Looping of a drop curtain.
- 2) The Upsetting of a Make up box.
- 3) Certain shades of Yellow in a Tie, Vest or hat are thought to bring injuries onto the wearer. .

FAIRY ENTERING FROM STAGE RIGHT (Villain / evil character from Stage Left)

This is done because in the old theatres the stage door through which the evil character entered was always situated on the Stage left side or prompt corner. Some say that this was done so that the prompt or stage manager could also play the villain entering and leaving the stage easily thus saving money for the management.

When the Fairy talks about the powers of Evil the fairy should always transfer her magic wand from her Right hand to her left hand

Left has always been the evil side. When you spill salt you through salt over your left shoulder to ward off evil. If the left palm itches it is a sign of poverty. In the painting by Leonardo da Vinci of "The Last Supper" Judas Iscariot is seated on the left of Jesus. Another theory about the entrance goes back to "Mystery Plays" where the right side of the stage symbolises Heaven while the left side represents Hell.

FARCE

The Play "Farce" was put on to keep the Audience amused while sets were altered. The name came from the Latin "Farcirre", meaning :- to stuff, because the play was 'stuffed' between the main acts to pad out the main production. The term Farce referring to a mess up came from the fact that these short plays were staged with quick scene changes that didn't always go as planned.

FIRST LINES / Entrance

- 1) An actor must never repeat the first lines of a play as this will bring the 'Hoodoo' on to the actor.
- 2) It is unlucky if an actor stumbles over an object on his entrance as many actors think this will cause them to forget his lines or miss a cue .
- 3) If a part of the costume catches on the first entrance he must retrace his steps and make another entrance. If they do not do this then other misfortunes will befall the actor during the rest of the play.
- 4) It is considered unlucky for the audience to not hear the first lines of a play.
(See also Opening night / Last lines)

FIRST NIGHT

(see Front of House)

FLOWERS ON STAGE

The use of flowers is a practical tradition rather than a superstition although it has in recent years become more a superstition as the original reason no longer exists.

In the early day of the theatre there was very little lighting many plays were done during the day to make use of the natural sunlight . In the 1819 the introduction of Gas lighting caused an excess of heat that caused the real flowers on stage to dry up and to wither.

When electric lighting came onto the scene in 1880 when it was first used at the Savoy Theatre London which had been opened by Richard D'Oyly Carte on the 10 Oct 1880, it was run from Carbon Lamps which shone brightly and again created a tremendous amount of heat . In later years the lighting has evolved with less heat being generated but in those early days any flower or plant on stage would just die and in some cases had to be replaced after each act or scene.

FRONT OF HOUSE

- 1) If the first person to buy a ticket for a new production is an old man or woman it means that the play will have a long run. A young person is the opposite with the play sure to close shortly.
- 2) A torn bank note means that there will be a change of position for a man in the box office.
- 3) The usher seating the first person of the evening will have good luck for the whole performance. However if the first to be seated is in one of the many number 13 seats in the

- theatre then bad luck will bring bad luck for the rest of the night to the front of house.
- 4) If the programme seller is given a tip by a female member of the public then misfortune will fall on the theatre. Many old timers at the theatre will not except the extra tip.
 - 5) The first tip of a season given to an usher is always rubbed on the trousers to bring good luck and then kept in the pocket for the rest of the season to bring good luck.
 - 6) A Woman fainting in the theatre will bring bad luck to the usher whose section she is seated.
 - 7) If an usher receives a smile from a member of the cast on stage over the footlights, this is considered to be good luck.
 - 8) If the first customer to enter an auditorium on the first night is a woman then the play is doomed to failure.

GHOSTS

It is considered lucky to see a ghost before or during a production (See Theatre Dates for theatre ghost stories)

GHOSTS WALK

This is considered to be by actors as the day that they get paid "Pay day" This theatrical term refers to the lack of wages when there is no money available "The Ghost won't walk this time" A quote from Shakespeare's Hamlet Act 1 Scene 1

Horatio

ENTER GHOST AGAIN

" I'll cross it, though it blast me. -- Stay, illusion ! If thou hast any sound , or use of voice, Speak to me :

If there be any good thing to be done, That may to thee do ease, and grace to me, Speak to me:

If there be any good thing to be done, That may to thee do ease, and grace to me, Speak to me:

If thou art privy to thy country's fate, which happily, foreknowing may avoid, O, Speak !

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life, Extorted treasure in the womb of earth, For which, they say, you **spirits oft walk in Death,**

(EFX - COCK CROWS)

Speak of it :- Stay, and speak ! Stop it, Marcellus.

In use by 1833 the term possibly started with a theatrical company performing Hamlet, who hadn't been unpaid for weeks a line in the play became appropriate .

When Hamlet said of his father's ghost "Perchance 'twill walk again"

The Ghost replied "Nay, 'twill walk no more until its salary is paid"

Since then theatre managers have become known as Ghosts.

GONE BY THE BOARDS

In the Late 1800's / early 1900's the term Actress was considered much as the word prostitute or Exotic dancer is considered today. The term is by some considered to mean someone who has gone as far down the ladder of life as they can like the Actress, it is said that they have "Gone by the boards" referring to the stage.

Another and less theatrical reason is that the boards referred to do not mean the Stage boards as in Treading the Boards, but the boards that make up the clinker of a ship's hull , the term refers to anything thrown from the ships deck into the sea.

GREEN

- 1) Green has always been considered an unlucky colour especially in the theatre. It is considered to be the "Fairy's" (Mythical nymph's not the characters in Pantomime etc.) colour and it is considered unlucky to use it as it would offend them. Thus in Pantomime the costumes of Robin Hood and his merry men are usually in Brown, not Green.
- 2) In the early days of the theatre the stage used to be covered in a Green stage cloth to denote Grass. Today the stage is sometimes refereed to as "The Green".

The GREEN ROOM

- 1) It is possible that The "Green Room " got its name from the fact that the stage is sometimes refereed to as The Green (See above) and traditionally the room is under the stage Thus "The Green Room" (Under the Green Room) . However now days it refers to any rest room in the theatre. The Under stage rooms now are usually kept as stage store rooms (Lights, stage

- weights etc.).
- 2) The Green room started its life as a "Green Room" and was situated as the last room before the actors went on stage. The reason it was painted Green was because the theatre Lights in the old days gave off a green glow and as the actors went on stage they were so disorientated that they fell over or worse fell off the stage. To get the actors used to the light they were put into a Green room just before going on stage so that they could get used to the light and thus feel at home on the stage when they finally arrived to do their scene.
 - 3) The Oxford companion to the theatre says that the first reference to the "Green Room" is in Thomas Shadwell's play A TRUE WIDOW published in 1678.
STANMORE "No madam: Selfish, this evening, in a Green Room, behind the scenes, was before- hand with me.... "
 - 4) The only proper Green Room exists at the current Drury lane theatre in London and was a place where actors entertained visitors before and after performances. The title of the room may have been corrupted from the word "Screen room" or "Scene Room" which the room is also called in other theatres.
 - 4b) The Green room in the second Drury lane theatre designed by Christopher Wren and redesigned for Garrick was lined with Green Manchester Baise which prevented the actors costumes from getting smudged or creased when brushed on the walls. Thus the room before the actors went on stage became known as the Green Room.
 - 5) Many of the early English theatres have coloured names for the rooms denoting the salary of the actors, presumably the green room was for all the cast who weren't paid enough to have their own room.
 - 6) Early English plays were performed on the village Green so when they moved into the theatres the stage became known as the Green (See above) Thus the Green room is the room before the "Green".

A HAM ACTOR

In the days of the old "Black faced" minstrel shows there was a song called "The Hamfat Man" this was song was a dig at some of the second rate performers in that type of show. In those days Ham Fat was used to get the black make up off the actor's faces and that is what is referred to in the title of the song.

HAMBONE

The American term for a bad actor or "Ham Actor" (see above).

HARLEQUIN

The four Colours of his tunic all have meanings ;-- Yellow for jealousy

Blue for Faithfulness to Columbine

Scarlet for Anger

Black for Invisibility

During the show Harlequin would traditionally point to each colour at the appropriate time e.g. when in the script it said they were angry Harlequin would point to the scarlet diamonds on his tunic.

HENRY VIII (an unlucky Play)

Like the Scottish play Mac... , Henry VIII is considered to be an unlucky play. Unlike the other play these is no tradition of not mentioning the title but it is not played much because of the bad luck that seems to follow it.

It gained its reputation when it was first performed at the Globe Theatre in June 1613. A Cannon which was fired during the performance for a special effect ignited the Globes Thatched roof raising the theatre to the ground.

The play was written in 1613 with extra scenes possibly written by John Fletcher as it is thought that Shakespeare had stopped writing plays in 1611.

HIP! HIP! HURRAH!

This toast possibly comes from the Crusades when the Christian knights gave it as battle cry. The word Hip (originally it would have been "Hep") was possibly shouted in the wars of the holy land.

"Hip" is an acronym of "Hierosolyma est Perdita" which translates into "Jerusalem is destroyed" (Destroyed as in "Lost to the Infidel"). The "Hurrah" of the quote is thought to have come from the Slavonic Knights who used the word "Hu-raj" which meant "Paradise" in Slavonic. This would make

the translation of "Hip! Hip! Hurrah" into "Jerusalem has been saved from the Infidel and we are on the Road to Paradise" .

KENSINGTON GORE (Make Up Blood)

Kensington is now combined with Chelsea as a London Borough but originally a borough of Lambeth. A GORE is a triangular or Wedge shaped piece of cloth in dressmaking, and also a triangular shaped piece of land as in Kensington Gore. In the theatre the term comes from the fact that Kensington common was the site of the executions of many of those who took part in the Jacoite rising of 1745 when supporters of James the II rose against the government who had exiles James the first. The first of two risings was in 1715 and the second in 1745. Because of the bloody nature of the executions the theatre fake blood was named after this event.

In the LIMELIGHT

In 1862 Thomas Drummond (1797-1840) developed a new lighting system which involved burning lime. The first uses were in "Light Houses" (in 1861) but in the theatre it is used as a "Spotlight". It gave off a very good directional beam and generated very little heat. Thus the person who was in the beam (or Spotlight) came to be known as in the Limelight. (See also Spotlight)

This light gives off a little heat from the burning lime caused by the combustion of oxygen and hydrogen. Also called a DRUMMOND LIGHT after its inventor.

The first to use it in the theatre was Macready at Covent Garden for the 1926 Pantomime "Peeping Tom of Coventry". The light given off by the Lime was of a Greenish colour causing problems for costume designers and for the actors (See the Green Room / Traditions)

LAST LINES OF A PLAY

Actors never repeat the last lines of a play at rehearsals as it will bring bad luck on the play if they do so.

MACBETH (The Scottish Play)

During the very first production of the play in XXXX in front of King James the young boy actor playing Lady Macbeth (No women were allowed to appear in a lay during this period of time) Died backstage.

Since then this play has been considered to be an unlucky play, mainly due to the amount of accidents that have taken place during its performance.

It is unlucky to mention the name of the Scottish play in the Theatre if you do so it will evoke the power of the play and the only way to get rid of the curse is for the offender to Spin round anticlockwise on the spot once, 'to turn back time', then to spit on the floor this expels the poison of the words. Another recent variation is that the actor swears rather than spits on the ground. This has changed due to the unhealthy ness of the spit.

I think it was Lord Laurence Olivier who started this tradition of calling it the Scottish play after a run at Stratford.

Another reason for this being an unlucky play was given by Sir Ian McKellern while he was promoting "Lord of the Rings - the return of the King". In the days of early repertory companies MACBETH was considered to be one of the "Crowd winners" that pulled in the audiences when the season was flagging. If the repertory season included a production of MACBETH the company (Actors) knew that the theatre didn't have enough money to pay them at the end of the week. Thus it is unlucky for management to mention bringing in MACBETH within earshot of the actors as this is a sure sign that the theatre is in trouble.

Another slight variation is that as MACBETH was a popular play at the time if the play currently being performed to few members of the audience the management would draft in MACBETH to save the season using the same actors that were appearing at the theatre.

Actors believe that the Witches song in MACBETH (Act 3 Scene 5 Come away, come away / Act 4 Scene 1 Black Spirits) actually casts evil spells. To hum the tune in front of older actors may lose their friendship.

QUOTE "**Hubble Bubble Toil and Trouble**" (Also Manfred Man Song - Apr 1964) is often a misquoted piece of script from Act 4, Scene 1. The correct quote is "Double Double Toil and trouble: Fire, Burn; and cauldron, bubble".

LIST OF DISASTERS caused by the Play (Not all of them)

- 1) An actor getting stabbed in the ear

- 2) An Actor dropped dead during one of the original performances of the play.
- 3) Two actors have been known to have had heart attacks and died just before the opening night of the play.
- 4) An actor fell off stage and broke his arm.
- 5) An actor collapsed during a dance on stage.

THINGS TO DO IF THE PLAY IS MENTIONED

1. Walk around the Theatre Three times to dissolve the curse.

MIRROR's

It is unlucky to look over the shoulder of another actor in the dressing room mirror as misfortune will befall those who's shoulder is being looked over.

OPENING NIGHT

It is considered to be an unlucky play if the leading actor trips on his first entrance for the first night.

PANTOMIME (See also separate traditions)

BEGINNING (See Fairy's entering from stage Right & Villain)

"Panto "LINES

CINDERELLA

When they are trying to get the slipper onto the foot of one of the ugly sisters (Daisy) Dandini says " I cant get the foot of "Daisy" into the crystal slipper" to which Buttons replies "You couldn't get her foot into Crystal Palace"

DAME's

When the Ugly sisters are getting ready for the ball Their props must be larger than normal. One traditional line is when One of the Ugly sisters looks into the Mirror and sees how ugly she is she then asks her sister to look into the mirror and tell her who's face she sees. To this the other sister replies "Why it is me" to which the first replies "Thank heaven's, I thought it was mine"

DICK WHITTINGTON

The Cat when joining the ship must wear a sailors Collar round his neck and a Sailor's hat on its head.

GHOST SKETCH

This joke involves members of the cast sitting on a bench and singing a song. At certain points in the proceedings a ghost or monster comes onto stage and taps one of the cast on the shoulder leading to them being frightened and running off stage. This happens to each member of the cast until the last person, when they turn round to see the ghost, the ghost screams and runs away.

Extra's, the bench can be made with one leg further in than the other so that the bench tips over when one of the cast of frightened and runs off stage. The cast can be walking around instead of sitting down.

RIFLE REVIEW SKETCH

First found in "Puss in Boots ; or Harlequin and the Fairy of the Golden Palms" at the Drury Lane theatre in 1859 .

END

- 1) The Principle boy and girl are the last to enter for the curtain call with the boy entering slightly before the girl (principles) .
- 2) The "TAG LINE" should never be spoken before the final curtain call on the first night of the Pantomime. The Tag line is a poem wishing everyone a merry Christmas or best wishes for the new year depending when it is performed. It is made up of each of the principle characters taking a line with usually the "Star Name" reading out the final line or "Tag line".

General LINES

- 1) Local references are always popular , Football team Local Government, The Traffic system in the Town, The local bus service "I waited an hour for a bus then three came along at the same time . They don't come on their own , because they're frightened to come alone"
- 2) Taken from, I think a Laurel and Hardy film, this line is always popular with panto audiences. When the script calls for a repair to something or as in Dick Whittington , he, The Dame and Idle Jack have to break into a safe with the use of a large Hammer The Dame says "After Three when I nod my head , you Hit It" They then count to three and Idol jack

- Hits her on the head rather than the object in question.
- 3) "He's behind you " for the Ghost sketch.
 - 4) "Oh yes he is" "Oh now he isn't"
 - 5) Principle boy always sings a Marching song where they are joined by the "Babes" in the cast.

PAY DAY (see Ghost's Walk)

PEACOCK FEATHERS

The Peacock is a medieval symbol for Vanity and Pride. The bad luck part of the tradition is connected to the tail feathers, because of the Green "Evil Eye" at the end of the feather, Green for envy and the devil and the eye symbolising the all seeing eye. These feathers should not be used in Fans, worn on clothes or brought into the house as decorations. The screech of the peacock is said to foretell rain. Not a theatrical superstition as such but it is observed by actors.

PICTURES

Actors consider it unlucky to go on stage where there is a picture of an ostrich. (Don't ask me where this tradition comes from)

PRINCIPLE BOY (a Girl)

In the 1700's many of the male roles in Opera's like Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" (1786) had women taking the part originally written for men.

It is possible that the first "Principle boy" appeared in an early production of Tom Thumb called "Hop O'My Thumb and his brothers; or Harlequin and the Ogre" in which actress Elizabeth Poole played the part of a boy in the production staged at Covent Garden in 1831.

In the 19th Century actresses like Madame Vestris staged spectacular shows at London's Olympic theatre and Dury Lane

RED HAIR

This is also considered an unlucky hair colour to have on stage as many actors who had played "Shylock " with natural red hair have had unlucky accidents. The tradition then grew up of the actor wearing a red wig which rid them of the superstition . Edmund Kean an actor who played "Shylock " with his own natural Black hair broke the tradition and thus many actors followed his example breaking the tradition. However it is still thought to be unlucky to have natural red hair on stage.

SLAPSTICK

The term comes from the character Harlequin (The clown), "A mischievous character who plays tricks on Pantaloon to whom he is supposed to be invisible owing to the possession of a magic wand called a Slapstick. It was made of two pieces of wood bound together which the clown used to hit another performer in a comic routine. The nature of the sticks made it sound as though he were hitting someone very hard but in reality it rarely hurt. The name "Slapstick" comes from the noise it makes.

SPOT ON / ON THE SPOT

Although not a tradition it is connected with the theatre. If you are "Spot on" you are said to be in the right place, on the right mark. The mark being the centre of the circle of light given by the Spotlight. "On the spot" to be made the centre of attention.

STEALING SOMEONE'S THUNDER

John Dennis (1657- 1734) wrote a play called "Appius and Virginia" on its opening night in 1709 the critics were less than happy with the production saying that the best thing about the production was the sound effects for the Thunder. Mr Dennis had invented a new machine to create the sound of thunder which was better than anything in the theatre before. The show was immediately taken off and replaced by a production of Macbeth (The Scottish Play) which having herd his machine the compant decided to use it during the first act. Furious at this theft of his machine for the production and the fact that the theatre had replaced his show he came along to the performances of Macbeth and made a nuisance of himself shouting at the actors on stage saying that they had stolen his thunder, but wouldn't let his plays run.

THIRTEEN

It is considered bad luck to have a dressing room numbered 13 in the theatre. This number is considered unlucky outside the theatre as well as there were 13 people present at Jesus's Last Supper before he was betrayed by Judas. Another reason for the tradition comes from Scandinavia where the story is about the death of the Gods. It starts with a dinner in Valhalla (The hall in the celestial region where hero's souls were taken by the Valkyries to spend eternity feasting and enjoying the after life). Loki (God of Strife and spirit of Evil) intruded on the meeting making 13 in the room. It was at this point that the god Balder (God of Light) was killed leading to the downfall of all the Scandinavian gods.

TUNES (Songs)

Some tunes are a no go area in the theatre, why I don't know but "Three Blind Mice", "I Dream I dwell in Marble Halls" are avoided at all times.

WHISTLING

- 1) Whistling on stage is forbidden. The reason for this goes back to the early "Fly - gallery" theatres one of which was built in 1794 at the Duke of York theatre London. Because they didn't have an intercom system to tell the flyman when he was to drop in the scenery and backcloth's they invented a signalling system. This, like sheep dog trials, relies on the use of a series of whistles each with a distinctive meaning, which the stage manager would give to the fly man who would then drop in the scene. However some actors quite by accident whistled on stage and with a not very alert fly-man ended up with the scenery being dropped on their head or the head of another actor or actress. Many actors were killed because they forgot the basic rule. Today with modern technology this shouldn't happen and now whistling on stage is just a tradition.
The reason it was a series of whistles was that many of the backstage fly men were ex sailors who knew about knots used to tie off the ropes used to hold the flats and curtains. The Whistles were used aboard ships to signal various commands.
- 2) It is also considered unlucky to whistle in the Dressing room. If anyone does so they must leave the dressing room immediately, turn round three times. Then Knock on the door to come back in. (Reportedly started in 1910 venue unknown)
- 3) Whistling in a dressing room can also cause death (according to some in the theatre) to the person nearest the door, or for them to become ill or even worse to get the sack from the play.

UMBRELLA

Actors will not place an Umbrella on a table during rehearsals.

Where this tradition comes from I do not know but the Umbrella is also unlucky if you open it indoor, Drop it on a bed and worst of all if you drop an umbrella someone else must pick it up or you will have bad luck.

YELLOW

Like green yellow is considered unlucky

WORDS ORIGINATED (To do with) IN THE THEATRE or used in the theatre (Not in the above).

- BUFF** (Film Buff, Theatre Buff etc.) The term comes from the American City of New York and refers to people who liked to watch fires being put out or to Amateur fire-fighters who were called "Buffs" (First recorded by 1903) because they wore a buffalo uniform or coat and were called Buffs by the real professional fire-fighters who poked fun at their amateur friends with this remark. How it came to refer to people who watch entertainment I'm not quite sure.
- (In the BUFF)** Being Naked or in the Buff seems to have come from the Buff coloured leather shorts servicemen were sometimes stripped down to for inspection or in very hot weather.
As with Buff the change from one meaning to the fully naked "In the Buff" has been lost but one unfortunate English Regiment has been known as "The Buffs" for over 300 years because of the colour of their uniforms.
- EPISODE** (Greek - epeisodion 'Something Added') In the Greek Tragedy (Plays) the episode was originally a dialogue between two choral odes. Later the term came to apply to a tale introduced into a main story.

to MUG UP	To study Hard the phrase comes from the theatre where an actor would Scan his lines while making up his face (Mug - from the Gypsy meaning of simpleton or MUFF) with make up, thus to mug up for an exam is to quickly look up the relevant points for a purpose.
PAGEANT	In the 13th C the Pope decreed that there should be an annual "Feast of Corpus Christi" on which the religious plays were performed (See 10th C) An example of this would be the play about "The Creation of Adam and Eve" being performed by the plasterers guild. Each festival had a series of plays from the bible with various guilds performing their designated production on various wagon's called a "Pageant"
ORCHESTRA	From the Greek theatre, before Christ, where the chorus were placed during the play.
SCRIBE (A Writer)	Named after Eugne (1791- 1861) a French Dramatist who wrote the mechanically "Well Made Play" so hated by Bernard Shaw.
SPOT ON	Spot on - To be in the right place - on the right mark.
TROUPE	A number of Artists, Dancers or Theatrical Performers

AN ACTOR'S NAME FOR ME

ACTOR	One who acts in a play or film etc.
ACTRESS	Female Actor. Now not used as since the 1980's 90's women prefer to be known as actors.
CAST / CAST MEMBER	Actor or actress in a play.
COMPANY	The actors / actresses and stage crew who put on a production.
DRAMATIST	Writer of plays.
INGENUUE	Artless young woman, esp. as stage role.
PERFORMER	Someone who acts a part in a play, or performs on stage etc.
PLAYER	Person who takes part in a play.
PLAYWRIGHT	Person who writes plays.
THESPIAN	Theatrical <i>n</i> actor / actress
TRAGEDIAN	<i>n</i> Actor in, writer of tragedies.
TROUPE	A number of Artists, Dancers or Theatrical Performers

“PHRASE SAYINGS AND QUOTES”

(see also “Quote Un-Quote” and Catchphrases)

“Actor Laddie”

A term used to describe a "Booming voiced actor" or a term of reference to a well known performer in the theatre but not generally known to the public. "He's an actor Laddie". First used by Victorian and Edwardian actors they used the term "Laddie" when talking down to people who are not in the profession or junior members of the theatre company. Sir Donald Wolfit said that the only actor he ever heard use the term was Carillo but the phrase has been used in many characterisations of a typical Victorian actor.

“All Publicity is Good Publicity”

Dating from pre 1960's this proverb is possibly as old as the publicity department itself.

Other alternatives include "There's no such thing as Bad publicity".

"There's no such thing as over-exposure - only bad exposure"

"Don't read it - measure it"

“As the actress said to the Bishop”

“To Bishop” was formerly used in the sense to confirm, to admit into the church.

The first written example of this quote comes from the Leslie Charteris Saint (Simon Templar) series of books. In the novel "She was a Lady" later re-titled "The Saint meets his Match" in Chapter 13 the quote goes "As the Bishop said to the Actress" this was later changed to "As the actress said to the Bishop" by actors and comedians. Beryl Reid in the comedy programme Educating Archie used a

variation on this theme "As the Art mistress said to the Gardener!" preceding a remark to turn it into a "double entendre".

An example given in Nigel Rees book Phrases and sayings (ISBN 0747531145) goes "I've never seen a female "Bottom" (Referring to A Midsummer Nights dream) ... **as the actress said to the Bishop**"

“At the drop of a hat”

Used by Flanders and Swann as the title of their famous show the term comes from America where the dropping of a hat signals the start of a race. Michael Flanders is said to have been able to write songs on the spur of the moment or at a suggestion "**At the drop of a Hat**".

“Doctor Greasepaint will Cure me”

This phrase was said by Irene Handl and is quoted in many of her obituaries. If she was ill she believed that getting back into makeup and on stage could soon cure her. Bernard (Carry on) Bresslaw preferred to use the saying "Doctor Footlights will cure me".

“Exit Stage Left”

This is another, could have started with, Phrase. In the 1960's Hannah -Barbera created a cartoon character called "Snagglepuss" who had various catch phrases like "Heavens to Murgatroid!" and "Exit stage Left" as he moved quickly away from a situation, children soon picked up on this and it became part of the everyday use of the English language.

“Full Frontal Nudity”

This started according to the Oxford English Dictionary in 1971 so the term must have been in general use just before this so that it could be included. Previously naked people were not allowed to show everything. The Lord Chamberlains office restricted the use of naked actors until 1967 just before the production of "Hair" appeared on the London stage. In this Full moving nudity was seen for the first time on the English stage since the times of Oliver Cromwell. With this Nude restriction lifted many films and plays appeared with naked people and, as with "Women in Love" (1970) they were advertised "with Full Frontal Nudity".

“Full Monty”

Made popular by the 1997 film starring Robert Carlyle. The term 1st appeared in 1986 in a book called "Street Talk, the language of Coronation Street". It means the full amount or all of it. When ordering food to have delivered the full monty would be the whole menu. One possible origin could be a Spanish card game called "Monte" or from the street tailors "Burton" who's full name is Montague Burton thus to order a full set of clothes from Monty's would be appropriate. Thus to take off all ones clothes would be to take off the Full Monty.

“I don't care what the papers say about me as long as they spell my name right”

This is said to have been said by American Tammany leader "Big Tim" Sullivan.

LAUGHTER

“Laugh and the world Laughs with You. Weep and You Weep alone; For the sad old Earth must borrow its mirth, but has trouble enough of its own” by Ella Wheeler Wilcox (1855-1919)

It is often misquoted as “Laugh and the world Laughs with You. Cry and You Cry alone” and comes from the poem Solitude.

LUCK QUOTE often used in plays and shows.

“I'm a Great Believer in Luck and I find the harder I work the more I have of it” by Thomas Jefferson (1743 –1826)USA President.

“Its Not over till its over”

This originated in the USA in 1973 when it was said by Baseball star Yogi Berra.

“Its Not over till the Fat Lady Sings”

This is said to have originated in the USA when in May 1978 commentator Dan Cook (San Antonio TV Sports Editor) famously used it at a baseball game. However it could have been an earlier phrase referring to the opera by Richard Wagner called “Der Ring Des Nibelungen” and in particular the fourth opera of the Ring Cycle “Gotterdammerung” (The Twilight of the Gods) when Valkyrie Brunnhilde (usually played by a “Fat lady” with a horned helmet, spear and round shield) makes her entrance.

Fred Shapiro quoted the phrase in his book “The Yale book of Quotations” which appeared in the Dallas Morning News on the 10th March 1976. He quotes Texas Tech sports information director Ralph Carpenter who after his athletics team were on the brink of winning he said “Right, the opera ain’t over until the fat lady sings”.

One other origin may be from the deep south of USA (The Bible belt) in the form of “Church ain’t over till the Fat lady sings”.

“Knock Knock Who’s There?”

The opening line of many jokes started life in the play “Macbeth” by William Shakespeare (1605-6).

MACBETH SCENE II The Same

(Knocking within, Enter a Porter)

Porter Here’s a knocking indeed! If a man were Porter of Hell-gate, he sould have old turning the key.

(Knocking within)

Knock,

Knock, Knock! Who’s There, I’ the name of Beelzebub? Here’s a farmer, that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty: Come in time; have napkins andow about you; here you’ll sweat for’t.

The ORIGIN OF THE KNOCK KNOCK JOKE happened some 300 years after William Shakespeare. The easiest Knock Knock Joke is “Knock Knock”, “Who’s There”, “Doctor”, “Doctor Who”, “Yes that’s right”.

The Joke format is used all round the world here are some opening examples.

France	Toc-Toc
Holland	Klop-Klop
Japan	Kon-Kon

The Spread of the joke format seems to have reached the world at various times.

South Africa	1950’s
Cape Town	1953

“Music, Mystro, Please!”

British Band leader Harry Leader (.d. 1987) used this phrase in his broadcasts from 1943 (Started broadcasting in 1933) onwards. The phrase comes from a song written by Herb Magidson and Allie Wrubel which was sung by Flannigan and Allen in the film “These Foolish Things”.

“O Romeo, Romeo, Wherefore Art Thou Romeo”

This is quoted on during the balcony scene often used in sketches. The word “Wherefore” at the time of Shakespeare’s writing meant “Why” and not where as in modern English. The meaning of the phrase is why it is Romeo and not someone else . Someone who her family would not object to as they did with Romeo’s Family. The context of the quote is that the parents of both Romeo and Juliet are at loggerheads with each other.

“Put a Penny on the Drum”

Not a well known saying but the story behind it is worthy of inclusion.

In 1941 Liverpool Comedian Clay Keyes in a BBC Radio programme called “The Old Town Hall” started the phrase when he would set a musical riddle for members of the orchestra. These questions

were sent in by listeners. If the band failed get the riddle they paid a forfeit to charity which the would put onto the drum. An example of the riddle is :-

Q Where did the salt and vinegar go ?

A All over the pla(i)ce (the band would then play the tune)

An earlier example of this phrase was Stanley Holloway's song "Penny on the Drum" in 1937. during the First World War a Game called "Crown and Anchor" was played. To take part you had to put a penny on the drum to qualify to start.

In the 1940's the Salvation Army in Canada sang "Hallelujah, Hallelujah, throw a nickel on the drum and you'll be saved."

“Rhubarb, Rhubarb”

The phrase use to talk in the background of a play or film / Tv programme. The use of this theatrical nonsense coined the verb "To Rhubarb" meaning to talk nonsense. The use according to Nigel Reese could be connected with the rhyming slang for Fart (Rhubarb Tart) or its slang use to denote Male or female genitals.

Another phrase used by actors is "My fiddle, my fiddle, my fiddle"

“Send in / on the Clowns”

The tradition that the show must continue despite problems is just as relevant in the circus as it is in the theatre. to this end if there is a problem with the show it is the job of the clown to entertain the crowds while the problem is sorted out and to keep the audiences mind on something else thus to keep the show going "Send in the Clowns".

“The Butler Did it”

The actual origin of the term is unknown but it was in use during 1916 when a London cinema audience member is quoted as saying "The Butler did it after the last episode of a film series called "The Exploits of Elaine" (Played by Pearl White) in which the Detective Called Craig Kennedy discovers that Bennet the Butler had committed the murder.

Unusually the Butler never does the crime so the phrase is used as a sort of music hall joke.

Films that have had the butler committing the crime are; -

1951 The Ivory Dagger

1956 Landscape with Dead Dons (By Robert Robinson) At the end of the production the Oxford Detective Inspector turns to Dimpleby and hands him his coffee cup to put it on his tray with the lines "It always turns out to be the butler in the end".

1957 My Man Godfrey (Not a Whodunit)

In 1958 drummer Frank Butler, recorded an instrumental record called "The Butler Did it".

One actor in Scotland tended to get drunk quite often and would belt out the line "No need to wait to the end, the Butler did it". After he had done this a few times during a season of Agatha Christie plays he was sacked. Ironically when he was performing the plays never had the butler doing the Murder, but on the week he was sacked the Butler really did it (Story told by Alan Melville to Nigel Reese).

“The Real McCoy”

Two possible starts for this phrase.

The Whisky distillers Messrs G. Mackay promoted their product in 1870 as "The Real McKay" The McCoy part comes from the fact that the Clan McCoy's principle branch is the McKay family.

My favourite claim to the phrase comes from America where Welterweight boxing champion "Kid" McCoy in the late 1890's was asked by a man in a bar to prove he was who he said he was. Mc Coy punched him once, when the man came round the "Kid" declared that this was indeed the "Real McCoy".

“The Show must go on”

The title of a Queen number, a film from 1937 and a song of the same title written by Ira Gershwin and Jerome Kern for the film Cover Girl (1944). The phrase does go back a little before that to 1930 but seems to have originated earlier.

“There's a Cheque in the Post”

Used as a running joke in the Spike Milligan Q8 series on the BBC in 1979. The saying may have been earlier.

“There's no such thing as Bad publicity”.

Irish playwright Dominic Behan is quoted as saying "There's no such thing as Bad publicity except your own obituary".

“This one will run and run”

The first use of this phrase is said to have come from a review in the Sun Newspaper by Fergus Cashin.

“We shall not see his like again”

Seen in many an obituary this quote comes from Hamlet Act 1. ii.187 (1600). The Prince says of his late father : "A was a man, take him for all in all; I shall not look upon his like again. "

Theatrical stories

ACTOR'S STORIES

SARAH BERNHARDT

Sarah Bernhardt was obsessed with death and at the age of 20 she persuaded her parents to buy her a rosewood coffin lined with white satin. She often slept in it and was eventually buried in it when she died at the age of 79.

PLAYS

THE ENTERTAINER

Written in 1957 by John Osbourne the title came from an instrumental tune called "The Entertainer" by Scott Joplin who in turn got it from J.R. Johnson.

THE LADY OF LYONS by Lord Lytton

The first night of the play did not go as planned . The Audience at the first night performance were left waiting for the curtain to rise but after an hour they decided to go home because the stage crew were unable to raise the Fire curtain. The Play never opened that night.

ACTOR FACTS

1st known Actress to appear on stage was Margaret Hughes, Prince Rupert's mistress playing Desdemona in Othello at a theatre in Claire Market, London on the 8 December 1660.

The last actor to play female parts in serious drama was Edward Kynaston .d. 1706.

There are 7 basic plots

- 1) Cinderella
 - 2) Achilles / Tragedy
 - 3) Faust / Horror
 - 4) Romeo & Juliet / Romance
 - 5) Circe / entrapment
 - 6) The Hero and the Quest
 - 7) Orestes / Revenge story.
- (From the 1994 list compiled by David Cotts)

There are 12 Laughter promoting events in the theatre.

- 1) Novelties
 - 2) Physical Deformities
 - 3) Moral Deformities & Vices
 - 4) Disorderliness
 - 5) Small Misfortune
 - 6) Indecencies
 - 7) Pretences
 - 8) Want of Knowledge or Skill
 - 9) The Incongruous and Absurd
 - 10) Word Play
 - 11) The Expression of a Merry Mood
 - 12) Outwitting or Getting the Better of a Person
- (From the 1902 "Essay on Laughter" by Sully Prudhomme, based on the Greek philosopher Aristotle's finding)

There is a place on the stage for everyone to perform and is not superstitious clap trap. Page 14 of this file.

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QUOTE UN-QUOTE

“Acting is all about honesty. If you can fake that, you’ve got it made” **George Burns**

“Acting is the most minor of gifts. After all Shirley Temple could do it when she was four”
Katherine Hepburn (Actress)

“All actors should be treated like Cattle” or “I never said all actors are cattle. What I said was that all actors should be treated like cattle”
Sir Alfred Hitchcock 1920s

“All the World’s a Stage, and all the men and women merely Players: They have their exits and entrances

William Shakespeare – Jacques in As you like it

“An actor is the kind of guy who if you ain’t talking about him ain’t listening”
George Glass 1973 (Brando Ch 8) (sometimes attributed to Marlon Brando)

“Any actress with a deep voice is hailed by male critics for her wit, shrewdness, intellectuality – simply because she sounds like a man”
Kenneth Tynan 24 Oct 1972 (Diary)

“Anyone wishing to avoid the crowds when leaving, please wait until the end of the show”
Humphrey Lyttleton (I’m sorry I haven’t a clue)

“How many Actors does it take to change a lightbulb? One hundred. One to change the lightbulb and ninety nine to say I could have done that”
Anon 1992 (And I quote – actors and acting – Ashton Applewhite compiler)

“I enjoy travel, and with an act like mine it’s a damn good thing I do”
Les Dawson 1982 (The malady lingers on)

“If I get a hard audience they are not going to get away until they laugh” **Ken Dodd 20 Sept 1990**

“I know two kinds of audience only – one coughing and one not coughing”
Arthur Schnabel (My life in music)

“It don’t mean a thing if it ain’t got that swing” **Duke Ellington and Irving Mills (Song)**

“I’ve been working in show business for Eighty-six years, if this keeps up maybe I should consider making it my Career”
George Burns 1989 (All my best friends)

“Long experience has taught me that in England nobody goes to the theatre unless he or she has bronchitis”
James Agate 1935-1948 (Ego ch 6)

“My Dressing room was so small, Every time I stood up, I hit my Head on the Chain”
Eric Morecambe and Ernie Wise 1979

“Please do not shoot the pianist. He is doing his best” **Oscar Wilde (Impressions of America)**

“Scratch an actor – and you’ll find an actress” **Dorothy Parker 1937 (Ballade of Great Weariness)**

(about Katherine Hepburn) “She runs the gamut of emotions from A to B”
Dorothy Parker (reviewing The Lake 1933)

“Singers all have the same fault. When asked to perform for their friends they never will; when no one asks them they never stop”
Horace Satires c 30bc (Bk1 No 3)

“The Art of Acting consists in keeping people from Coughing”
Sir Ralph Richardson 19 Jan 1947 the Observer.

“The scenery was beautiful but the actors got in front of it” **Alexander Woolcott**

“The trouble with nude dancing is that not everything stops when the music stops”
Robert Helpmann 1968 (review of Oh Calcutta)

“Two cannibals are eating a clown. One turns to the other and says, Does this taste funny to you”
Tommy Cooper + others

“You estimate the position of an actor by the time he is late for rehearsal. If he (I don’t say a word about ladies, they are always an hour late for everything, bless ‘em) is twenty minutes behind, he is most likely mere utility. If a man keeps everyone waiting an hour and a half you may put him down as a star.”
Jerome K Jerome 1888 (On stage and Off Ch 5)

(Comic) “What time would you like to leave tonight? (Audience) About 11 o clock (Comic) then you are only staying for the first half then” **Ken Dodd (Comedian)**

CATCHPHRASES

Arthur Askey I Thank You

Bruce Forsythe Nice to see you to see you nice
What’s the Scores on the Doors (Generation Game)

Larry Grayson Shut that Door

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE CREATED THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE (See also William Shakespeare File)

William Shakespeare is responsible for creating many words and phrases we use in the English Language. Here are a few of them.

“Accommodation”

First appeared in print in the “Othello”

“A Horse, A Horse my Kingdom for a Horse”

First appeared in print in the “Richard III”

“Bedazzled”

First appeared in print in the “The Taming of the Shrew”

“Bedroom”

First appeared in print in the “A Midsummer Nights Dream” meaning a place to sleep on the ground.

“Employer”

First appeared in print in the “Much Ado about Nothing”

“Foppish”

First appeared in print in the “King Lear”

“Fortune-Teller”

First appeared in print in the “The Comedy of Errors”.

“Ill wind which blows no man to good”

First appeared in print in the “Henry IV Part 2”

“Knock Knock Whose There?”

The opening line of many jokes started life in the play “Macbeth” by William Shakespeare.

“Kissing”

First appeared in print in Various of Shakespeare’s Plays.

“Lament”

First appeared in print in Various of Shakespeare’s Plays.

“Laughable”

First appeared in print in the “Merchant of Venice”

“Laughing Stock”

First appeared in print in the “The Merry Wives of Windsor”

“Laugh Yourself into Stitches”

First appeared in print in the “Twelfth Night”

“Murder most Foul”

First appeared in print in the “Hamlet” – Associated with Agatha Christie.

“Naked Truth”

First appeared in print in the “Love’s Labours Lost”

“Pomp and Circumstance”

First appeared in print in the “Othello”

“Silliness”

First appeared in print in the “Othello”.

“The Game is afoot”

First appeared in “Henry IV” – The phrase is usually associated with “Sherlock Holmes”.

“Traditional”

First appeared in print in the “Richard III” in its first use as an adjective.

“Wild Goose Chase”

First appeared in print in the “Romeo and Juliet” – Name of a later play.

“Zany”

First appeared in print in the “Love’s Labour Lost” a word from the Italian commedia.