

IN SEARCH OF LORD STRANGE: Dynamic Patronage in the North West

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Henrye Earle of darbye: with his sonne. fardinando. Lord Strange.
Came to this Cittye in August. And was honorably received. by the
mayor into his howse and did lye there two Nightes: mr parvise
Scollers: playd A Commodie out of the book of Terence before
hym. The Shepeards playe played at the hie Crosse. with other
Trivmphes vpon. the Rode eye ...

(Mayors List 13: Cheshire and Chester Archives
and Local Studies, ZCR 60/83 fol. 13^v)¹

Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, appears in the *Cheshire including Chester* dramatic records only once, on the occasion of a two-day visit to the city with his father in August 1578, when the pair was nobly entertained by the mayor. Quite exceptionally, they were treated to a performance of the Painters' *Shepherds Play*, despite its suppression along with Chester's other Whitsun biblical plays three years previously. The mayor, Thomas Bellin, apparently felt confident enough to allow the remounting of one of these controversial pageants for the play-loving visitors. It is evident that Earl Henry, even though some might have expected him as an ecclesiastical commissioner for the diocese to disapprove, was nonetheless amenable to this traditional entertainment. He had, in fact, a personal link with a member of the producing guild, the Painters, Glaziers, Embroiderers, and Stationers. Thomas Chaloner, a prominent member of the guild, had been recently employed by Earl Henry to paint a magnificent new screen for the Great Hall at Lathom.²

But what of Earl Henry's companion on this occasion? Ferdinando was the son and heir of Henry Stanley, fourth Earl of Derby and Lord of the Isle of Man. Styled Lord Strange of Knokyn from October 1572, he became fifth Earl of Derby at his father's death on 25 September 1593. The family held extensive lands in many counties but their principal base was in south-western Lancashire where the palatial seat at Lathom House and another home at Knowsley a few miles from Liverpool were their preferred residences.³ They were also the dominant landowners in neighbouring Cheshire, with powerful influence in the city of Chester.⁴

The fortunes of the family had been set in the previous century by Lord Thomas Stanley, whose skilful management of his career successfully negotiated the turbulent reigns of Edward IV, Edward V, and Richard III, the latter despite Lord Thomas' second marriage to Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry Tudor. A grateful Henry VII later rewarded his canny stepfather with the earldom and major land acquisitions.⁵ With increasing interest, the Earls of Derby engaged in the patronage of entertainers, an initial preference for bearwards progressing to the Fourth Earl's company of actors who seem to have toured on an annual basis for two decades, their career culminating in three performances at Court between 1580 and 1583. Ferdinando therefore inherited a tradition of theatrical patronage which he embraced at a young age.

Ferdinando Stanley's cultural influences were varied. Although family records have not survived from the 1570s, we can trace his matriculation from St John's College, Oxford, in 1572, in the same period that he was recorded as an honoured guest at a play at Corpus Christi College.⁶ First summoned to spend time at Court at Christmas 1571, 'that he might here lern some nurture and be fashioned in good manners, mete for one such ~~son as~~ as he is and hereafter shall be by cours of nature mete to serve ye realme', he served as a squire in the royal household as a teenager.⁷ The lavish entertainments at Court during Christmas and Shrovetide would therefore have been part of his formative experience, the most consistently featured performers in the period being Leicester's Men and the boys' companies.⁸ There is also early evidence that Lord Strange participated in festive provincial receptions as a member of Court. The detailed civic record of the Royal Entry at Worcester on 13 August 1575 includes his name among the nobles in attendance on the Queen on a summer progress that also featured a two-week extravaganza in July at Leicester's Kenilworth residence.⁹

Ferdinando was not only a cultivated young nobleman at the highest level of the landed aristocracy. He was also the son of Lady Margaret Clifford, great-grand-daughter of Henry VII, and through her had one of the better claims to the throne, albeit a troubled one, given his mother's continuing attachment to the Catholic faith. Lady Margaret, who was estranged from her husband by the 1570s, lost her comfortable place at Court in later years when suspicion grew that she was dabbling in divination and witchcraft, perhaps with an eye to glimpsing her son's future prospects.¹⁰ Earl Henry, on the other hand, was more securely positioned and probably graced with some of the strategic skills that his

fifteenth-century ancestor had employed in negotiating rival factions. Educated at court with Edward VI, Henry Stanley was loyal to the Protestant reformist cause but married Lady Margaret in a Catholic ceremony at Whitehall in the presence of Queen Mary and King Philip. Under Elizabeth he would be charged with a potent political role in the North West as Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire and Cheshire and as a member of ecclesiastical commissions to suppress papist sympathizers in the region.¹¹ Yet he simultaneously maintained friendly relations with members of the Lancashire gentry who kept their loyalty to the old faith. The one Derby household book that survives from the period, partially covering the years 1586–1590, includes the names of such guests as two vigilant Protestant members of the ecclesiastical commission, Bishop Chadderton of Chester and Sir Edmund Trafford of Manchester, alongside a couple of steadfast recusant Lancashire gentry, Sir Thomas Hesketh and Sir Richard Shireburn.¹²

Records of provincial touring in civic and household accounts beyond the North West demonstrate that Ferdinando Stanley was an early adopter of the family's patronage tradition. While still a teenager of seventeen or eighteen — his birth date is uncertain — a troupe under his patronage surfaces in the southern provinces at Southampton in June 1577. We have a rather precise record from the Southampton Book of Fines: 'Item paid to my Lorde stranges *servantes* v young men *vauters* & *lumpers* comonlie called *lumpers* or *tumblers* the 29 of Iune — x s'.¹³ A tumbling troupe is clearly differentiated in this account from the acting companies, and is also on record, probably on the same southern tour, at Exeter where their 13s 4d reward equalled that of the much more prominent Leicester's Men.¹⁴

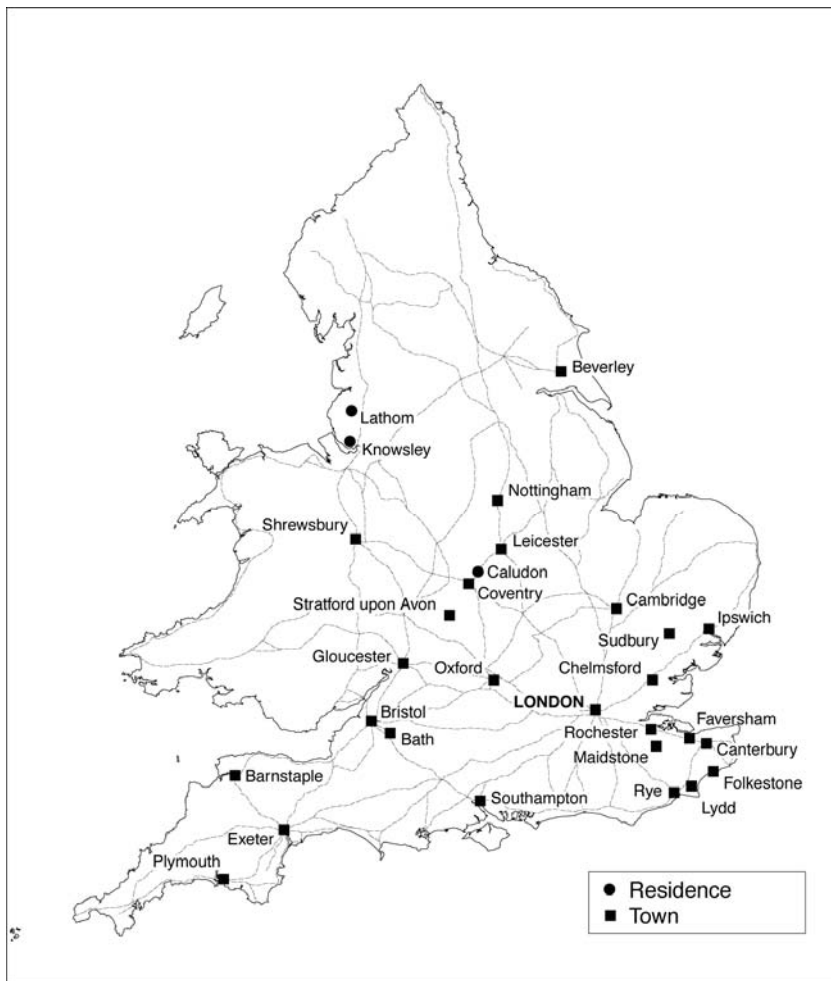
What motivated Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, to launch his career as a patron with such a company of tumbling players? A notable performance during the Kenilworth festivities is worth pausing over. The Earl of Leicester had engaged an Italian tumbler as a special act for the show presented on 14 July, a performance of remarkable dexterity described enthusiastically by Robert Langham.¹⁵ This remarkable Italian tumbler is one of several recorded between 1574 and 1575 in the provinces and at Court. On 19 June 1574, the day after Leicester's Men played for town officials, an Italian tumbler performed at Ipswich, receiving the same 15s reward.¹⁶ Italian performers were also at Nottingham in September 1574 where they were paid 'for *serteyne* pastymes that they shewed before mr meare & his brethren'.¹⁷ As at Ipswich, their tour may have coincided with Leicester's Men whose payment on 1 September immediately precedes

theirs. The double coincidence of Italian travellers intersecting with the tour of Leicester's Men at Ipswich and Nottingham may point to an interest on the part of Leicester himself in featuring a tumbling act at Kenilworth the following year. The timing of their travels would not preclude the possibility that these were the same Italian players who followed the royal progress of the Court in July 1574 and 'made pastyme' at Windsor and Reading.¹⁸ Still on the road, Italian 'tumblers or players' also performed at the port town of Dover sometime during the September 1574–September 1575 accounting period.¹⁹

Among the numerous late-medieval and early-Tudor entertainers known to have toured before 1575, acrobatic performers are rarely noted.²⁰ Only a handful of tumblers, vaulters, or rope-walkers, most without patrons, can be identified in provincial accounts between 1465 and 1573.²¹ There were undoubtedly varying degrees and styles of acrobatic talent on display during these years, so how comparable such entertainers were to the 1570s Italian troupe is moot. Indeed, it is hard to resist the theory that touring acts of spectacular acrobatic skill were innovative in the provinces in the 1570s and grew in popularity in subsequent decades.²²

There are many questions arising. Did the Italians belong to one or more visiting troupes? What influence might they have had on English players with acrobatic skills? More specifically, was the teenage Lord Strange influenced by his experience of such acts with the Court? Within the Stanley household itself, Strange's troupe of tumblers would have varied the entertainment options, given the already available talents of Derby's actors.

Annual tours, mostly on record in the South, show that the two family troupes did follow the same itinerary in some years between 1577 and 1581. At Faversham in 1577–1578 and at Bath in 1578–1579 and again in 1580–1581, both Strange's and Derby's players are recorded, though comparing the rewards yields at least one surprise.²³ Strange's troupe seems to have launched itself into touring with considerable clout, despite the junior status of its patron, but why would they receive a higher reward than Derby's at Bath in 1578–1579 and as much as Leicester's at Exeter in 1577? Surely they were offering something special? A dearth of surviving records from north-western towns and households frustrates a confident assessment of where Strange's troupe may have toured in that region during his first decade of patronage. But perhaps there was less need to represent his name in the North West where the Stanleys' influence was pre-eminent?



Cartography: C.A. Robinson

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FIG. 1: Map of Locations visited by Strange's/Derby's Men 1576-1594

Within a mere three years, just after Christmas 1579/1580, Lord Strange's 'tumblers' had achieved the highest honour and reward of all – a command performance before the Queen at Whitehall.²⁴ Christmastide court festivities for two of the next three years continued to feature tumbling and 'feats of activity' by Strange's performance troupe, presumably the culmination of the annual tours recorded in the provincial accounts, with the likely addition of entertainment provided for the Stanley household at its Cannon Row, London residence or at one of its residences in the North West.²⁵ Unfortunately, before 1587 we have no family records, apart from stray correspondence, to help trace these performers at the Lancashire family seats or their relationship with their patron, or for that matter, his movements between Court and country, but the evidence of the 1586–1590 Household Book does suggest a pattern which will be outlined below.

In any case, we do have one named performer from Strange's troupe of tumblers and an important one at that. John Symons is named as the payee and leader of the troupe at Court in the Chamber accounts for the 1 January 1582/1583 'Sundrey feates of Tumbling and Activitie' though the Revels accounts simply attribute the performance to Strange's 'servauntes'.²⁶ However, after these years of Court engagements, the troupe under Strange's patronage disappears from the royal entertainment calendar. Symons may have had a star temperament – or he may have been lured away from Lord Strange's patronage by the upwardly mobile Edward de Vere, seventeenth Earl of Oxford. The Court records for Christmas 1584/1585 help to explain the shifting circumstances: Symons and his fellows performed their popular feats of activity and vaulting that year but for the first time under the patronage of de Vere.²⁷ In 1585/1586 and 1587/1588, Symons and company maintained their Court appearances during the Christmas season, but without a patron named.²⁸ It seems probable that the Queen herself assumed patronage shortly thereafter for when Symons' showmanship was taken into the provinces in 1588, his tumbling act was part of the touring Queen's Men. Their first notice in the autumn of 1588 at the town of Nottingham singles out Symons as lead member, but sporadically specific accounts for the next two years identify both tumblers and rope-dancers in the Queen's Company.²⁹

Symons, therefore, may have moved from Strange's patronage soon after 1583 and the dwindling records of Strange's troupe suggest that their heyday was over although they surface occasionally in the provincial accounts until 1584–1585.³⁰ The level of the two provincial rewards on

record is significantly lower than in times past. A company of musicians under Strange's patronage also appears for the first time in the Earl of Leicester's entourage in the Low Countries in 1586 but subsequent notices are few: at Nottingham the same summer and a couple of years later at Coventry.³¹

Ferdinando Stanley's patronage of theatre has been recognized primarily for what I would suggest was his second troupe, an acting company best known for its years of success as 'Strange's Men' in London and at Court, well-documented from 1590 to September 1593 when it briefly took the name 'Derby's Men' upon the patron's accession to that title.³² A few provincial records help us track the resurgence of this second innovative performance troupe, which played household, London, Court, and country between 1588 and 1594 when their patron unexpectedly died. The timing of the re-formation of a troupe of professional players may coincide, as luck in this instance allows, with the relatively brief period covered by the only extant Stanley household book. Unlike Lancashire gentry households, the Stanleys do not seem to have indulged in the myriad pipers and mummers who probably typified the local culture of this under-populated and introverted county.³³ The household book indicates that their preference was for the professional theatre offered by the playing companies featured in London and at Court — Leicester's, the Queen's, and Essex's, apart from some players (simply referred to in a familiar generic way by the family steward) who have been recognized by some as the home troupe, the Lord Strange's Men.³⁴

I have outlined elsewhere the case for identifying the 'players' named without patron or town of origin who performed for the assembled Stanley family, including Lord and Lady Strange, at some point during the traditional festive seasons of Christmas and Shrovetide between 1587 and 1589/1590.³⁵ The Christmas season 1587/1588 found the Stanley family at Knowsley, with the otherwise undesignated players in attendance, although their departure is duly noted on 30 December. Did their travels then take them through Coventry? The only notice of Strange's players on the road in the late 1580s is at Coventry at some time during the November 1587–November 1588 accounting year.³⁶ Again the reward is a relatively modest, 5s, half the amount of the reward given to Strange's tumbling troupe in 1578–1579.³⁷ Were they heading to London? At this point, we don't know.

During this era Ferdinando Stanley had been granted the office of Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1585, assuming

administrative responsibilities in the North West during his father's increasing absences, after his appointment to the Privy Council and notably as ambassador to the French court in 1585 and 1587, and to the Duke of Parma in the Spanish Netherlands in 1588.³⁸ He successfully managed the mustering of a defensive force in the North West during the anxious months of the Armada crisis in 1588 and soon after, on 28 January 1588/1589, he was summoned to Parliament as Baron Strange.³⁹ The apparent grooming for succession to the earldom, the new opportunities to build his reputation in London and at Court, and a genuine interest in the arts, may have persuaded Ferdinando Stanley to encourage a second performance troupe to wear his livery. If some players were in place by Christmastide 1587/1588, there may soon have been a boost to their numbers and talents.

Leicester's Men, who played twice at Lathom in July 1587, were forced by their patron's death in September 1588 to seek another patron. It may be no coincidence that several of their most talented members found a willing alternative in Lord Strange. The recruiting of personnel for acting companies in this period is tricky to trace with assurance, but there is some consensus of opinion that Leicester's comic star, the clown Will Kemp, as well as at least two others of the old company, George Bryan and Thomas Pope, migrated to Strange's patronage after Leicester's death.⁴⁰ If so, they might have been part of the troupe that played at Lathom for their patron and his extended family during the Christmas season (29 December–10 January) before relocating to London, where they can be found at the Cross Keys in November 1589 stoutly defying the authorities.⁴¹ Although they appeared in the North West during the Stanley family's Shrovetide celebrations at Lathom in 1589/1590, quite strikingly, the troupe does not show up again in provincial account records on extended tour until the summer closure of the public theatres sent them on the road in 1592. These players under Strange's patronage, unlike their predecessors, seem to have set their sights on achieving success primarily in London and at Court, a feat they accomplished quite remarkably between 1589 and 1593. That their first Court appearance in 1590/1591 included feats of activities seems only appropriate, given the first phase of Lord Strange's patronage.⁴²

The possibility that a young Shakespeare may have been among those transferred has aroused much speculation, but the sources resist conclusion on this tantalizing subject. What is certain is that Shakespeare was one of several brilliant playwrights writing for the new Strange's Men during their heyday in London and at Court in the early 1590s. Strange's repertory,

known from the title pages of a handful of extant published plays, and from the detailed accounts in Philip Henslowe's *Diary* itemizing their performances at the Rose Theatre, also included plays by Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, the hitmakers of their day. It is also generally accepted that Strange's Men was the largest company of its era, likely modelled on the Queen's Men, but able to mount more ambitious and daring theatre than the royal company could compete with by the end of their first decade. Styles changed and some of the Queen's star actors like Richard Tarleton, John Bentley, and William Knell had passed away, to be replaced in the public and royal eye by Edward Alleyn, the Admiral's Man who was lured into Strange's company by early in 1591.⁴³

By 1592 Strange's Men were dominant at Court during the Christmas and Shrovetide seasons, with the Rose Theatre as a base for extended performances in repertory.⁴⁴ What seems to have forced this troupe on the provincial road were theatre closures in the London area resulting from Privy Council inhibitions against playing during 1592–1593.⁴⁵ In late June 1592 they left the Rose to tour the South via Kent and Sussex as far as Bath, Bristol, and Gloucester in the West and then returning via Coventry, Oxford, and Cambridge in time to perform three plays at Court during Christmas.⁴⁶

The licence issued to Strange's Men on 6 May 1593 by the Privy Council allowing them to play anywhere free from plague and beyond a seven-mile radius of plague-ridden London signals their desire to tour that year, in lieu of performing on Bankside. Recognition of their quality is expressed in the license; touring will enable them to exercise their talents and make some money 'that they maie be in the better readines hereafter for her Majesty's service whensoever they shalbe thereunto called'.⁴⁷ The players are named — Edward Alleyn (still identified as a Lord Admiral's Man), William Kemp, Thomas Pope, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, and George Bryan 'being al one companie' for the purpose of this tour license.

The sources for their provincial itinerary are more varied than usual for 1593 because that rare and much desired item, an actor's letter from the road, survives from two locations on the route. Thanks to Edward Alleyn, it is possible to confirm the likely direction of the 1593 tour, which began north-east of London, stopping at Chelmsford where Alleyn wrote his first extant letter home.⁴⁸ Civic accounts confirm a southern route thereafter, through Southampton to Bath and Bristol where Alleyn wrote his next surviving letter, on the 'wensday after saint Jams his day'.⁴⁹ The letter lays

out where the troupe was heading next on a tour projected to last till All Hallowstide. The road North would take them through Shrewsbury and Chester and then through the Pennines to York, all stops where letters from home might be sent.

The Shrewsbury bailiffs' annual account confirms their appearance there sometime between 25 July and 28 September.⁵⁰ Chester lacks its city and cathedral treasurers' accounts this year but it would be surprising indeed if Strange's Men did not play there. The 1593–1594 city treasurers' account, which is extant, begins 12 October 1593, so if the troupe played Chester they must have done so before that date.⁵¹

The next stop mentioned in Alleyn's letter is York, but in the North West there were other attractions possible at the various Stanley residences, not many miles from Chester. We know from his letter dated 26 September 1593 in the Salisbury papers that Ferdinando Stanley was then in residence at New Park, less than a mile from Lathom where his father had died the previous day.⁵² Given Henry's deteriorating condition, Lord Strange may have been at one or another of the Stanley homes during the late summer. While Ferdinando's appetite for entertainment may have been dampened by his father's final illness, the mention of Chester on the company's itinerary suggests that a stop to visit their patron in residence not many miles from that city could have been on the agenda for the tour (we should probably not expect that Alleyn would suggest sending personal post along to his patron's residence).

Less persuasive, it seems to me, is a case that has been made by David George for an extended stop in the tiny town of Prescott near the Knowsley estate. Whatever the purpose of the short-lived playhouse built in Prescott sometime after 1592, it would surely have been a major fall from grace for what was arguably the premier acting troupe in the land to embrace it as an alternative to the Rose during the plague year. As George notes, Prescott had a population of approximately 400 and was 'a poor place with its inhabitants engaged in the making of clay pots and coal mining'.⁵³ Not only did Strange's Men have other places to go on tour during the autumn but their patron had more serious matters on his mind than throwing up a purpose-built theatre for them in the improbable location of Prescott. Ferdinando was thinking of the transfer of some of his father's offices when he wrote so quickly to Sir Robert Cecil on 26 September, but he was also soon demoralized by the cloud of deep suspicion arising from the treasonous activities of the recusant Richard Hesketh who approached him in late September about pursuing the Stanley claim to the throne.⁵⁴ The

new Earl of Derby reported Hesketh to the authorities with reasonable speed but he was implicated in the process nonetheless and seems to have had a fall from favour at court.⁵⁵ Could this be why his acting troupe was not called back to Court after all during the 1593/1594 Christmas and Shrovetide seasons? Certainly his letters to Cecil during the ensuing months are anxious ones, and the appeal sent by his wife invoking family feeling (Cecil was her cousin) contains the touching sentence 'I dowbte not but he shall be crossed in court: and crossed in his country but I inmagine his vprightens and honorable cariage will by the meanes of soe good frindes as your father and your selfe vpon whose loue and kindensse he cheefely and only doth rely be able to support him agaynst any malles...'⁵⁶

That Strange's Men continued their tour in the autumn is not in doubt. Beyond Chester their next destination for post mentioned in Alleyn's letter was York. Yet they are not recorded among the companies rewarded there that year, either as Strange's or Derby's Men. Did they change their direction? Was there an accounting oversight? It is unlikely we will ever know. Did the troupe known as Derby's Men return to London by All Hallowstide as intended or did they remain on the road? And where were they during the first half of 1594, given the loss of their regular gig at Court? It is certain that they did not return to the Rose under Derby's patronage: when the Rose reopened between 27 December 1593 and 6 February 1593/1594, the resident company was Sussex's Men.⁵⁷

Two payments in the Midlands in early December 1593 confirm that they were still touring the provinces late in the year, stopping at Coventry, Lord Henry Berkeley's residence at Caludon Castle, and probably Leicester.⁵⁸ A final possible stop on the tour might have been a final performance for the patron at Knowsley or Lathom during Christmas; if they were not invited to play again at Court, as they may well have expected at the start of their 1593 summer tour, then reverting to an old custom of entertaining the Stanley family household in the North West during the festive season would have made a logical alternative, though no household book survives to prove that this indeed happened.

Judging by surviving correspondence, Ferdinando Stanley remained in Lancashire during this period, no longer in favour at Court because of his perceived flirtation with the recusant cause for a Catholic succession. His excruciatingly painful death on 16 April 1594 was widely suspected to have been brought on by poisoning, perhaps by a vengeful recusant, angry that he had reported Hesketh to the authorities, or perhaps by an agent of Burghley, ever watchful for the Queen's interests, especially in

Lancashire.⁵⁹ The Derby name must have been unpopular with the Queen and her advisors during these months before the Earl's death and we may wonder what the players under his patronage did as a result. Apparently not on the road and not at Court, there is general agreement that they resurfaced in London by June 1594 under new patronage as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, playing with Lord Admiral's Men in repertory at Newington Butts.⁶⁰

Although the extraordinary talents assembled in the company must have helped to ensure their preferred status at Court, the patron's rôle as an advocate for performance opportunities and as a cultural sponsor is important to recognize. However faulty his political judgment may have been in the end, the emerging patterns of Ferdinando Stanley's patronage suggest that he associated his name with two of the most innovative troupes in the period. By 1594 when the core of his second company moved to another patron, they were destined for lasting success, initially as the Chamberlain's Men, the company of Shakespeare, and then, from 1603, as the players of the King himself.

Records of Early English Drama

NOTES

1. *REED: Cheshire including Chester* edited Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, and David Mills, 2 vols (University of Toronto Press, 2007) 1 182.
2. Chaloner's poem directed to Derby and describing this work, commissioned in 1576, survives at the British Library in MS Harley 1927 fol. 10.
3. For the architectural history of these residences and a lesser house at New Park near Lathom see my entries on the *REED Patrons and Performances Web Site* <<http://link.library.utoronto.ca/reed/>>.
4. Earl Henry would be appointed Lord Chamberlain of Chester on the death of the Earl of Leicester in 1588. For the Stanley Earls of Derby's influence in Chester, see further J.H.E. Bennett 'Two Elizabethan Chamberlains of the Palatinate of Chester' *Journal of the Architectural, Archaeological, and Historic Society of Chester* 20 (1914) 198–211.
5. See further my essay, 'A Family Tradition: Dramatic Patronage by the Earls of Derby' in *Region, Religion, and Patronage: Lancastrian Shakespeare* edited Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson (Manchester UP, 2003) 205–26.
6. See Joseph Foster *Alumni Oxonienses 1500–1714* 4 vols (Oxford: Parker, 1891–1892) 4 1409 and the 1572–1573 account entry in *REED: Oxford* edited John R. Elliott Jr and Alan H. Nelson (University), and Alexandra F. Johnston and

- Diana Wyatt (City) 2 vols (University of Toronto Press, and London: The British Library, 2004) 1 155.
7. From the Queen's letter dated 6 December 1571; Hatfield House: CP 158/147.
 8. See E.K. Chambers *The Elizabethan Stage* 4 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923) 4, Appendix A, 88–97.
 9. *REED: Herefordshire and Worcestershire* edited David N. Klausner (University of Toronto Press, 1990) 436.
 10. See further Barry Coward *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley and Earls of Derby 1385–1672: The Origins, Wealth and Power of a Landowning Family* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1983) 28–33 and J. J. Bagley *The Earls of Derby 1485–1985* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985) 54–6.
 11. Derby held the office of Lord Lieutenant for the two counties from 1572, the year of his succession to the earldom.
 12. The manuscript, kept by Derby's steward William Farington, is now held in Preston at the Lancashire Record Office, DDF 2429. The Household Book has undoubtedly survived because it was kept with miscellaneous other Stanley family papers in the Farington of Worden archives. See Coward *The Stanleys* xi–xii, for a brief account of the various misfortunes that befell the family archives.
 13. Southampton Record Office, SC5/3/1 (Book of Fines) fol. 165^v. My thanks to Peter Greenfield for this and other Southampton records which will be published in his edition (with Jane Cowling) of Hampshire dramatic records in the *REED* series.
 14. Full details of all references to the touring records of professional companies cited in this essay from published *REED* volumes can be found on the *REED Patrons and Performances* web site: <<http://link.library.utoronto.ca/reed/>>.
 15. Robert Laneham *Robert Langham: A Letter* with introduction, notes, and commentary by R.J.P. Kuin (Medieval and Renaissance Texts 2; Leiden: Brill, 1983) 48.
 16. Ipswich: Suffolk Record Office, C/3/2/1/1 (Ipswich Chamberlains' Accounts) fol. 56.
 17. Nottingham: Nottinghamshire Record Office, CA 1613 (Nottingham Chamberlains' Accounts) page 7. My thanks to John Coldewey for all references to his transcriptions from the Nottingham Chamberlains' Accounts for the Nottinghamshire collection, to be published in the *REED* series, with Dave Postles as co-editor.
 18. Kew: The National Archives, AO 3/907 page 117. See also K.M. Lea *Italian Popular Comedy: A Study in the Commedia dell'arte, 1560–1620 with special*

- reference to the *English Stage* 2 vols (New York: Russell and Russell, 1962) 2 352–8 for further instances of Italian players in England.
19. *REED: Kent Diocese of Canterbury* edited James M. Gibson, 3 vols (University of Toronto Press and London: British Library, 2002) 2 470. Other records of tumbling performers in the provinces during the same period occur in the south-west and at Cambridge but they are not specifically identified as Italian. See *REED: Devon* edited John M. Wasson (University of Toronto Press, 1986) 67, 154, and *REED: Cambridge* edited Alan H. Nelson, 2 vols (University of Toronto Press, 1989) 1 273.
 20. See further the *REED Patrons and Performances* web site for cumulative listing of pre-1642 patronised performers culled from the first nineteen volumes in the *REED* series.
 21. My search of published and in progress *REED* collections has yielded only five such acts with patrons: the prince's tumbler, 1474–1475; seven *saltors* of the Earl of Somerset, 1483–1484, both at Barnstaple; the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports' tumbler in Sandwich, 1510–1511; and at Selby Abbey, the prince's tumblers, c. 1480 and Thomas Darcy's tumbler, c. 1500 (the latter courtesy of Barbara D. Palmer from her *Yorkshire: West Riding* edition in progress with John M. Wasson: the Selby Bursars' Accounts at University of Hull: Brynmor Jones Library, DDLO/20/6 mb 8, and Leeds: Yorkshire Archaeological Society, MD282 mb 2).
 22. Philip Butterworth describes some of the more interesting examples in his chapter on 'Feats of activity: juggling, tumbling and dancing on the rope' in *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge UP, 2005) 26–48.
 23. For Faversham's adjacent rewards of 6s 8d to both Strange's and Derby's players see *REED: Kent: Diocese of Canterbury* 2 554. For the 5s 2d reward to Strange's Men and the 4s to Derby's Men at Bath in 1578–1579 see *REED: Somerset including Bath* edited James Stokes with Robert J. Alexander, 2 vols (University of Toronto Press, 1996) 1 12. Derby's Men received 15s at Bath in 1580–1581, while Strange's Men earned 7s 9d.
 24. *Malone Society Collections 6: Dramatic Records in the Declared Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber 1558–1642* edited David Cook with F.P. Wilson (Oxford: Oxford UP for Malone Society, 1962 for 1961) 16. Strange's tumblers received £10 on 15 January 1579/1580. The fact that Edmund Tilney, the Master of the Revels, was linked by marriage to the Stanleys undoubtedly also helped place Strange's troupe on the Court calendar: see further Scott McMillin and Sally-Beth MacLean *The Queen's Men and their Plays* (Cambridge UP, 1998) 14–17.
 25. For the £10 payments at Westminster (28 December 1581) and 1 January 1582/1583 at Windsor see *Malone Society Collections* 6 19, 21.

26. *Malone Society Collections* 6 21 and Kew: The National Archives, AO 3/907, 244.
27. *Malone Society Collections* 6 22.
28. *Malone Society Collections* 6 23, 24. Chambers' suggestion that a reference to 'Mr Standleyes Boyes' with John Symons in the 1585/1586 Christmas Court records may indicate a return to Lord Strange's patronage is implausible, given Ferdinando Stanley's noble status. Also, the 1585–1586 Faversham record cited as further evidence of the troupe's continuing existence is misdated by almost a decade: see *Elizabethan Stage* 2 119, compared with *REED: Kent: Diocese of Canterbury* 2 554, 559.
29. For details of the Queen's Men's tours, 1588–1590, see McMillin and MacLean *Queen's Men* 178–80. The Nottingham entry is in the Nottingham Chamberlains' Accounts: Nottinghamshire Archives, CA 1629 page 11.
30. The only known 1584–1585 appearance can be found in the Beverley Town Accounts for the year (Beverley: East Riding of Yorkshire Archives, BC/II/6/37, mb 3). My thanks to Diana Wyatt for this reference from her *REED* edition in progress. The other tour stop was at Barnstaple in 1583–1584.
31. The musicians' entries are published in *Household Accounts and Disbursement Books of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, 1558–1561, 1584–1586* edited Simon Adams *Camden Society series* 5: 6 (1995) 352–3 and *REED: Coventry* edited R.W. Ingram (University of Toronto Press and Manchester UP, 1981) 323. The Nottingham entry is in the Nottingham Chamberlains' Accounts: Nottinghamshire Archives, CA 1625 fol. 13.
32. The main published sources for the Strange/Derby troupes are John Tucker Murray *English Dramatic Companies 1558–1642* 2 vols (London: Constable, 1910) 1 86–91, 107–8 (as the 'Strange-Chamberlain company'); Chambers *Elizabethan Stage* 2 123–6; and Andrew Gurr *The Shakespearian Playing Companies* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 264–5, 274. There are errors and some confusion in these accounts which I hope to correct in a forthcoming study of Strange's Men, in collaboration with Lawrence Manley. Some of the correct details are already available on the *REED Patrons and Performances* web site.
33. For further discussion of Lancashire local entertainment traditions, see Sally-Beth Maclean 'A Road Less Travelled? Touring Performers in Medieval and Renaissance Lancashire' in *Porci ante Magaritam: Essays in honour of Meg Twycross* edited Sarah Carpenter, Pamela King, and Peter Meredith *Leeds Studies in English* NS 32 (2001) 321–43.
34. See 'A Family Tradition' 225 note 51 (see note 5 above) and, for example, Alvin Thaler 'Faire Em (and Shakspeare's Company?) in Lancashire' *PMLA* 46 (1931) 657–8, and William Farington *The Derby Household Books* edited F.R. Raines

- (Remains historical and literary connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester 31; Manchester: Chetham Society, 1835) 46.
35. See 'A Family Tradition' 217–18.
 36. *REED: Coventry* 321.
 37. *REED: Coventry* 290.
 38. See J.J. Bagley *The Earls of Derby 1485–1985* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985) 56–8.
 39. Concise details of Ferdinando Stanley's titles, offices and lands are given on the *REED Patrons and Performances* web site.
 40. See, for example, Andrew Gurr *Shakespearean Playing Companies* 199–202 and Murray *English Dramatic Companies* 1 73–5. For undisputed evidence of company membership, see the license naming Bryan, Kemp, and Pope among Strange's Men and issued on 6 May 1593 by the Privy Council (Kew: The National Archives, PC2/10 page 351).
 41. The Lord Mayor wrote in protest to Lord Burghley on 6 November to complain that Strange's Men had refused to observe his order to close the playhouses: see 'Dramatic Records from the Lansdowne Manuscripts' in *Malone Society Collections* 1.2 edited E.K. Chambers and W.W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford UP for Malone Society, 1908) 180–1.
 42. *Malone Society Collections* 6 27.
 43. See McMillin and MacLean *Queen's Men* 52–3, 166–9.
 44. Receipts from the seasons at the Rose 19 February–22 June 1592 and 29 December 1592–February 1592/1593 were documented by Philip Henslowe (Dulwich College, MS VII fols 7^r–8^v). Strange's men are also noted as playing for 3 days at the Newington Butts playhouse in an undated warrant from the Privy Council to the local JPs (among others) asking for their return to the Rose after a period of restraint (Dulwich College, MS VII fol. 27^r).
 45. Many of the key documents of control for the 1592–1593 period appear in Appendix D of Chambers *Elizabethan Stage* 310–14.
 46. References to their itinerary are — or soon will be — available on the *REED Patrons and Performances* web site.
 47. See note 40 above.
 48. Alleyn's letter, dated 2 May 1593, is now Dulwich College, MS 1 article 9.
 49. The Southampton Book of Fines furnishes no evidence for summer 1593 because pages for this year have been torn out of the manuscript. However, the Privy Council licence cited above was copied into the civic records and dated 3 July 1593, a strong indication that the company had passed that way and shown their warrant to play; Southampton Archives, SC2/6/5 (Knaplocke's

- Book) fol. 28v. Alleyn's second letter, to be dated 1 August, is now Dulwich College, MS 1 article 11. A third piece of correspondence, from Philip Henslowe directed to his son-in-law Alleyn at Bath is not explicitly dated, but it seems to be chronologically placed in the same MS (article 13), amongst other 1593 correspondence written while Alleyn was on the road with Strange's Men.
50. Shrewsbury: Shropshire Archives, 3365/535 bifolium 2 fol. [1]; the date, 24 July, appears at the top of the second bifolium, indicating the start of the accounts to follow.
 51. REED: *Cheshire including Chester* 1 247.
 52. The letter is addressed to Sir Robert Cecil and seeks his support, with Burghley's, for a smooth transmission of the lord lieutenantships for Cheshire and Lancashire, as well as the chamberlainship of Chester, from Ferdinando's father to himself; *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury, K.G., preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire* 24 parts (Historical Manuscripts Commission; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode etc. for HMSO, 1883–1976) 4 (1892) 378.
 53. David George 'The playhouse at Prescott and the 1592–94 plague' *Region, Religion and Patronage* edited Dutton, Findlay, and Wilson, 227–42, especially 227. In conversation David Mills and I have mused on the playhouse and its possible connection with the Prescott Grammar School, cited in the manorial records and abstract of the school accounts from the period; see REED: *Lancashire* edited David George (University of Toronto Press, 1991). For comparative interest, see also the intriguing Witton Grammar School playhouse record in REED: *Cheshire including Chester* 2 800–2.
 54. See above, note 52.
 55. See J.J. Bagley *The Earls of Derby 1485–1985* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1985) 64–7 for an account of Ferdinando's final months.
 56. Hatfield House, CP 170/16 (HMC Salisbury MSS 4 427–8). A letter from Derby to Sir Robert Cecil on 8 November 1593 notes 'sinse I ~~haue~~ came from the Courte I haue seene some directions for matters in this Cuntry: whearein I ame not writt vnto, as I euer was even when my father was alive./ I must mervale at it & informe you, then whome I rely on noe man more but your father affection, and trust./' (Hatfield House, CP 170/71r–71v; HMC Salisbury MSS 4 411). In mid-December Derby was still lobbying unsuccessfully for the office of Chamberlain of Chester, previously held by his father; HMC Salisbury MSS 4 437.
 57. Dulwich College, MS VII, fol. 8v.
 58. A 2 December payment to Derby's Men is noted in the Chamberlains' and Wardens' Account Book 2: Coventry Archives, A 7(b) page 245 (the year heading '1594' in REED: *Coventry* 341, refers to the year when the annual

accounts for 1593–1594 were delivered). See also Peter Greenfield ‘Entertainers of Henry, Lord Berkeley, 1593–4 and 1600–5’ *REED Newsletter* 8:1 (1983) 12–24, for the 5 December payment at Caludon from the Berkeley House Steward’s Book: Berkeley Castle Muniment Room, General Series Bound Book 107 fol. 51. A third undated payment for the year to Derby’s Men is found in the Leicester Chamberlains’ Accounts: Leicestershire Record Office, BR111/2/62 mb 2.

59. John Stow *The annales of England* (London: Ralfe Newbery, 1600; STC: 23335) 1275–7 gives a poignant account of Ferdinando’s final hours. Peter Thomson alludes to the contemporary rival rumours of his death by poisoning or by witchcraft but, without citing sources, also mentions ‘the likelier possibility that he had been dispatched on orders from Lord Burghley, whose whispering spies were the source of the alternative rumours’; *Shakespeare’s Professional Career* (Cambridge UP, 1992) 44. Reference is made to the latter suspicion in a document in the State Papers Domestic (16 August 1594): see *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, of the Reign of Elizabeth, 1591–1594* edited Mary Anne Everett Green (London: Longmans, Green etc. for HMSO, 1867) 545.
60. Henslowe begins recording a brief run for the new Chamberlain’s company and Admiral’s Men at Newington Butts 3–13 June 1594 while the Rose remained closed (Dulwich College, MS VII, fol. 9).