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Mid-eighteenth century theater in London and in the American colonies | A comparison

Karyl Marie Seljak
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THE MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY THEATER IN LONDON
AND IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES: A COMPARISON

By
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B.A., Whitworth College, 1967

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1969

Approved by:
Chairman, Board of Examiners
Dean, Graduate School

FEB 17 1969
Date
The seventeenth century was for the American colonists a time of building and they had little inclination for the amusements of the theater. But during the eighteenth century, after life in America had become more settled, a company of actors ventured from England to Virginia and was greeted by enthusiastic crowds of Southerners. Because the America of the eighteenth century was a frontier environment, the traveling players were forced to transport scenery and costumes over many miles of rough road from one crude theater to another. In the northern colonies the comedians encountered Puritans, Quakers and Presbyterians, whose intolerance of things theatrical proved an even greater obstacle to the players' attempt to bring drama to the colonists than did the primitive environment. In spite of rough roads and zealous New Englanders and Philadelphians, the energetic comedians managed to firmly plant the English theater in the colonies. But because of the intolerance and the primitive conditions, the colonial players did not have the time, energy or resources to adopt the new staging techniques and the realistic style of acting developed by the London theater managers. This paper explores the differences and the similarities between the English and American stages of the mid-eighteenth century and delves into the reasons why the Puritans, Quakers and Presbyterians were so opposed to the theater.
The present work is divided into four parts: "The Plays," "The Playhouses," "The Players" and "The Playgoers." Before delving into previously unexplored comparisons between the English and the colonial theaters, it is necessary to reiterate the already established fact that the provincial players performed precisely the same dramas that were enjoyed in London; therefore, the chapter entitled "The Plays" serves as an introduction. The three remaining chapters constitute a contribution to the field of theater history; because, although such historians as Hugh F. Rankin and W. Lawrence extensively describe colonial scenes, costumes, actors and spectators, they barely mention the London stage. And the great historians of the English theater, Richard Southern, Alwin Thaler and Kalman Burnim; while they delineate in detail the duties of the London playhouse manager; do not so much as acknowledge that a colonial stage existed.
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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION: THE PLAYS

For the eighteenth century theater, the basic elements were of play, actors and audience, held together by a bond of interest. The theater was present in colonial America from the beginning, but the early settlers were rarely concerned with it. They were themselves actors in a more pressing true-life drama, carving homes out of the wilderness and struggling for survival in hostile surroundings. There was no place for artificial comedy or tragedy. And the Puritan belief, that the play, by artificially arousing emotion, weakened human character, presented an even greater obstacle to the existence of a theater in seventeenth century America. The Bostonian Calvinists preached that passions thus awakened, whether of grief at tragedy or mirth at comedy, gradually altered and lowered "character" to a simulated being unworthy of true manhood.¹ The Puritans were enemies of the glorification of the natural man, with all his instincts and appetites, that characterized Renaissance and Elizabethan dramas. The duty of the Calvinist in this world was to know himself; without sparing himself one bit, without flattering himself in the slightest, without concealing from himself a single unpleasant fact about himself. The Puritans were further opposed to the symbolism of the theater because they associated it with the

monarchical forms in politics and religion against which they were rebelling. The Calvinists felt that there was no need for symbols "... for God dwells within ... there he preacheth and there he teacheth: for outwardly are nothing but obscurities, darkness ... where is nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth." Another prime obstacle to the establishment of the theater in New England was its reputation of being connected with the loose living of Restoration London. A petition drafted in 1761 and urging that playacting be forbidden in Rhode Island reads:

It is well known that on the nights of performance the theatre is surrounded by a large concourse of people, who resort there not to see the performance within, but to take part in the performance without. Riots, drunkenness, and obscenity are among the least of the evils nightly practised. While the audience within are strengthening their morals, and adding to the stage, the rabble without are drenching themselves in rum, and wallowing in open and public prostitution.

In the eighteenth century, after life in the colonies had become more settled, theatrical companies that had ventured to the New World from England began to gain the approval and the enthusiastic support of a large number of the Anglican colonists, who bore no antagonism toward the theater. Dramatic activities in the provinces, as in all colonial cultures, were quite naturally patterned after those of the mother country.

In fact, the provincial comedians presented precisely the same plays that were performed on the London stage. Amazingly

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enough only one drama that was written by an American was ever performed for a provincial audience. Thomas Godfrey's *The Prince of Parthia* was produced in Philadelphia's Southwark Theater on the night of April 24, 1747, by the playwright's many influential friends. Godfrey, son of the original inventor of the navigational instrument that was to become known as Hadley's quadrant, had been praised by one of his contemporaries as "... one of the first sons of the Muses on this side of the Atlantic." 4 The youthful playwright had died in Wilmington, North Carolina, August 1, 1763, leaving as his literary legacy several poems and the manuscript of *The Prince of Parthia*, which was published in 1765. The scene was laid in Parthia sometime around the beginning of the Christian era and what plot there was involved events supposedly drawn from history, dealing only in grand passions and noble sentiments expressed in dialogue of soaring turgidity and incorporating practically no action. The unpopularity of the play is attested by the fact that it was never again acted in the colonies by a professional company of comedians.

The English playwrights of the eighteenth century were less inspired than their predecessors; therefore, London, and thus American, theater quarters drew heavily upon the works of earlier English dramatists. The Elizabethan (1558-1603) and Jacobean (1603-1625) dramas that were revived in the eighteenth century are the work of a small number of authors. Of this rather elite

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group of playwrights, William Shakespeare was by far the most popular. Thirty of the thirty-seven plays accepted as Shakespeare's appeared on the English stage as full length pieces between 1737 and 1777, and two others (The Taming of the Shrew and Pericles) in shorter versions. On the average it was possible for the London theatergoer to see fifteen or sixteen of Shakespeare's plays during a single season. The total number of nights devoted to the performance of Shakespeare's plays in the forty years; record of approximately 2,500 has come to light; constitutes almost one-fourth of the entire theatrical program for the era.

The eighteenth century Londoner was drawn to Shakespeare's plays by one, or all, of the many things provided by them. His dramas contain a great deal of action which, as well as being dramatically important, was also extremely exciting to the mid-century theatergoer. The plays are full of duels and there is a wrestling match in As You Like It, scenes of fighting in the streets in Romeo and Juliet, and a riot in Julius Caesar. Ghosts and the supernatural is another element which appealed strongly; the ghost in Hamlet was a memorable figure and is often

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5. Love's Labor's Lost, Troilus and Cressida, Titus Andronicus, Henry VI, part II, and Henry VI, Part III were not acted in London between 1737 and 1777.

6. As You Like It I, ii, 224-30.

7. Romeo and Juliet III, i, 76-93.

referred to in the literature of the time. Audiences accustomed to the show and pageantry of stately processions, as accounts of the reception of foreign notabilities and the sovereign in London prove, had their appetite for spectacle gratified by the attention paid to ceremonial processions in the plays. From *Julius Caesar* to *Henry VIII* Shakespeare uses the opportunities provided for solemn and dignified movement on the stage. The close of *Hamlet*, with the four captains bearing Hamlet's body off the stage to the accompaniment of "... the soldiers' music and the rites of war," shows how dramatic such spectacle can be. The plays also contain a great deal of clowning, which called not only for acrobatic skill and miming, but also for witty speech. There is a long list of clowns, jesters, fools, comic serving men like Launcelot Gobbo in *The Merchant of Venice*, to be found in Shakespeare's plays. In addition to having all that life of excitement, laughter, violence and spectacle which appealed to the physical senses of the mid-century audience, Shakespeare's drama re-creates the whole picture of humanity with simplicity, so that men of every kind, country, creed, and generation understand. Thus Shakespeare was popular with eighteenth century theatergoers partially because he gave them the power of detaching themselves and seeing their own lives as part of universal life. An admiring

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Dr. Samuel Johnson expressed this sentiment in 1765 when he wrote:

This is the praise of Shakespeare, that his drama is the mirror of life; that he who has mazed his imagination, in following the phantoms which other writers raise up before him, may here be cured of his delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language; by scenes from which a hermit may estimate the transactions of the world, and a confessor predict the progress of the passions.  

Of the thirty Shakespearean plays that were acted in London between 1737 and 1777, nine were tragedies (Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Romeo and Juliet, King Lear, Julius Caesar, Coriolanus, Timon of Athens, and Anthony and Cleopatra); eight were histories (Richard III, Henry IV, Part I, Henry IV, Part II, Henry V, Henry VIII, King John, Richard II, and Henry VI, Part I); and thirteen were comedies (The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor, As You Like It, Much Ado About Nothing, The Tempest, Cymbeline, Measure for Measure, Twelfth Night, All's Well That Ends Well, The Winter's Tale, The Comedy of Errors, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, and A Midsummer Night's Dream.) Of the total number of nights devoted to Shakespeare in the forty years, 993, or 40%, were given to tragedy, followed by the comedies (862, or 35%), and the histories (628, or 25%). The most frequently revived play; not only among Shakespeare's, but of all full length pieces presented between 1737 and 1777; was Hamlet, but it was surpassed in number of performances by Romeo and Juliet.  

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11 Smith, op. cit., p. 117.
most frequently; as was Richard III from among the histories.  

Shakespeare was also colonial America's most popular playwright. Of the 108 plays performed in Philadelphia's Southwark Theater during the 1766-1767 season, seventeen were Shakespearean. The other 91 dramas were the works of nearly as many playwrights and their popularity was short-lived; a great many of them were not performed during more than this one season. Fourteen of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays are known to have been presented for the enjoyment of America's pre-revolution audiences:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Play</th>
<th>The Place and Date of Its First American Performance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Richard III</td>
<td>New York March 5, 1750</td>
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<td>2. Othello</td>
<td>New York December 26, 1751</td>
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<td>3. The Merchant of Venice</td>
<td>Williamsburg September 15, 1752</td>
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<td>4. King Lear</td>
<td>New York January 14, 1754</td>
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<td>5. Romeo and Juliet</td>
<td>New York January 28, 1754</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Macbeth</td>
<td>Philadelphia October 26, 1759</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Henry IV</td>
<td>New York December 18, 1761</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The Taming of the Shrew</td>
<td>Philadelphia November 21, 1766</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Cymbeline</td>
<td>Philadelphia May 25, 1767</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. King John</td>
<td>Philadelphia December 12, 1768</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The Tempest</td>
<td>Philadelphia January 19, 1770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The Merry Wives of Windsor</td>
<td>Philadelphia March 2, 1770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Julius Caesar</td>
<td>Charleston April 20, 1774</td>
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</tbody>
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Of these fourteen plays, Richard III and Romeo and Juliet were America's as well as England's favorites.

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Of the Elizabethan and Jacobean dramas that were revived in the eighteenth century, only John Fletcher's (1579-1625) *Rule a Wife* and *Have a Wife* and Ben Jonson's (1573-1637) *The Alchemist* can be said to have competed successfully with the most popular plays of Shakespeare. *Rule a Wife* and *Have a Wife* was a special favorite of the eighteenth century London playgoer because the part of Leon gave David Garrick the opportunity to display one of his many talents, the rapid transition from one emotion to another, and Henry Woodward and Hannah Fritchard were successful as Perez and Estifania.

Restoration (1660-1700) drama provided one-sixth of the plays in London's eighteenth century repertory and accounted for about one-fifth of the total number of performances. The most popular of the revived Restoration tragedies were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playwright</th>
<th>Plays</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Otway</td>
<td><em>The Orphan, Venice Preserved</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Southerne</td>
<td><em>Oroonoko</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryden</td>
<td><em>All For Love, Don Sebastian</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congreve</td>
<td><em>The Mourning Bride</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td><em>The Unhappy Favourite</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nathaniel Lee</td>
<td><em>Theodosius, Rival Queens</em></td>
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15 David Garrick (1717-1779) made his debut as a professional actor at Ipswich (1741) in *Oroonoko*, a play by Thomas Southerne. His success led to his appearance in London the same year in the title role of Richard III, in which he scored a sensational triumph. During the following six months Garrick appeared in eighteen different roles and rapidly established himself as one of the best actors of the time. Between 1742 and 1747 he acted in London at the two principal theaters, the Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and from 1747 until 1776 he was co-manager and owner of the Drury Lane.

These same plays were performed on the stage of colonial America and were greeted by enthusiastic audiences. Thomas Otway's *The Orphan* was presented in Williamsburg on Friday, January 24, 1735, and was so well received that it was repeated the following Tuesday. *Venice Preserved, All for Love, The Mourning Bride* and *Theodosius* were other American favorites which were performed time and again in the colonial theaters. These Restoration tragedies, replete with pathetic heroines, honorable heroes and despicable villains, were popular during the eighteenth century primarily because their sentimentality appealed to the extremely emotional Georgian audience.

In both England and America, revived Restoration comedies were even more beloved than their somber counterparts. Those comedies performed most frequently were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Playwright</th>
<th>Plays</th>
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<tr>
<td>Farquhar</td>
<td><em>The Constant Couple, The Town Jivals, The Recruiting Officer, The Inconstant, The Beaux' Stratagem</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congreve</td>
<td><em>The Double Dealer, The Old Bachelor, Love for Love, The Way of the World</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dryden</td>
<td><em>The Spanish Friar</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vanbrugh</td>
<td><em>The Provok'd Wife</em></td>
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<td>Howard</td>
<td><em>The Committee</em></td>
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17 Rankin, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

18 Georgian: relating to the reigns of the three Georges: George I (1714-1727), George II (1727-1760), George III (1760-1820)

George Farquhar (1678-1707) was the author of the two most popular Restoration comedies presented on the colonial stage, The Recruiting Officer, followed in popularity by The Beaux' Stratagem. Written in 1705, when all England was blazing with martial spirit, The Recruiting Officer was in demand in America during those crises in which the colonies were threatened with involvement in the military activities of the Empire. William Congreve's (1670-1729) plays were popular with both the provincials and the Britons. However, the colonial Quakers and Presbyterians, who characterized theaters as "... nurseries of debauchery," objected so vehemently to the indecent lines contained within Congreve's plays that, when Love for Love was played in Philadelphia in 1767, David Douglass, the manager of a traveling company of comedians which performed in nearly all of America's major cities, was careful to announce:

Mr. Congreve's Comedies are allowed to abound with genuine wit & a true Humour; but, in compliance with the licentious Taste of the Times in which they were written, the Author has in some places given the Rein to the wanton Muse, and deviated from those Rules a more refined Age, and chaste Stage require; the Reviver of this play, has taken the Freedom to crop such Luxuriances, and expunge every passage that might be offensive either to Decency or good Manners.21

Early eighteenth century plays constituted one-fifth of all full length pieces acted in London from 1737 to 1777 and accounted for almost one-fourth of the total number of perform-

21 Rankin, op. cit., p. 116.
ances. Of this number, almost 60 per cent are comedies, and
there was approximately the same ratio of comedy to tragedy for
relative frequency of performance.22 The most commonly performed
comedies were Fielding's The Miser; Addison's The Drummer;
Susanna Centlivre's The Busy Body, The Wonder and A Bold Stroke
for a Wife; Cibber's The Provok'd Husband, The Careless Husband,
The Double Gallant, She Would and She Would Not, Love Makes a Man
and Love's Last Shift; Steele's The Conscious Lovers and The
Funeral. The plays of Richard Steele (1672-1729) and Susanna
Centlivre and Colley Cibber's (1671-1757) The Provok'd Husband
were especially well received in the colonies. Because of the
favorable reputation of Sir Richard Steele, his plays, particu­
larly The Conscious Lovers, could be performed again and again
for the primarily Quaker audiences of Philadelphia. In both
America and England The Provok'd Husband was very often included
with more somber and gory productions such as Richard III in
order to liven up the bill of fare.23

The works of such early eighteenth century tragedians as
Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718), Joseph Addison (1672-1719) and George
Lillo (1693-1739) were nearly as popular as their lighter comple­
ments. Nicholas Rowe's The Fair Penitent, Jane Shore, Tamerlane
and The Ambitious Ste.-Mother; Addison's Cato; Lillo's George

22 Lynch, op. cit., p. 36.
23 The mid-century bill of fare invariably included a short
and light afterpiece in addition to the more serious and full
length first piece.
Barnwell; Phillips' The Distrest Mother; Hughes' The Siege of Damascus were all highly esteemed by both American and English audiences. After Shakespeare's works, the most popular play in the colonies was George Barnwell, sometimes said to have been the first honest attempt to correct, from the stage, the vices and weaknesses of mankind. This piece, depicting the temptations of a young man to steal and murder because of his infatuation for an unscrupulous woman, brought domestic middle-class tragedy into fashion, and one mid-century lady was quoted in the Gentleman's Magazine as saying that "... none but a prostitute could find fault with this tragedy." In the colonies, then, it was always a wise selection in those communities that exhibited hostility towards the stage, and, following an English custom, it was nearly always presented during the Christmas and Easter seasons for the edification of the lower classes of theatergoers.

Full length plays by contemporary dramatists also formed a portion of the theatrical repertory, constituting more than one-third of the total number of plays of all types brought to the English stage between 1737 and 1777; they account, however, for less than one-fifth of the total number of performances. One

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26 Rankin, op. cit., p. 192. (The exact date of this quote is unavailable.)
hundred and sixteen plays (sixty-four tragedies and fifty-two comedies) had their first appearance in the period; sixty-one of these (thirty-four tragedies and twenty-seven comedies) did not survive the first season and only twelve (five tragedies and seven comedies) were performed in as many as ten seasons. This death of good drama prompted the Countess of Pomfret to write that nothing was quite "... so rare a thing as a good play in these days." Nearly all of the eighteenth century dramas were written by individuals who were not primarily playwrights; David Garrick, one of the most prolific of the century's writers, was first of all an actor and a theatrical manager. This fact explains in part why the mid-century dramatists produced so few really great plays. Another primary reason for the death of good eighteenth century drama is the diffidence of the Georgian playwright.

If in a well-work'd Story they aspire,
To imitate old Rome's or Athens's Fire,
It will not do, for strait the Cry shall be,
'Tis a forc'd heavy piece of Bombastry,
says the prologue to Susanna Centlivre's The Beau's Duel. In contrast with Shakespeare, many eighteenth century playwrights subjected their audiences to hours of forced rhetoric; and yet

27Lynch, op. cit., p. 23.
28Ibid.
30Nicoll, op. cit., p. 61.
the age was conscious of this weakness of its drama. The compiler of The Companion to the Play-House (1764) has well noted the lack of plainness and simplicity which characterized most eighteenth century drama:

Whether the refined Stile of Addison’s Cato, and the flowing Versification of Rowe first occasioned this Departure from antient simplicity it is difficult to determine; but it is too true, that Southerne was the last of our Dramatick Writers, who was, in any Degree, possest of that magnificent Plainness, which is the genuine Dress of Nature; though indeed the Plays even of Rowe are more simple in their Stile, than those which have been produced by his Successors.31

Both the spectator and the playwright were aware of this vast weakness of contemporary drama; but, the playwright lacked the confidence necessary to strike off on his own and return to the simplicity of William Shakespeare.

The few contemporary plays that did survive the first season were performed again and again in both England and America. The most frequently acted new comedies were, in the order of their popularity, The Suspicious Husband by Benjamin Hoadley, The Jealous Wife by George Colman, The Way to Keep Him by Arthur Murphy, The Clandestine Marriage by George Colman, All in the Wrong by Murphy, The West Indian by Richard Cumberland and The School for Lovers by William Whitehead. As these titles suggest, the proper theme for comedy was love and marriage. Many of the newly written comedies were satires. The satirical comedy attained its full growth in the plays of Henry Fielding (1707-

31Ibid., p. 62.
1754) just at the beginning of the mid-century period. But
Fielding's satire was largely directed against the government,
and such attacks became dangerous, and almost impossible, after
England's passage of the Licensing Act in 1737. Drama,
however, continued to be used for satirical ends. But the objects
of satire were no longer of political concern; they were instead
matters of social and religious significance. Samuel Foote's
(1721-1777) The Trip to Calais contains, in the character of Lady
Kitty Crocodile, a venomous portrait of the Duchess of Kingston;
while in Foote's The Minor the Methodists are made the brunt of
his wit, and the Reverend George Whitefield is referred to as
Dr. Quintum, a name attributed to him by folk who made light of
his crossed eye. The contemporary tragedies most often per-
formed in London and in the colonies were Tancred and Isisundra
by James Thomson; Henry Jones' The Earl of Essex, Longina by John
Home; The Roman Father by William Whitehead, Mahomet by James
Muller and The Earl of Warwick by Thomas Franklin. This crown
is fairly typical of all the new tragedies performed in the
period. Many were drawn from Roman or Greek sources, such as
The Roman Father; several, such as Mahomet, made use of satiric

32 The Licensing Act permitted the performance of legit-
imate drama only at the two patent houses of Covent Garden and
Drury Lane. This limitation enabled government officials to
closely inspect all plays which were presented in London.

33 Ibid., pp. 21-22.
34 John Hillier, "Rex or N. George Whitefield
themes; English history supplied the setting and often the plot for a large number; and almost all emphasize the love element, even at the expense of probability or historical accuracy.

Unfortunately, a large proportion of the works of the mid-century authors were merely adaptations of older dramas. In fact, it is probably as alterers of old plays rather than as original dramatists that these writers are most appropriately regarded. Almost all types of literature were used for the purpose, and nationality or age did not make a piece unsuitable for adaptation. But it was primarily to Shakespearean drama that the playwrights turned in search of plays that they might adapt to their own stage. Most of these altered plays were short-lived; only the original works of such writers as Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774) and Richard Sheridan (1751-1816) are still seen today.  

Although the farces and pantomimes, which were invariably performed after the first pieces and were, for the most part, written during the eighteenth century, were even more transient than their full length contemporaries, they were exceedingly well received by the eighteenth century audiences of both England and America. The most popular of these afterpieces were Garrick's *Lethe*, James Townley's *High Life Below Stairs*, *Harlequin Sorcerer* and *Garrick's Miss in Her Teens*. The farce, the eighteenth century's favorite type of afterpiece, was a short drama that made use of tricks and intrigue, the whole depending for its  

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35 Davies, loc. cit.
vitality upon humor and often descending to the low and coarse.
There were forty authors who tried their hand at this kind of
writing; the most important of whom were Fielding, Dodsley, Foote,
Garrick, Colman, Macklin and Murphy; and together they furnished
about one hundred farces that were given performance. It was
John Rich, who popularized the pantomime, first at Lincoln's Inn
Fields and later at Covent Garden. Though not quite the same as
commedia dell'arte, the pantomime combined the stock characters
and situations of the harlequinade with elements from classic
myths, folktales or contemporary events. They leaned heavily on
scenic display, spectacle, dance and acrobatics, and they were
often cited as evidence of the low taste of audiences. The
basic cast of the harlequinade included Harlequin, the lover of
Columbine; Pantaloon, her father; and the Clown, the bumbling
servant of Harlequin. Pantaloon constantly attempted to inter­
fere with the courtship of Harlequin and Columbine, and out of
this stock situation developed a flurry of tricks and feats of
agility. The most popular pantomimes; Harlequin Sorcerer,
Harlequin Ranger, Queen Mab and Harlequin Executed; helped to
inspire a growing insistence upon greater realism in acting.
Audiences familiar with the antics of the pantomimist, who could

36 John Rich was the manager of Lincoln's Inn Fields and,
after 1737, Covent Garden.
37 nankin, op. cit., p. 154.
38 Kenneth Macgowan and William Helnitz, The Living Stage
106-08.
successfully convey meaning without benefit of language, were prepared to receive with enthusiasm the representations of Garrick, whose acting approached reality more closely than did the older and more declamatory style of Colley Cibber and James Quin (1693-1766).

The novelties, which were frequently performed before the afterpiece on both English and American stages, were even more often cited as evidence of low taste of audiences than were the pantomimes. These unusual entertainments were often so popular that they and not the play drew the townspeople to the theater.

In 1775 a Briton, Samuel Johnson, wrote:

I have been at one play since I writ you my Journal, the Beggar's Opera with the Druids: my inducement for going was to hear Signor Rossignol's most amazing imitations of singing Birds, which He does to that perfection that it is impossible to distinguish them from the finest notes of the Nightingale, Canary Bird, Goldfinch, Linnet, etc., for all appearance of the human voice is entirely lost; the sound is produc'd with a very great effort and exertion of the lungs, and he is oblig'd to stop for breath and drink a glass of water in the middle of his performance.39

In an effort to entice larger numbers of spectators to the playhouse, both English and colonial managers engaged an increasingly wider variety of these popular novelty acts. Mid-century New Yorkers, for example, were enthralled by Anthony Joseph Dugee, who entertained his audiences with performances on the slack wire, and by his muscular wife, billed as "The Female Sampson."40


Philadelphians swarmed to the Society Hill Theater primarily to see an eight-legged cat or a puppet show entitled *Punch's Opera, Hateman, or The Inhappy Marriage*, with a fine Dialogue between Punch and his Wife Joan. Although these novelty acts were exceedingly popular with the playgoers, they definitely were not endorsed by the actors. Kitty Clive, the brilliant English comedienne, vehemently denounced the imported tumblers, rope-dancers, dancing dogs, and "Squallers" as "... devils who come over to England to get our bread from us; and I say curse them all." Even though the actors disliked the novelty acts and urged their elimination, both London and provincial audiences reveled in them and, therefore, in order to continue drawing the townspeople into the theater, the managers retained the frivolities.

One of the greatest effects of the audience's interest in novelty on the stage was the increased emphasis in both England and the colonies upon the spectacular in the theater. Rich, in his attempt to draw spectators to Covent Garden, expended enormous sums for magnificent scenery and elaborate costumes. The coronation of George III, in September, 1761, was followed by Covent Garden's stage representation of it:

Such a profusion of fine cloaths, of velvet, silk, sattin, lace, feathers, jewels, pearls, etc. had not been seen upon any stage. The scenery, music, and other ornaments, were all

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correspondent to the grandeur of the ceremony, which was shown to crowded houses for near two months together. David Garrick's spectacles were not nearly as successful as those produced by Rich; Garrick was more interested in first pieces than he was in novelties. In 1761 Garrick contented himself with reviving the post-coronation production that had been seen in 1727 with the original dresses now shabby from use. It served as an interlude between Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* and the afterpiece. His only novelty was to open the back of the stage on to Drury Lane, where a real bonfire, with a crowd drinking porter to the health of Queen Anne Boleyn, was revealed to the audience. Within a few minutes the stage dukes, duchesses, archbishops and heralds were choking in the smoke that poured in from outside, and shivering in the autumn air. Night after night this absurdity was repeated until the audience asserted its authority and drove the performers out into the street. This was not the first time Drury Lane's audience asserted its authority. In 1756 Garrick prepared a pantomime called *The Chinese Festival*, in which a hundred persons were employed; Italians, Swiss, Germans and Frenchmen. Unfortunately for the manager, war with France

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42 Davies, *op. cit.* 1, 331.


45 The Seven Years' War (1756–1763): Hostilities began in America as the result of a dispute over possession of the Ohio
broke out while the piece was in rehearsal, and when he attempted to produce it without discharging the foreigners, the result was a riot, and a loss of over 4,000 pounds. But when due allowance was made for the prejudices of the audience, the success of such spectacular productions as Noverre's The Chinese Festival was assured. Colonial managers, responding to the expressed desires of their audiences, produced spectaculars just as did their English counterparts. In Romeo and Juliet, the spectacular assumed a morbid hue with the inclusion of an elaborate funeral procession to the home of the Capulets and a solemn dirge. Much more appropriate was the insertion of dancing foresters in the Shakespearean comedy As You Like It.

Both colonial and English theater managers, in their attempt to draw spectators to the playhouse, included an after-piece, novelties and spectacle with every first piece they presented to the theatergoing public. And the English managers, with the Americans following their lead, frequently chose popular Valley. Soon the whole question of British or French domination of the North American continent was involved. Eventually nearly every major country of Europe was drawn in on one side or the other. Louis XV of France enlisted the aid of his kinsman, the Bourbon king of Spain. A struggle begun in 1740 between Frederick the Great and Maria Theresa over possession of Silesia was quickly merged with the larger contest. The Seven Years' War thus reached the proportions of what virtually amounted to a world conflict, with France, Spain, Austria and Russia arrayed against Great Britain and Prussia in Europe and with English and French colonial forces striving for mastery not only in America but also in India.

46 Thaler, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
47 Shurter, op. cit., p. 57.
stock plays rather than the inferior works of contemporary dramatists for first pieces. It is obvious from the statistics that have been gathered that the English manager, who was always eager to fill the seats of his theater, prepared his repertoire only after carefully considering the desires of his audience. As is also apparent from statistics, the American players, just as in all colonial cultures, patterned their dramatic activities after those of the mother country. Therefore, provincial players performed precisely the same dramas that were enjoyed in London. It remains to be determined whether or not the colonial comedians, after combating a primitive environment and the intolerance of Puritans, Quakers and Presbyterians, had the time, energy or resources to adopt London's staging techniques and acting style as well as her repertoire.
CHAPTER II

THE PLAYHOUSES

London's two patent houses, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, often called the "winter theaters," ordinarily opened for the season about the middle of September and remained open until late May or early June. During the first few weeks of the season it was customary for each theater to schedule performances on only three nights in the week and to alternate with the rival house, which offered plays on the other three week nights. But after the season was well under way, each theater advertised six performances a week. Seldom did the colonial theaters schedule in excess of three performances in a single week; because, although London's eighteenth century population exceeded half a million, New York's population did not reach 10,000 and of this number a great many referred to the theater as the "House of Satan" and refused to attend dramatic performances. The colonial cities simply contained too few theatergoing inhabitants to support more than three dramatic performances a week. In addition to opening less frequently than did their English counterparts, the American playhouses also opened irregularly. In fact, in some colonies it

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1 Davies, op. cit., II, 306.

2 The colonial players frequently performed on Monday, Wednesday and Friday nights.

was difficult or even impossible for them to open at all. A number of the more influential colonials, particularly among the New England Puritans and the Philadelphia Quakers, feeling that the theater should be considered among those luxuries injurious to morals, lodged strong protests against granting comedians permission to play. The result of these protests was the imposition by the assemblies of the northern colonies of rather stringent restrictions upon the players.

Massachusetts Puritans had migrated from England in an era when licentiousness and obscenity were considered to be desirable and necessary ingredients for successful drama, and their clergy had impeached the theater, from both the pulpit and the printed page. Playhouses, they charged, were responsible for emptying the churches, aiding the Pope, inducing the Lord to visit the plague upon London, corrupting maidens and chaste wives, and providing a market place for harlots and their customers. The theater was denounced as the "Bastard of Babylon" and "... the snare of concupiscence and filthy lusts of wicked whoredom." This "Chapel of Satan" was censured as a school that taught:

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4 Rankin, op. cit., p. 61.


6 Thompson, op. cit., p. 103.

7 Rankin, op. cit., p. 2.
... how to be false and deceive your husbands, or husbands their wives, how to play the harlot, to obtain one's love, how to ravish, how to beguile, how to betray, to flatter, lie, swear, forswear, how to allure whoredom, how to murder, how to poison, how to disobey and rebel against princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to move to lusts, to ransack and spoil cities and towns, to be idle, to blaspheme, to sing filthy songs of love, to speak ill-wisely, to be proud, how to mock, scoff and deride any nation. 8

The Massac usettes puritans, believing that the righteous man who avoided the evil pleasures of this world would escape eternal damnation, forbade entrance to European factors such as the theater that they had come to a New World to avoid. 9 Unlike their English counterparts, the colonial Puritans did not realize that by the eighteenth century a large share of the Restoration dramas had been purged of their obscenities. Therefore, while eighteenth century English Puritans gave countenance to theatrical productions, the acting of plays in Massachutes led to a flurry of Bostonian denunciations. In 1685 Samuel Sewall's 10 temper blazed forth at a dancing master's boast that by one play he could teach more divinity than the Old Testament. 11 And two

8 Ibid.


10 Sewall was born in England in 1652. He came to New England at the age of nine, studied divinity at Harvard, entered the ministry, married, and thereafter devoted himself to public affairs. He held numerous offices in the Massachusetts colony, becoming in 1692 a judge of the Superior Court, and in 1718 its Chief Justice. He died in Boston in 1730.

years later, when tavern-keeper John Wing fitted up his establishment for a magic show, a committee of four, including Sewall, persuaded Wing that not only was such a display unseemly, but offensive. Sewall's fears mounted in 1714 with the whispers that a play was to be acted in the Council Chamber. Pointing out that not even the Romans, with all their lust and dissipation, had ever gone so far "... as to turn their Senate House into a Playhouse," he anxiously cautioned, "Let not Christian Boston, go beyond Heathen Rome in the practice of Shamefull vanities."¹² No record indicates whether this outburst was sufficient to thwart the performance, but no source reveals further attempts at play-acting for the next thirty-six years. Then, in 1750, two young Englishmen, assisted by some of the gallants of Boston, performed The Orphan in a coffee house on State Street. This coincided with an unexplained riot in the street outside the makeshift playhouse (some said it was caused by those demanding entrance), which only served to accentuate the evil influence of the drama. In consequence, a statute passed by the General Court in April of 1750 stated as its purpose the prevention of the "... great mischiefs which arise from public stage plays:"¹³ it provided for fines of 20 pounds for those who staged a play, with lesser penalties of


¹³Clapp, A Record of the Boston Stage (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1853), p. 2.
5 pounds for each actor and spectator. 14 Thus it was that in 1750 strict moral prohibitions of theatrical performances became a legal reality. Some plays, however, were clandestinely performed; The Orphan was acted before some 210 persons on March 13, 1765, although one spectator grumbled that it was miserably performed. 15 Such presentations were the exception rather than the rule, and, ordinarily, those enamored of things theatrical pampered their fancies by assembling in groups to hear the reading of plays. In fact, it was not until 1792 that Boston was to legally support a professional theater.

Until 1762 no statutes restricted theatrical performances in Calvinist Rhode Island, although there was such strong sentiment against drama that no actor had dared to enter the colony before David Douglass and his company arrived in Newport in the late spring of 1761. 17 On the surface, a theatrical venture into any portion of Rhode Island would seem a bold undertaking, but there was logic behind Douglass' choice of Newport. Even at this early date, Newport had taken on the air of a summer resort for those wealthier and more theater-minded southern planters who

14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 9.
16 Roger Williams, the founder of the colony of Rhode Island, was an extreme Puritan unalterably opposed to the doctrines of the Anglican Church.
17 While the English companies were permanent groups attached to particular theaters; the American companies, because of the small provincial population, were bands of strollers. They carried their sample equipment with them and moved about the country as they saw fit.
iled northward to escape the heat and endemic fevers of their own environments. Still, Douglass found a strong wave of opposition, further complicated by his negligence in not securing a "character" or certificate of good behavior from Governor Francis Fauquier before he left Virginia. A representative rushed southward to rectify this oversight, and the document, as eventually presented, bore the date June 11, 1761. In the interval, the versatile manager schemed to circumvent the necessity of formal permission to play by an ingenious innovation. Handbills distributed through the streets of Newport announced the forthcoming presentation of a series of "Moral Dialogues" rather than of Shakespeare's Othello. These "Dialogues" were so well received that, despite an adverse vote at a special town meeting, Douglass hastily constructed a playhouse on Easton's Point as soon as his "character" arrived from Virginia. The manager was able to thwart the petitions of the anti-theater group by the presentation of passes to members of the Assembly and by the performance of two benefits for the poor of the town.

In 1762 Douglass' company moved on to Providence, where they encountered even more intolerance. Rather than further

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18 Charles Blake, An Historical Account of the Providence Stage (Providence: George H. Whitney, 1868), p. 15.

19 The handbill announcing the presentation of a series of "Moral Dialogues" is reproduced in Appendix A.

irritate the sensitive morals of the community, Douglass termed
the crude barn of a theater he had hastily erected a "Histrionic
Academy." Once again he stretched his evasiveness to the extreme,
advertising that the primary objective of the actors was to
"... deliver dissertations on subjects instructive and enter-
taining" and to instruct their audience "... to speak in public
with propriety."21 This subterfuge, however, failed to deceive
these zealots and they delivered a petition to the General
Assembly, requesting that body to "... make some effectual law
to prevent any stage-plays, comedies, or theatrical performances
being acted in this Colony for the future." The 405 names affixed
to the document were enough to demand political action, and in
August of 1762 the legislature approved "... an act to prevent
Stage Plays and other Theatrical Entertainments in this Colony;"
it provided for fines of 50 pounds for those who staged a play
and penalties of 100 pounds for each actor.22

In New York, as in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, there
were Calvinist groups who strongly condemned the theater and
denounced all actors as depraved wretches bent on corrupting
society and misleading the young:

Entertainments have an influence on the minds of young people,
greatly endanger their morals by giving them a turn for in-
triguing, amusement and pleasure, even upon the best & most
favorable supposition, that nothing contrary to decency & good

21 Hughes, op. cit., p. 34.
22 Blake, op. cit., p. 33.
manners is exhibited; yet the strong impressions made by the
gallantries, amors & other moving representations, with which
the best players abound, will dissipate & indispose the minds
of youth, not used to them, to everything important &
serious. 23

The Dutch who had settled New York had no particular theatrical
heritage and, as a result, harbored none of this antagonism
towards the drama. These thrifty folk, however, did object to
the expense and waste of time involved. This principle is
particularly reflected in the indentures for apprentices in the
early eighteenth century:

He shall not absent himself Day or Night from his Master's
service without his leave, to haunt Alehouses or Playhouses,
but in all things as a faithful apprentice he shall behave
himself toward his said Master, and all during the said
term. 24

Influenced by Calvinist groups and believing playgoing to be a
waste of time and resources, the New York Council, on May 6, 1709,
forbade playacting. 25 This decree, however, did not prevent
Governor Robert Hunter from writing the first play known to have
been printed in America, which appeared in 1714 under the lengthy
title of Androboros, A Biographical Farce of Three Acts, viz: The
Senate, the Consistory and the Apotheosis. A great many New
Yorkers shared the Governor's interest in drama with the result
that the Council's edict was all but ignored by a large share of

23 Mary Caroline Crawford, The Romance of the American
Theatre (New York: Halcyon House, 1940), pp. 33-34.
24 Rankin, op. cit., pp. 3-4.
25 George C. Odell, Annals of the New York State to 1798
the city's populace. But in 1761 New York began to sink into an economic depression as a result of the British decision to draw off its military and naval forces to concentrate their war efforts on the French islands of the Caribbean. Ever increasing numbers of merchants readily joined with Calvinist groups in protesting that the comedians drained too much money from the town, money that might well be spent on necessities:

> People are dayly murmuring at the badness of the times as tho' they were actually concern'd for their Interest, but their conduct proves a contradiction to it. For men in every profession are ever some of some party of pleasure or other, and as if they had not room enough to spend their money that way, they must for all put themselves under greater temptations in going to the play house.26

The determination of New York merchants and religious leaders to rid that community of the temptations of the theater led to the appearance in the local press of a vehement war of words between two writers using the pseudonyms of "Philodemus" and "Armanda." Philodemus began the exchange by stating that all ladies who went to the theater were lacking in modesty. An angry Armanda not only vigorously defended the actors but retaliated by styling Philodemus . . . a superannuated animal that has past his grand climacteric, and whose early times of life had been employed in luxury and debauchery, and now being satiated, concludes that all is vanity and every pleasure criminal.27

In retort, after posing the question as to whether the playhouse

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26 Rankin, op. cit., pp. 61-62.

27 Hornblow, op. cit., p. 118.
or the Bible were the better teacher, Philodemus countered with what he obviously considered the worst possible slur, intimating that his tormentor was herself nothing but a strolling player. Throughout the eighteenth century, then, the theater in New York was forced to deal with disapproving Calvinists and frugal businessmen who wished to put an end to all dramatic productions.

New Englanders found even sturdier allies among the Quakers and Presbyterians of Pennsylvania who believed, as did the Puritans, that the theater was the "House of Satan." The fundamental belief of Quakerism was that Divine revelation is immediate and individual; any person may perceive the word of God in his soul, and every Quaker must heed it. Terming such revelation the "Inner Light," the Quakers saw no need for the formal creed or the ordained ministry of the Church of England. They worshipped in silence; any member of a congregation might speak when he was moved to do so. Quakerism was, moreover, a way of life, for it, in contrast with New England Puritanism, was concerned primarily with living according to Christian principles rather than with a preparation for an afterlife. Love and help of fellow man, tolerance, nonviolence, hard work, and rigorous self-discipline were the criterions of every Quaker's actions. And music, the fine arts, belles-lettres, the theater, and other forms of entertainment, since they served no immediate practical or edifying purpose but seemed rather to be useless and sometimes dangerous adornments of life, were suspect in Quaker eyes. The
overseers, who were charged with the responsibility of seeing to
the welfare of fellow members, dealt sternly with

... such as run Races, either on Horse back or on Foot; lay
Wagers, or use any Gaming, or needless and vain Sports and
pastimes; for our time Swiftly passeth away, and our pleasure
and Delight ought to be in the Law of the Lord. 28

Quakerism evolved in the later stages of the Protestant
Reformation in England, precipitated by the ministry and person-
ality of George Fox. His preaching in 1644 and following made
converts among Seekers, Independents, Baptists, and other secta-
rians, who loosely united as "Children of the Light," "Friends,"
or "Friends in the Truth." Fox and his converts soon spread the
new faith through the British Isles to the Continent and to
America (1656). According to the anonymous Planter's Speech to
His Neighbours and Countrymen of Pennsylvania, East and West-
Jersey, and To All Such As Have Transported Themselves into New
Colonies, for the sake of a Quiet and Retired Life, published in
1684 by the London Quaker printer Andrew Sowle, the Quakers
flocked in multitudes to the New World because they hoped to
bring the Indians out of heathenism into a "... serving aware-
ness of the divine principle within them," they sought to escape
from the corrupt atmosphere of Restoration England, they wished
to advance their economic position, and they hoped to

... commence, or improve such an innocent course of life,
as might unload us of those outward cares, vexations and

28 Frederick B. Tolles, Meeting House and Counting House
turmoils, which before we were always subject unto, from the hands of self designing and unreasonable men.\textsuperscript{29}

Persecution fortified them in their zeal to publish the "Truth" of the "Light of Christ that lighteth the heart of every man."

Hangings in Boston and imprisonment in Cromwellian (1653-1659) and Restoration England failed to discourage them. Missionaries traveled widely, and settlers migrated to the New World until, when Fox himself visited America in 1671-1673, he found Friends in Barbados, and from the Carolinas to New England. Rhode Island was their greatest mainland stronghold, until in 1681 Pennsylvania was granted by Charles II (1660-1685) to the distinguished Quaker convert, William Penn. The Quakers retained complete control of the government of Pennsylvania until 1756 when Indian massacres became so prevalent that the Friends could no longer effectively govern the colony and at the same time remain pacifists.\textsuperscript{30} However, because they comprised such a large proportion of the population of Philadelphia, the Quakers continued to exercise a moral influence on the colony until after the Revolutionary War. On the other hand, the Friends who remained in England composed such a small portion of the primarily Anglican population that it was quite impossible for them to impose their disciplined way of life upon their fun-loving countrymen.

\textsuperscript{29}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 33-34.

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Boorstin, op. cit.}, pp. 58-63.
The Quakers, in their attempt to establish a "City of Brotherly Love" in the New World, struck out at all of the useless and dangerous adornments of life. One of their first targets was the theater, which they considered to be nothing more than an "Inlet of Vice." William Penn, despite his reputation for tolerance, was not one to agree with those playwrights who defended themselves against the attacks of Jeremy Collier and others by asserting that to exhibit vice was to establish a standard of virtue. In 1699, in his *No Cross, No Crown*, Penn had come forth with a powerful argument against the theater by posing the question, "How many plays did Jesus Christ and his apostles recreate themselves at? What poets, romances, comedies, and the like did the apostles and the saints make or use to pass their time withal?" This principle he had incorporated into the Great Law of Pennsylvania, a reflection of his efforts to establish a Holy Community within his colony: a provision forbade "prizes, stage plays, masques, revels, bull-baitings, [and] cock-

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31 Jeremy Collier (1650-1726): When King James II was deposed in favor of William of Orange in 1688, Collier, an English clergyman, joined those who refused to forswear their oath of allegiance to the former king by pledging loyalty to William, and were thus known as "nonjurors." He was several times imprisoned for his writings; in 1696 he publicly absolved two prisoners about to be executed for the attempted assassination of the king, and was declared an outlaw. Despite this status he remained an active nonjuror, and devoted his energy to criticism of the contemporary stage, attacking such playwrights as Sir John Vanbrugh and William Congreve in a dissertation, *Short View of the English Stage* (1698).

32 Rankin, loc. cit.
fighting.\textsuperscript{33} Despite the disallowance of the law by William and Mary in 1693,\textsuperscript{34} the ban against diversions quickly reappeared upon the statute books and just as promptly was disallowed once again. But William Penn was as persistent as he was religious, and from England he instructed James Logan, the leader of a conservative Quaker party of Philadelphia merchants, to "... prepare a nervous Proclamation against Vice,"\textsuperscript{35} a basis for a Council approved measure on November 27, 1700, prohibiting plays and bonfires. Even after this law met the inevitable fate of disallowance, similar endeavors in 1706 and 1713 were bolstered by threats of fine and imprisonment but, like their predecessors, incurred the displeasure of the Crown. So it was that, from 1682 to 1713, Pennsylvania made strenuous efforts to gain permanent injunctions against theatrical entertainment, in each instance frustrated by the regal veto. Realizing the futility of their efforts, the Quakers refrained for several years from further legal attempts to prohibit the drama in Pennsylvania.\textsuperscript{36} And by

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34}The Penns were authorized to make laws with the advice and consent of the freemen or their representatives. The laws of Pennsylvania were to be as nearly as possible agreeable to the laws and statutes of England. They were to be sent to England within five years for inspection, and might be disallowed by the Privy Council. Massachusetts and Rhode Island, on the other hand, were both chartered colonies and therefore laws passed by their assemblies could not be vetoed by the Privy Council.


\textsuperscript{36}Hughes, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 11-12.
1757 the antagonism towards the stage in Philadelphia appeared to have waned. In that year the students at the city's college performed The Masque of Alfred as "... an Oratorical Exercise... before large Audiences, with great Applause." No objections were directed towards this dramatic exercise of the younger generation as "... every Thing that could injure their Morals had been carefully avoided." A year later the Reverend William Smith went so far as to predict in his American Magazine: "... who can tell but the coming generation may have theatres by law established, and grow as fond of actors and actresses as the polite, well-bred ladies and gentlemen of the beau monde in Britain: of whose follies, as well as fashions, we are the most humble, zealous mimics."\textsuperscript{37}

But the outspoken Smith was not one calculated to win support for the theater among the Friends or Presbyterians. In the first place, he was an Anglican rector, and his intemperance and slovenly habits were not pleasing to those of more pious leanings. Therefore, in 1759, when it became common knowledge that a new playhouse was soon to be constructed on Society Hill, the religious factions closed ranks and rose up against this evil in their midst. Their first move was to appear before Judge William Allen, requesting an injunction against the players. In rejecting their suit, the judge observed "... that plays brought

him more moral virtue than sermons."\textsuperscript{38} On May 22, the Quakers petitioned the governor directly. On the same day, their allies, the Presbyterians, submitted a similar document, declaring the stage to be "... a most powerfull Engine of Debauching the Minds and corrupting the manners of Youth"\textsuperscript{39} and suggesting that such extravagances should not be tolerated during the current war with France. When no immediate reply seemed to be forthcoming from Governor Denny, the religious phalanx applied increasing pressure to the General Assembly, and that body, on May 31, 1759, passed "An Act for the More Effectual Suppressing of Lotteries and Plays," providing a fine of 500 pounds for those "... several companies of idle persons and strollers who have come into this Province from foreign parts"\textsuperscript{40} and attempted to perform or sell tickets to plays in Pennsylvania. Governor Denny found himself in a dilemma, for the revocation of the permission to play that he had granted earlier in the year could be interpreted as a reflection upon his integrity. Then too, as he told his Council, the "Prohibition of plays was a most unreasonable restraint ... from taking innocent diversions."\textsuperscript{41} The Council, on the other hand, although they did not necessarily condone the theater, saw in the suppression of lotteries the loss of the chief means of support for the academy.

\textsuperscript{38} Rankin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{40} Bridenbaugh, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 144.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 145.
the charity school and the college. Backed by his Council, the
governor neatly avoided the issue by supporting amendments to the
act delaying the effective date of execution until January 1,
1760. Even after the act became law, it remained in force only
eight months before being disallowed by the king in Council,
September 2, 1760. Unsuccessful in eliminating theatrical enter­
tainment, the Society of Friends now could only impose slight
restrictions on the acting of plays in the colony. For example,
Hallam's traveling company of comedians was permitted to perform
in Philadelphia only if nothing indecent or immoral was offered.
The company was also ordered to perform one night per season for
the benefit of the city and was forced to furnish adequate secu­
rrity for debts.

In contrast with their more zealous northern neighbors, the
Anglican Southerners, as a notice in the October 24, 1745, issue
of the Virginia Gazette indicates, were not deeply interested in
theological disputations or controversies on abstract religious
theories: "Just imported and to be sold by William Parks, in
Williamsburg, a large quantity of church and family Bibles and
Common Prayer Books, sermons, etc., too tedious to mention."

42 The first well-organized company that came to America
consisted of twelve actors gathered together in London by William
Hallam, the bankrupt manager of a small unlicensed theater. In
1752 he shipped them to the colonies under the management of his
brother Lewis. After Lewis Hallam's death, David Douglass became
the manager of the company.

43 Thomas J. Wertenbaker, The Old South—the Founding of
American Civilization (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942),
p. 62.
The southern planters, in addition to accepting without question the religious tenets of the Church of England, also patterned their social constitution after that of the English gentry. The isolation of plantation life, which made it difficult for men of intellectual interests to come in contact with each other, the educating of young Southerners at Oxford and Cambridge, the constant influx of Anglican ministers, some of them men of wide cultural interests, the employment of British tutors and professors at William and Mary, the migration of architects, landscape gardeners, musicians, physicians, the importation of English books, the contact with English ship captains; all tended to bind the southern colonies more closely with the culture of the mother country. "The habits, life, customs, computations, etc., of the Virginians are much the same as about London which they esteem their home," declared Hugh Jones, the Chaplain of the Virginia House of Burgesses.

The planters and even the native negroes generally talk good English without idiom or tone and can discourse handsomely upon most common subjects, and conversing with persons belonging to trade . . . for the most part they are much civilized.  

For both the English gentry and the southern planters, entertainment was a necessary part of life. They played cards and hunted and they attended balls, musical concerts and the theater.  

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from the middle of the seventeenth century. In Virginia on August 27, 1665, the play, *Ye Bare* and *Ye Cubb*, was staged in Cowle's Tavern with a cast of Cornelius Watkinson, Philip Howard and William Darby. To one Edward Martin, acting a play seemed akin to heresy, and scurrying to John Fawsett, the king's attorney, he reported the play and demanded that the offenders be brought to trail. The defendants were haled before the county court by a reluctant Fawsett, but the case was continued, the justices of peace ordering Watkinson, Howard and Darby to appear at the "... next Court, in those habiliments that they then acted in, and give a draught of such verses, or other speeches and passages, which were then acted by them." At the following session of the court the justices apparently were pleased with the performance of the accused, for the verdict was that the players were "... not guilty of fault," and because of "... the charge and trouble of that suit did accrue ... ." they further directed that Martin, the accusing witness, pay all costs of court.

From 1665 until the Continental Congress, in an attempt to rid the land of the corrupting influence of the theater, banned all stage productions in 1774, plays were presented in South Carolina, Virginia and Maryland with greater and greater frequency and virtually without challenge. A few of the more delicate-minded

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46 Odell, op. cit., p. 4.
47 Rankin, op. cit., p. 11.
of the audiences did, however, express their displeasure with plays which contained inelegant and over-frank speeches and allusions. These voices of disapproval became so loud in Charleston that the comedians felt compelled to compose and present a prologue in an effort to placate the dissenters:

If important mortals, cramm'd with Thought,  
Condemns what Addison and Shakespeare wrote,  
Fond of our Peace, adverse to all Disputes,  
We straight submit, and ask--the Price of Boots,  
The good and wise may say--'Abuse has been'.  
But from th' Abuse ne'er argue to the Thing,  
Oft at the Tree do future Culprits spring,  
And Thefts increase the more while Felons swing,  
Must Convicts therefore out of Goal be kick'd  
And Robbers 'scape lest Pockets should be Pick'd'?

But most of South Carolina's Anglican planters and their families never failed to attend Charleston's Dock Street Theater when they came into town for the winter social season and for Rice Week in the spring. And the sessions of the General Assemblies and of the courts brought throngs of prominent people into Annapolis and Williamsburg. Until the Assemblies adjourned, these planters crowded into little playhouses three times a week to witness their favorite theatrical performances. The South, unlike her northern neighbors and in imitation of the mother country, opened her theaters regularly and the Southerners, many of whom were avid playgoers, became thoroughly acquainted with all of London's most popular dramas. In fact, theatrical happenings in the mid-eighteenth century South were so well supported that they were

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important news even in the northern colonies. In the 1770's Rivington's New York Gazette went so far as to send a special correspondent to cover the opening of a Charleston theater. This reviewer praised Hallam's acting and then went on to remark:

The house is elegantly finished and supposed for the size to be the most commodious on the continent. The scenes, which are new and well designed, the dresses, the music, and what had a very pleasant effect, the disposition of the lights, all contributed to the satisfaction of the audience, who expressed the highest approbation of their entertainment.  

Unlike the theaters of London, very few of these colonial playhouses were erected expressly for dramatic purposes. Charleston's first dramatic season was inaugurated during the winter of 1735. For lack of a proper theater, Thomas Otway's The Orphan, or The Unhappy Marriage was performed in the courtroom on Friday, January 24, 1735; "Judge, Jury, and Court officials willingly stored away legal documents and let in the invading hosts who were to prepare for the Thespian rites."  

It was in Philadelphia that a company of players under the dual management of Walter Murray and Thomas Kean made its first recorded appearance in 1749. Seeking a building in which to perform, the managers obtained from William Plumstead the use of his warehouse on Pine Street. In 1750 the Murray-Kean Company

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49 Crawford, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

50 Willis, op. cit., p. 10.

51 William Plumstead, the mayor of Philadelphia, had recently been read out of the Quaker meeting and had embraced the Anglican faith.
FIGURE I

THE SITES OF COLONIAL AMERICA'S PRINCIPAL THEATERS

New York

Philadelphia

Annapolis

Williamsburg

Charleston
traveled to New York and secured "... a Convenient room for their purpose in one of the buildings lately belonging to the Hon. Rip Van Dam Esq. [a former governor of New York], deceased, in Nassau Street." As in the Plumstead building in Philadelphia, the theater was probably housed in a warehouse and resembled a playhouse in few respects other than size. Originally there were no boxes, as only seats in the pit and gallery were advertised. Later, when a few box seats were added, the capacity of the house reached 161 in the pit, ten box seats, and 121 in what was a rather large balcony.

As the Murray-Kean Company, which had been comprised primarily of stage-struck tradesmen and their wives, drifted back into obscurity, Lewis Hallam's well-organized company began its rise to prominence. Hallam's players found the converted warehouses so inadequate that they immediately began to erect buildings expressly for dramatic purposes; something which had been done in London ever since 1576 when James Burbage built England's first public playhouse, called simply The Theater. After Hallam's death, the enterprising David Douglass assumed the management of the company. On November 12, 1766, he opened Philadelphia's Southwark Theater; America's first playhouse to be designed with an eye to permanence. The first floor of the theater was constructed of bricks and supported a frame structure that was painted

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52 Odell, op. cit., p. 32.
53 Hankin, op. cit., p. 32.
a dull red. The roof line was broken by a bell-shaped cupola, added as an aid to ventilation. Construction costs of this building of ninety-five by fifty feet totalled approximately 360 pounds. A year later Douglass built the John Street Theater in New York. Its rather primitive appearance has often been placed in sharp contrast with the pillared elegance of London's Drury Lane. New York's playhouse was of rough frame construction and the exterior was painted a dull red. The building itself was set back some sixty feet from the street and a crude covered passageway protected the carriage trade in inclement weather. Inside, the dressing rooms and green room were located beneath the stage. The auditorium contained about one thousand seats and a capacity house yielded receipts equivalent to $800.00.

Within Drury Lane, as in colonial theaters, there were box, pit and gallery sections. The pit with its fixed benches sloped upwards, and enclosing it in the form of an ellipse were two tiers of boxes, occupied by the ladies and gentlemen who attended the theater. A top gallery faced the stage, but was

54 Arthur H. Quinn, A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1923), p. 16.
55 Crawford, op. cit., p. 37.
56 The green room is a waiting room for the players between cues or scenes. Every English and American theater of any size contained a green room.
FIGURE II

The Theater Royal, Drury Lane

INTERIOR OF THE JOHN STREET THEATER, NEW YORK

not carried round the sides. The first major alteration to the theater occurred in 1762 when David Garrick resolved to drive the spectators from their seats on the stage. These spectators paid large sums for the privilege of being seen by the rest of the audience and were rarely interested in the play that was being performed. By mid-century these popinjays had become nuisances: "Ye farce was stop'd for half an hour while Cross drew lines with chalk to divide players from spectators, and then ye farce went on with great applause." In order to drive the spectators from the stage, Garrick greatly increased the capacity of the house itself from 1,268 to 2,206, making it more than twice as large as New York's John Street Theater. The final eighteenth century alteration to Drury Lane was done in the summer of 1775, when the building was converted by the Adam brothers from "... an old barn into the most splendid and complete theatre in Europe." The old side boxes were replaced by larger ones, the new boxes were supported by light elegant pillars and lined with crimson spotted paper, and the pillars were inlaid with plate glass on a crimson and green background. This major alteration was accomplished at a cost of 4,000 guineas, which is an immense sum compared with the paltry 360 pounds paid for the construction of Philadelphia's Southwark Theater.

59 Barton, op. cit., p. 81.

60 Kalman Burnim, David Garrick, Director (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1961), p. 64.
In colonial playhouses, as in those of London, ladies and gentlemen occupied the boxes which usually lined the auditorium in a U-shape along both sides and across the rear. The boxes in a theater in Williamsburg were "... raised slightly above the level of the stage and hemmed in by velvet-cushioned railings—in front of a flower-decorated panel extending all around the house." Sharpened metal spikes were used to separate the boxes from the pit and the gallery. In both England and the colonies unattached gentlemen occupied the pit, from which they could procure an excellent view of the actors' feet and ankles. The gentlemen sat on benches and above them hung chandeliers of candles. Woe betide the apparel of the men who sat directly under them! Just as in London, the gallery usually ran only across the back of the provincial theater, but in the larger houses, unless upper boxes had been installed, all three sides of the auditorium wall were utilized. The gallery held the cheaper seats, and it was usually in this upper-tier that trouble materialized. In England, the footmen and the lackeys considered the gallery their special domain while, in the colonies, it became the province of the less genteel element of mechanics, artisans and laborers, and a market place where women of easy virtue solicited


their customers.  

Colonial lighting arrangements were extremely simple. Above the stage several pendant chandeliers known as "hoops," containing a varying number of candles, furnished primary illumination. Sconces along the walls of the auditorium, left burning through the performance, lighted the audience area. Both tallow and spermaceti candles were used, with the cleaner and more expensive spermaceti candles in the hoops above the stage, a precaution against tallow-spotted costumes. Those of tallow, "... a malodorous idea and a dripping fact," served the customers. Philadelphia's Southwark Theater, which was constructed in 1766, finally eliminated the waxy trickle by installing oil lamps. For a considerable distance along the front of the colonial stage ran a row of candles, technically known as "the float." These were ensconced in a narrow tin box and fronted by a board, so as to prevent the light from dazzling and distracting the spectators' eyes. The lighting arrangements of Drury Lane and Covent Garden were similar to those of the colonial theaters. The audience areas were lighted by candles arranged at

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64 Spermaceti is a waxy solid separating from the oil of the sperm whale.

65 Rankin, op. cit., p. 54.

66 W. Lawrence, "Early American Playgoing," The Theatre, XXIV (December, 1916), 404.
intervals along the edges of the galleries. Four hoops of candles illuminated the Covent Garden stage, while Drury Lane boasted of six chandeliers, numerous wall brackets and footlights, which consisted of a row of unshaded candles. When the stage-lights began to flare or flicker out the gallery gods commonly set up a cry of "Snuffers! Snuffers!" The candlesnuffer had then to obtrude himself in the midst of the traffic of the scene to fulfil his humble office. The candlesnuffer made occasional appearances on the stage in capacities other than his normal one. In the colonies he was frequently called upon to move the furniture and in England he often appeared as a supernumerary: "The prince then enters on the stage in state/Behind a guard of candlesnuffers wait."67

The mid-eighteenth century stage was exceedingly small; ", . . . the longitudinal diameter of the auditory part of the Covent Garden stage from the commencement of the stage to the back wall being 54 or 55 feet."68 With a depth of 28 feet and a width of 45 feet, the Drury Lane stage was even smaller and was built with an incline from front to back. The largest colonial stages were probably of approximately the same dimensions as Drury Lane's. Although the exact footage of the Southwark Theater stage is unknown, it is apparent from the size of the playhouse

itself that its stage was nearly as large as that of Drury Lane:
Southwark Theater, 95 feet by 50 feet; Drury Lane, 112 feet by
58 feet. The back stage of the eighteenth century English and
provincial theater, stretching from the proscenium arch to the
back wall, held the scenery, which was treated as a tableau to
illustrate the action of the play rather than as an integral part
of it. Most of the action of the play took place on the footage
which extended from the commencement of the stage to the prosce­
nium arch. On either side of the stage was a box; the Georges
always sat in the left-hand Drury Lane and Covent Garden stage
box. Between each of the two boxes and the proscenium arch was
a door, which was used as a place of entrance and exit for the
actors. 69

Attached to the apron of both colonial and London stages
was a semicircular enclosure referred to as the orchestra. The
early eighteenth century English orchestra was rather small and
contained a harpsichord, six or seven musicians and a spectator
or two. By the close of the eighteenth century many more spec­
tators were seated in the orchestra. In fact, the orchestra had
to be enlarged in order to accommodate all of the dignitaries
who wished to be seated near the stage. 70 At the beginning of
the century the provincial managers hired only a very few musi-

69 Richard Southern, The Georgian Playhouse (London:

70 Lawrence, Old Theatre Days and Days, pp. 240-43.
ciants, perhaps just a harpsichordist and one fiddler. But it did not take many years before the scores were treated more respectfully. On September 24, 1767, the Pennsylvania Journal distinctly mentioned the "... band of music ..." which was to play the music between the acts. During the acts the musicians relaxed backstage; therefore, "... the last scene of every act is constantly interrupted by the tinkling of a little bell, which apprizes the music to be ready to play in the interval between the acts."  

In both American and English theaters a curtain separated the back stage from the apron; but, during most of the first half of the century, it was seldom used once the play began. Placed in strategic positions behind the proscenium, shutters performed the services of a curtain by drawing or closing to reveal or hide a more elaborate or specific decor. Sometimes the provincial and English actors remained on the forestage while the setting of wings and shutters changed, and then stepped back into the upstage area and into the new scene. This was the case in Act II of Drury Lane's 1773 production of Richard III:

Act II opens with a scene in front of St. Paul's. Richard soliloquizes:
"Hal Edward taken ill"
the direction reads, "Scene draws and discovers, Lady Anne in Mourning, Lord Stanley, Tressel, Guards and Bearers, with King Henry's Body." Richard continues to speak:

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72 Burnim, op. cit., p. 94.
73 Cooke, op. cit., I, 46.
"But see! my Love appears"
and he steps into the scene to interrupt the progress of the funeral procession.\(^{74}\)

Usually, however, both the colonial and the London stage was clear of actors at the termination of a scene or act and the drawing of the shutter frames revealed a new scene and new actors.

By the middle of the century the English theater was beginning to realize the usefulness of the act-curtain. David Garrick had been bombarded by theatrical criticisms which all expressed

\[\ldots\] a wish that every dramatic author would so contrive the denouement as not to cover the stage with dead bodies, except in the finale; whereby the specious representation will be supported, and the curtain may drop, to leave us in full enjoyment of the prosimilitude: for it cannot be denied that the carrying off stiffened counterfeit dead bodies is so laughable an artifice, it is sure to excite a risibility, and turns the whole into a tragic-comic farce.\(^{75}\)

By 1760, therefore, the act-curtain was in frequent employ in London. In that year a Chinese visitor viewed a presentation of Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World* and then described his impressions: "After thus grieving through three scenes," he says of the heroine, "the curtain dropped for the first act." Then 

\[\ldots\] after the queen had fretted through the second act, the curtain was let down once more," and so on for the other three acts.\(^{76}\)

The act-curtain was probably not used by the mid-century provincial managers. In the colonial theater "\[\ldots\] a large green

\[\ldots\]

\(^{74}\)Burnim, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

\(^{75}\)Ibid., p. 91.

\(^{76}\)Ibid., p. 93.
curtain hung before the players until they were ready to begin, when, on the blast of a whistle, it was raised, and some of them appeared and commenced acting.\textsuperscript{77} But there is no information available to indicate that the provincials ever utilized the curtain once a play had begun. It is apparent that, while the provincial theater managers were able to build playhouses which closely resembled those constructed by their London contemporaries, they found it impossible; after struggling for survival in a frontier environment and combating Puritan and Quaker intolerance; to obtain the resources necessary to adopt innovations, such as the use of an act-curtain, which London theater managers were developing.

Eighteenth century London and colonial scenery consisted of little else than paint and canvas: a painted back cloth and six side wings or flats created an illusion of garden, street or the interior of a room. In 1743 John Rich, manager of Covent Garden, assigned his lease to a Martha Launder as security for a mortgage of 1,200 pounds, and in the papers is an inventory of scenic material on the premises at the time. This inventory includes ". . . twelve top grooves with six iron braces and ropes, 30 bottom grooves of different sizes, 43 backscenes and nineteen sets of wings."\textsuperscript{78} Much of the scenery utilized by the English theater was designed and executed by continental painters. This

\textsuperscript{77} Rankin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{78} Richard Southern, \textit{Changeable Scenery} (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1952), pp. 197-211.
fact is apparent to anyone acquainted with the following line from Henry Fielding's satiric *Tumble-Down Dick; or, Phaeton in the Seeds:* "And the scenes painted by the Prodigious Mynheer Van Bottomflat." The reason for this was that compared to the continent, perhaps because the English court financially supported neither opera nor theater, London had a dearth of scenographic artists. In 1775 Thomas Malton expressed the disgust he held for the incompetent English scene-painters:

It is the least qualification of a scene painter to be excellent in landscape, in which a small knowledge of perspective is prerequisite; but in order to execute designs in architecture with correctness, and a just proportion of the several parts, requires a thorough knowledge of perspective. It is somewhat surprising, that all who are concerned in scene painting, do not make perspective their immediate study; being the basis of their profession; yet several artists employed in it, are not totally ignorant of it, in theory, but they are almost wholly unacquainted with its rules, which, to me, is unaccountable.

Because they were so difficult to acquire, good scenic pieces were used by the London theater managers time and time again, not only for the same stock play, but for many different plays whose setting requirements were similar. Tate Wilkinson, a great London actor, in 1790 fondly recalled that one scene

... used from 1747 to this day in the Fop's Fortune &c. which has wings and flat, of Spanish figures at full length, and two folding doors in the middle:—I never see those wings slide on but I feel as if seeing my very old acquaintance unexpectedly.

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79 Ibid., pp. 193-94.
80 Burnim, op. cit., p. 67.
81 Tate Wilkinson, Memoirs of His Own Life (York: Wilson, Spence, and Mauman, 1790), IV, 92.
The scenery erected for a London production of T. A. Arne's Persian opera *Artaxerxes* consisted of three pairs of column wings and a plainish, panelled wall. There was no feature of eastern atmosphere in the scenery; it was without doubt a stock scene.

As a result of the use of stock scenery, there existed in English playhouses a great deal of sloppiness and indifference. In 1775 *Venice Preserved*’s parting scene between Jaffier and Belvidera was exhibited in Yorkshire and what was supposed to be a fine Venetian city was actually represented by a rural village of Mansfield. In April of 1771 a critic for *The Hibernian Magazine* advised the managers of Dublin's Smock Alley not to decorate a representation of a merchant's compting house with colonnades of enriched pillars interspersed with statues. The author of *The Rival Theatres*, which was written in 1737, very succinctly and effectively pointed out the want of propriety and order in the regulation of scenes:

1st Man: Here Wardrobe-Keeper, bring the Book of Accounts with you—Now Brother, you shall see how large our expenses are.
2nd Man: Read the Articles.
W. Keeper: Imprimus—a Cloud and a half, with the three odd waves.
1st Man: What necessity could there be for them?
W. Keeper: 0 dear Sirs, Clouds are the most useful things we can have; for they must always appear to an audience, tho' the Scene lay in a Bed-Chamber; and with the addition of the three odd Waves, we had now enough Waves to make a Sea.82

Just as there were many complaints about the sloppiness which resulted from the use of stock scenery so also were there numerous

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complaints about noisy scene shifts which came as a result of the indifference of the London stage crews:

Be so good as to prompt the managers in one of your papers, and admonish them to grease their ocean a little better against next time. For, tho' it may not be possible to make it roar as it ought to do, it should not be suffered to creak in so discordant a manner, to the utter ruin of all musical entertainments, and grievous offence to us men of taste.\(^83\)

David Garrick, after taking note of many of these rather vehement criticisms and after viewing the elegant French stage settings, vowed to drastically revise Drury Lane's policy regarding scenery. Therefore it was under Garrick that the English scenographic art began its slow but steady rise to prominence. In 1763 a pamphleteer contrasted the emerging splendor to the first half of the eighteenth century "... when few scenes were required and those poorly executed, compared with the excellent painting now produced, where one single flat or front shall be fairly worth their whole stock."\(^84\) After 1773 a large portion of Drury Lane's elegant scenery was executed by the French stage designer, De Loutherbourg, who was engaged by Garrick at the unprecedented salary of 335 pounds a season.\(^85\) De Loutherbourg and his predecessors, Oram and French, besides creating incomparably elegant stage settings, also worked to eliminate at Drury Lane the use of stock scenery. By 1760 the practice of providing new


\(^{84}\) Burnim, op. cit., p. 69.

\(^{85}\) Barton, op. cit., pp. 215-17. (For the 1747-1748 season Oram was paid 130 pounds and for the 1766-1767 season French was paid 213 pounds.)
scenery for new plays presented in London was becoming vogue. In that year Murphy's Desert Island was first presented at Drury Lane. This play introduced a variety of scenery beginning with that of the first act which represented "... a vale in the Desert Island, surrounded by rocks, caverns, grottos, flowering shrubs, exotic trees, and plants growing wild." Similarly, the scenes executed for Johnson's Irene, besides being splendid and gay, were also well adapted to the inside of a Turkish seraglio; the view of the gardens belonging to it was in the taste of eastern elegance. During the second half of the eighteenth century, then, stock scenery rapidly fell into disuse in London. From 1765-1766 to 1775-1776 thirty-seven new mainpieces were introduced at Drury Lane and, of these, nineteen were mounted with new settings.

Another feature of maturing English staging methods was the cultivation of a new flexibility in the placement of doors, arches, and other means of access to the stage. Until the late 1750's the two proscenium doors had been the only entrances; but, in 1759, for example, Arthur Murphy's The Orphan of China could boast of two large gates in the back scene through which burst the Tartars and Timurkan and his train. An additional development at Drury Lane especially evocative by the implications of its

86Burnim, op. cit., p. 70.
87Davies, op. cit., I, 119-20.
subsequent evolution into lateral flats was the occasional turning of the parallel wings to oblique positions. In 1749 Aaron Hill, a theater critic, wrote to Garrick:

The chief difficulty will be found your painter's; For, considering, how crowded a confusion, has, before, been represented to the audience, in the speech of Buricles, 'twill call for all the pencil's art, to fill the temple (through side openings, seen twixt columns, standing separate from the slanted scenes, which are to be set back as far as possible) with such significantly busied groupes of interested people, as were spoken of in the description.\(^9\)

In order that London stage crews might more easily move these huge scenes, William Rufus Chetwood developed in 1741 a rather amazing piece of machinery. He harnessed the wings and backscene by ropes to a common shaft under the stage which was turned by means of a barrel or drum.\(^90\) The development of these innovations and the execution of the elegant stage settings required the expenditure of large sums of money by London's foremost theater manager, David Garrick: 1747-1748, 290 pounds; 1749-1750, 213 pounds; 1766-1767, 652 pounds; 1771-1772, 1073 pounds; 1772-1773, 1365 pounds; 1773-1774, 1227 pounds; 1774-1775, 1594 pounds.\(^91\) The provincial theater managers did not expend such enormous sums for scenery. For example, all the properties of the American Company have been assessed at no more than the equivalent of $1,000. Unlike the scenery utilized by the London theaters,

\(^{89}\text{Ibid., p. 96.}\)

\(^{90}\text{Chetwood, op. cit., p. 73.}\)

\(^{91}\text{Burnim, op. cit., pp. 74-75.}\)
virtually all of the provincial decorations were fashioned by Englishmen. New scenery, painted by Richards, a London artist, was featured in an advertisement printed in the September 1, 1772, issue of a Maryland newspaper: "... the new Scenes painted by Mr. Richards exhibit a View of a superb Apartment, at the end of a fine Colonade of Pillars of the Ionic Order." In fashioning the properties ordered by colonials, English scenographers splashed paint on material of a burlap-like quality and frequently sacrificed detail for bold outline to take advantage of the dim light cast by the flickering candles. Unlike the scenery which was executed for the London theaters during the second half of the eighteenth century, the provincial scenes were by no means designed to fit the action of any particular play; usually there were stock representations of a street, a forest, a parlor, or the like. Nor was it unusual to see chairs or tables painted on the fabric, although these properties were on stage if required. Provincial scenery, like London's decorations, consisted of a backdrop and side scenes, the average width of which was twenty-four to twenty-nine feet, the height around sixteen feet. Designed to part in the middle, both colonial and English scenes slid to the sides of the stage in top and bottom grooves, while, because of greater facility in transportation, American backdrops were fastened to rollers rather than to frames as were London

backdrops. Just as in England, scenery was shifted in the provinces in plain view of the audience. The colonial actor, in imitation of the London performer, would sometimes walk towards the apron with the wings closing behind him, and, at other times, he would make his exit to the rear of the stage, the scenes shifting behind him. In other words, the scenery utilized throughout the mid-century period by the provincial theater managers closely resembled that employed by Londoners previous to the advent of Garrick and De Loutherbourg. Unfortunately, the colonials, after countering Puritan and Quaker denunciations of the theater and endeavoring to bring drama to a frontier society, simply could not find the time, energy or resources to bring the innovations developed by enterprising Englishmen to the American stage.

Just as he had revolutionized the English scenographic art so also did Garrick revamp Drury Lane's entire lighting system. Until 1765 the Drury Lane stage, just as all English and provincial stages, was illuminated by six hoop-shaped chandeliers each of which contained twelve wax candles in brass sockets. These chandeliers could be lowered to be lighted and could be raised into the upper stage-house to darken the stage. In order to make the stage even darker, the footlights were sometimes lowered into an apron trough. But even when the chandeliers were not raised and the footlights not lowered, the eighteenth century English and provincial stage was a place of gloom. Although Garrick often

93 Runkin, op. cit., pp. 103-04.
spent an unheard-of 400 pounds annually on candles, the light which emanated from the chandeliers and the footlights was insufficient to allow any action to take place on Drury Lane's back stage. 94

Considering the Continental system of lighting to be superior to the English system, Garrick, when, in 1765, he returned to Drury Lane from Paris, discarded the rings of candles that hung conspicuously across the stage and installed French winglights. Although there is no evidence that provincial managers made use of winglights, it is well known that in 1766 David Douglass equipped Philadelphia's newly erected Southwark Theater with oil lamps rather than with the traditional candle chandeliers. The winglights which Garrick installed in Drury Lane consisted of a series of perpendicular oil lamps which were backed by reflectors and mounted on iron posts or frames. Masked by the wings, this device could be turned away from the stage to diminish the light. For the old footlights of candles, Garrick substituted a line of oil lamps sent him by Jean Monnet. These innovations enabled the actors to step farther back into the scenic areas without becoming obscured by dark shadows. 95

The installation of oil winglights in Drury Lane enabled de Loutherbourg to experiment with color. He


astonished the audience, not merely by the beautiful colouring far superior to what they had been accustomed to, but by a sudden transition in a forest scene, where the foliage varies from green to blood colour.\textsuperscript{96}

Such a transformation was achieved by placing different colored silk screens in the flies and near the side wings. These turned on pivots, and when the lights were cast behind them they reflected their various enchanting hues upon the scenery and stage. The introduction of the colored silk screens, the winglights and the oil footlights caused an abrupt increase in Drury Lane's lighting expenditures: 1747-1748, 421 pounds; 1749-1750, 414 pounds; 1766-1767, 1240 pounds.\textsuperscript{97} Colonial managers did not spend such large sums of money on lighting. After attempting to discredit Puritan and Quaker criticisms of the theater, the provincial players did not have the energy or the resources to adapt Garrick's lighting innovations to the American stage.

Surprisingly, it was Charles Macklin, a great mid-century actor, rather than David Garrick who revolutionized English theatrical wardrobes by encouraging the use of historically accurate dress. Both London and colonial players had always worn what they fancied, regardless of the general effect. Actresses, concerned only with looking their best, invariably wore contemporary dress. No matter what the role, whether Egyptian queen or Negro slave, actresses never discarded the contemporary wide skirt. Turbans or

\textsuperscript{96}Burnim, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 80-82.

\textsuperscript{97}Ibid., p. 82.
a headdress of feathers constituted their only disguise.\textsuperscript{98}

Actors, on the other hand, made occasional attempts to achieve historical and geographical accuracy. The Shakespearean characters of Falstaff, Henry VIII and Richard III, for example, appeared without fail in period clothing. Frequently, however, the attempts were only half-hearted. Actors playing an eastern role often wore "... an Indian turban, a loose robe like a dressing-gown edged with fur, an Arabian sash, Turkish trousers and Russian boots."\textsuperscript{99}

In London hardly any progress in historical accuracy was made under Garrick's management; all that really mattered to him was that a player's clothes should conform to the recognized stage tradition for his part, if any such tradition existed. In his poem of The Actor, written in 1762, Robert Lloyd inveighs against the monotonous stability of theatrical costume thuswise:

\begin{quote}
To suit the dress demands the actor's art,  
Yet some there are who overdress the part.  
To some prescriptive right gives settled things—
Black wigs to murderers, feathered hats to kings.  
Yet Michael Cassio might be drunk enough,  
Though all his features were not grimed in snuff.
Why should Poll Peachum [\textit{The Beggar's Opera}] shine in satin clothes?  
Why every devil dance in scarlet hose?\textsuperscript{100}
\end{quote}

This and other, similar criticisms prompted Charles Macklin to

\begin{footnotes}
\item[98] The tragic queen always wore a black velvet dress and a plumed headdress, while the eastern princess invariably appeared wearing an elegant turban.
\item[99] Barton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 32-83.
\item[100] Lawrence, \textit{Old Theatre Days and Ways}, p. 127.
\end{footnotes}
play Macbeth in Highland dress instead of the uniform of an English general in the time of George II, worn by Garrick. Thus it was that in 1773 Macklin appeared as Macbeth wearing "... brogue-like shoes, calf-length tartan stockings, a basket-hilted sword, tunic, and plaid Balmoral bonnet." Macklin's innovation was, unfortunately, never adopted by the provincial players. The colonial managers were much too busy building theaters, transporting scenery over rough roads and combating Puritan and Quaker intolerance to concern themselves with the historical accuracy of costumes. Therefore, until after the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, American actresses were never seen without the contemporary hooped skirt and their male counterparts invariably sported the latest styles from London.

Although he did not encourage the use of historically accurate dress, Garrick gave sharp attention to matters of costume. The wardrobe of Drury Lane had become so shabby by 1735 that Aaron Hill felt compelled to criticize it in the January 24 issue of The Prompter:

I have frequently seen a Duke in a coat half a yard too long for him, and a Lord High Chamberlain that had shed most of his buttons. I have seen men of proud hearts submitting, unnaturally, to strut in tarnished lace, and there is a certain Knight of the Garter who condescends to tie back his wig with a packthread. When a King of England has honoured the stage, with his whole court in full splendor about him I'd undertaken to purchase the clothes of all his nobility for

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102 Lawrence, "Early American Playgoing," p. 404.
the value of five pounds. It exceeds all power of face to be serious at the sight of so much shabbiness and majesty!

The reason of this, I am informed, is that the habits do not become the perquisites of Earls and Barons till they have been worn out by the Emperors of the theatre. 103

Garrick was determined to remedy this situation. The bills of innumerable Garrick productions, both new and stock, announce "... the characters New Dress'd,"104 and although the costumes were not always appropriate they were almost sure to be sumptuous and attractive. The maintenance of this magnificent wardrobe required the expenditure of large sums of money: 1747, 1054 pounds; 1749-1750, 430 pounds; 1766-1767, 1124 pounds. From 1771-1772 the figures increase considerably until they reach 1871 pounds in 1775-1776. Each year from 1771 until 1776 the expenditures on costumes exceeded those on scenery and machines and represented six to eight per cent of Drury Lane's entire operating budget.

In addition to these expenditures which Garrick made directly for his wardrobe, his contracts with players included allowances of 50 pounds for clothing. 105 Because the colonial performers were preoccupied with the problems of producing plays in a frontier environment, they did not spend such enormous sums for magnificent and appropriate costumes. For example, in 1761 Douglass spent only 400 pounds for scenery and clothing, both of which he imported

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103 Hill, op. cit., p. 25.
104 Burnim, op. cit., p. 75.
105 Ibid., pp. 77-78.
from London. 106

In the attempt to fill their playhouses with spectators anxious to see the elegantly clad comedians, the English managers employed several modes of advertisement. The ceremony of the drum and trumpet was an aggressive method of drawing crowds to the theater and had been inaugurated in England about the middle of the sixteenth century. Tate Wilkinson, writing in his memoirs in 1790, dwells upon his rural experiences of thirty years earlier and points out that it had long been customary

... for a drummer and trumpeter in every street to proclaim in a audible voice, having been assisted by his shrill notes, without which ceremony the gods would not submit to descend from their heights into the streets to enquire what play was to be acted, nor ascend into the gallery. 107

By the middle of the eighteenth century, however, London's playhouses had replaced the ceremony of the drum and trumpet with other and more effective advertising techniques. There is, in addition, no evidence to indicate that this colorful method of advertisement was ever used by the colonials.

Two methods of advertising which were extremely popular on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the eighteenth century were the posting of play bills 108 and the placing of theatrical notices in the newspapers. An expense account of Covent Garden, under the date of September 12, 1735, lists among other charges an item of

106 Hughes, op. cit., p. 33.
108 Reproductions of English and colonial play bills are in Appendix B and Appendix C.
On January 18, 1735, one of the earliest theatrical notices in any American newspaper appeared in the *South Carolina Gazette*: "On Friday the 24th Inst. in the Court-room will be attempted a Tragedy, called the Orphan, or the Unhappy Mariage. Tickets will be deliver'd out on Tuesday night at Shepherd's at 40s. each." The issuance of tickets was another effective means of advertising upcoming performances in both England and the colonies. The tickets were usually crude brass checks about the size of a quarter-of-a-dollar and, as there were no reserved seats, they bore no indication of a seat number.

109 Thaler, op. cit., p. 269.

110 Forty shillings appears to be a high price to pay for a theater ticket; but, there is evidence to indicate that during the early portion of the eighteenth century the shilling was not worth as much in South Carolina as it was in England. It must also be remembered that, because the Charleston Court House and the other early American theaters did not afford room for many spectators, higher prices could be charged for tickets.

111 *The South Carolina Gazette*, January 18, 1735, p. 3.
To advertise special occasions, and benefits in particular, British and American managers introduced printed tickets:

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Theatre Royal
In Drury Lane
Wednesday, the 21st of October
1747
The Alchymist
Box 5s.¹¹²
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In their attempt to attract potential spectators, the English players employed numerous other advertising techniques which do not appear to have been put to use by colonials. The managers of the London theaters, knowing that one full and friendly house would bring others, often gave people free tickets and sometimes paid them to attend a production. In addition, programs, which contained lists of players and their parts, were sold by the orange girls¹¹³ before each performance.

Both English and colonial performances usually began at six and, since no seats were reserved, ladies sent their servants to the theater at four o'clock to keep their places.¹¹⁴ In 1768

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¹¹² Thaler, op. cit., p. 264.

¹¹³ Orange girls were so called because they also sold oranges and other fruits before each performance.

an English critic complained of this early opening of the doors and the frequent late start of performances. "I am sorry, nay, I am ashamed for you, the managers of Covent Garden," he wrote, "to declare that the only reason to be assigned why you so impose on the public, is the benefit accruing to you from selling tea, coffee, and fruit, by means of the eight bawling women." In the colonies similar refreshments could be purchased at the makeshift bar sometimes set up in provincial theaters.

The colonial playhouse had no need for a box office as tickets were sold at various designated places and positively no money was taken at the door. The English playgoer, on the other hand, had to purchase a ticket from the boxkeeper before entering the theater. To preclude temptation to fraud, the wages paid being small, it was usual to recruit the boxkeepers from the tradesmen class. Plummer, one of the Drury Lane boxkeepers in and about 1744, kept a cheesemonger's shop in Kingsgate Street. Doubtless this practice explains the fact that when Philip Palfreman, who had been a boxkeeper at Covent Garden, died in 1768 he left a fortune of 10,000 pounds. The English boxkeepers allowed spectators to be admitted at reduced rates at the end of the third act. So many playgoers took advantage of this situation that in 1754 a critic rebuked

115 Thaler, op. cit., pp. 219-20.
116 Rankin, op. cit., p. 159.
117 Lawrence, Old Theatre Days and Ways, pp. 87-88.
... the gentlemen who draw the men from under their right ears about seven o'clock, clad on a bag-wig and sword, and drop into the boxes at the end of the third act, to take their half-crown's worth with as much decency as possible; as well as the bloods who reel from the taverns about Covent Garden near that time, and tumble drunk into the boxes. 118

The full prices charged for admission into English playhouses were usually 5s. to the boxes, 2s. 6d. to the pit, 2s. and 1s. to the gallery, and 10s. 6d. for a seat on the stage. 119 Fashionable Britons, however, always paid for their tickets in gold; even if only two five-shilling box tickets were purchased, a guinea would be tendered in exchange. George Anne Bellamy, a favorite mid-century actress, stated that her benefit at Covent Garden in 1756 made her 1100 pounds richer; because, Lord Kildare, Lord Granby, Mr. Fox and Mr. Digby paid 100 pounds each for their tickets. 120

During the first half of the eighteenth century colonial play tickets often cost a good deal more than did those sold by the spacious English theaters. The following advertisement appeared in a 1736 edition of the South Carolina Gazette:

On Thursday, the 12th of February, will be opened the new theatre in Dock street, in which will be performed the comedy called the "recruiting Officer." Tickets for the pit and boxes will be delivered at Mr. Charles Sheppard's, on Thursday, the 5th of February. Boxes, 30s.; pit, 20s.; and tickets for the gallery, 15s., which will be delivered at the theatre the day of the playing. 121

116 Ibid., p. 186.
120 George Anne Bellamy, Apology for the Life of Bellamy by Herself (London: The Literary Society, 1786), III, 84.
121 The South Carolina Gazette, January 31, 1736, p. 3.
By the 1750's, however, because the size of the provincial theater had increased, the price of the American play ticket had dropped considerably: Boxes, 7s. 6d.; pit, 5s. 9d.; gallery, 3s. 9d. It had even dropped below that of the English play ticket; since, during the latter portion of the eighteenth century, one shilling sterling was worth two of the still depreciated American shillings.

At the lowered prices the American theaters earned approximately $750.00 a month or 100 pounds a night in depreciated currency. Below is a list of the receipts and charges for a benefit performance of Othello at New York's Chapel Street Theater:

**RECEIPTS**

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<th>Shillings</th>
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<td>116</td>
<td>46</td>
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| Pit " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " &n
to the men's dressers, 4s.
" " stage-keeper, 32s.
" " drummer, 4s.
" wine in the second act
" Hugh Gaine for two sets of bills, advertisements & commissions

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**BALANCE, 114 pounds 10s.**

The nightly receipts of the English patent houses rarely exceeded 70 pounds or approximately 140 pounds in American currency. The following is a list of the expenditures and receipts for Covent Garden's September 12, 1735, production of *Hamlet*:

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<td>Mr. J. Rich</td>
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<td>3 advert is ts for Hamlet</td>
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**Rec t 55 pounds 19s. Od.**

Although American theatrical ventures were not quite as profitable as their English counterparts, they did bring to their participants

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124 Seilhamer, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

125 Wyndham, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
substantial sums of money. And colonial managers certainly did not expend such enormous sums for spectacular scenery, elaborate costumes, elegant playhouses and dramatic lighting effects as did David Garrick. But, even though colonial productions lacked the exquisite settings of the London performances, the provincial managers must be praised for the great strides they did make in America's frontier environment. After all, David Douglass, in his attempt to bring the theater to the colonists, had to erect playhouses, transport scenery and costumes for long distances over rough roads, and combat Puritan and Quaker intolerance.
CHAPTER III

THE PLAYERS

London's most outstanding mid-century performers were probably David Garrick, Charles Macklin, Kitty Clive and Peg Woffington. Garrick and Macklin are known primarily for the naturalistic school of acting which they revived after the rather lengthy reign of Colley Cibber and his decidedly declamatory style of speaking. Peg Woffington made her London debut in 1740 at Covent Garden as Sylvia in *The Recruiting Officer*. During her career at Drury Lane and Covent Garden she played most of the heroines who then ruled the stage, in both comedy and tragedy; roles in which the heroine appears in masculine disguise afforded her some special triumphs. Her last appearance was as Rosalind in Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (1757). Kitty Clive, best known for her portrayal of broad-comedy roles, first appeared on the stage at Drury Lane in 1728 under the management of Colley Cibber. She continued to appear at Drury Lane until 1743, and from 1746 to 1769 was a member of David Garrick's theatrical company.

Although the English players who ventured to America during the eighteenth century were not nearly as talented as were their London contemporaries and were acquainted only with Cibber's school of dramatic rant and not with the newly revived naturalistic

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1 Thomas Davies, *Dramatic Miscellanies* (London: [n.n.], 1784), I, 56-57.
style of acting, the colonists were, for the most part, delighted with their performances. Probably the most accomplished players to see service in America were the principal members of the Hallam Company. Mrs. Hallam played the feminine leads and her husband, realizing his own shortcomings, assigned the male leads to William Digby, perhaps the best actor in the entire troupe. Lewis Hallam reserved for himself the parts of principal comedian and serious old men. Next in importance was Patrick Malone, who played many of the top supporting characters, both serious and comic, among them the roles of Shylock and Lear. Mrs. William Adcock was recognized as the second lady of the company, playing heavy tragedy, second comedy parts, and the more attractive old woman parts.

In a season which averaged about eighty different plays in 180 nights most colonial and English actors played over fifty nights in an amazing variety of roles. During Goodman's Fields' 1741-1742 season, David Garrick, for example, played eighteen major characters. And Mrs. Henry King, a minor English actress, was reputed to have had sixty-two different roles in her repertoire; she could perform any one of them after only a minimum of rehearsal. The colonial player led an even more strenuous life; American companies were so small that the actors frequently had

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2 Coad, op. cit., p. 197.
3 Berton, op. cit., pp. 45-46.
to take two parts in the same play. In both America and England parts were assigned by the manager, often with the aid of the actors themselves. In 1754 Patrick Malone offered to help Lewis Hallam gain permission from Governor Hamilton to open a theater in Philadelphia. Malone undertook the business on condition that, if successful, he should have for his reward the part of Falstaff. Once an actor had shown his ability to handle a part it became his property. The English audience knew Charlesacklin as Shylock, Henry Woodward as Falstaff, Hannah Fritchard as Lady Macbeth, and no manager dared alter the arrangement. A similar situation existed in the colonies. Richard Goodman and John Henry had both played Major O'Flaherty in Richard Cumberland's West Indian and they quarreled bitterly for the opportunity to perform the role in Philadelphia in 1773. Performers often continued to play their parts long after they were physically and vocally suited to them. A middle-aged Mrs. David Douglass maintained her right to play those youthful roles that she had claimed as her prerogative under her former husband’s management and Susannah Cibber was still playing Ophelia and Juliet at forty-nine. The audiences seemed not to have noticed these incongruities, or if they did,

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5. Dunlap, op. cit., p. 16.
7. Mrs. Douglass’ first husband was Lewis Hallam, Sr.
cared not in the least.

The number of rehearsals an actor required to prepare a part for a night's performance varied with the size of the role and the interval which may have elapsed since he last played the part. Companies seldom rehearsed stock plays more than once before performance. Measure for Measure, which was revived after a nine year interval, warranted only two rehearsals. New plays were not much more fortunate. Cumberland's The Jew was produced for the first time after only four full rehearsals and six partial ones and on May 7, 1772, the Virginia Gazette carried this item:

We are authorized to announce that the new Comedy of The Fashionable Lover written by Cumberland, now acting at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, with the utmost applause, will shortly appear in our Theatre. Such is the Industry of the American Company, that though the Piece has not been above 10 Days in the Country, it has been rehearsed more than once, and is already, we hear, fit for Representation.

David Garrick's company, unlike Covent Garden's players and the American Company, frequently devoted three to eight weeks, and on one occasion at least a year, to preparing a new play. The following notice has been found in the November 17, 1755, issue of Gray's Inn Journal: "A new Tragedy, entitled Boadicia [written by Richard Glover] is now in Rehearsal at the Theatre." Boadicia did not open until December 1. And Garrick, also unlike other managers, insisted that all his players attend the rehearsals he conducted; forfeits and stoppages of small amounts appear.

8 Rankin, op. cit., p. 166.

9 Burnim, op. cit., p. 46.
frequently in the Drury Lane account books as fines against actors who absented themselves from rehearsals.\textsuperscript{10}

Not even Garrick, however, was able to fully convince the players that they should do more toward preparing for a performance than merely memorize their lines. In \textit{The Prompter} Aaron Hill struck out at the slovenly manner in which the actors conducted their rehearsals:

The pride and conceitedness of these vain men and women, who are slow to believe they have anything to learn, tho' they find they have something to remember, have reduced a rehearsal to a mere muttering over the lines, with seldom so much as articulation of voice, so far are they from supposing it necessary to practice any of the more considerable duties. The prompter\textsuperscript{11} dispatches his boy to the Green Room to give notice when the lady or the gentleman is waited for in the scene. Then in rush they, one after another, rumbling their parts as they run, hurrying with a ridiculous impatience till they have caught and beat back the cues, and then, immediately, forsaking the stage as if they had nothing to do in the play but to parrot a sound without consequence.\textsuperscript{12}

And in 1768 one Clarinda penned an acid critique of the members of the American Company in their failure to utilize rehearsals with enough efficiency to so much as properly memorize their lines:

\textsuperscript{10}Chetwood, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{11}The eighteenth century prompter was a much more important official than the prompter of today. Not only had he to be ready at all moments to give the actor the word, but he had to summon up the musicians, ring up the curtain, see to the changes of scenery, the working of the traps and the rolling of the thunder. Most of his messages were conveyed by bell-pulls but he was also armed with a whistle to notify the stage hands when to shift the flats, wings and borders.

\textsuperscript{12}Hill, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 67-68.
I cannot help mentioning a Thing that must always be disagreeable to a sensible Audience. It is the barefaced, illiberal, and very often indecent Insertions of some of his the manager's Actors that play the low parts in comedy, or Farce, which is generally substituted for what they have either forgot, or perhaps, which is more likely, never perused—to be imperfect is so great a Fault, that the putting in their Ribaldry, is hardly a greater.¹³

In the opinion of the eighteenth century actor, each role was a solo performance; there was no need for interaction and therefore there was no need for orderly or numerous rehearsals. All that a Georgian player asked of his fellows was that they give him his cues, keep out of his way and not distract the attention of the audience during his speeches. Even the great Garrick was not enough concerned about interacting with the other players to refrain from fidgeting with his buttons in the less important scenes in Macbeth. And Kitty Clive habitually waved to her friends in the audience between her speeches.¹⁴ Aaron Hill decried this practice of actors to neglect to play their parts except when they themselves were speaking:

They relax themselves, as soon as any speech in their own part is over, into an absent unattentiveness to whatever is replied by another; looking around and examining the company of Spectators with an Ear only watchful of the Cue; at which, like Soldiers, upon the word of Command, they start, suddenly, back to their postures, Tone over the unanimating Sound of their Lesson; and, then (Like a Caterpillar, that has erected itself at the Touch of a Twig), shrink again, to their crawl, and their Quiet: and enjoy their full Ease, till next Rowing.¹⁵

¹³Rankin, op. cit., p. 149.
¹⁴Barton, op. cit., p. 83.
Although David Garrick, like other eighteenth century theater managers, was not especially concerned about interacting with the other players, he and Charles Macklin were both vitally interested in rendering their lines in a conversational tone. It is, in fact, commonly assumed that these two performers initiated a naturalistic school of acting that spelled an end to the formalistic school of James Quin. But nature underlay all the schools of eighteenth century acting. Quin at his worst, in full-bottomed periwig, truncheon in hand, sawing the air and monotonously intoning, did not consider himself unnatural. He had merely superimposed upon nature the resources of art. From the age of Thomas Betterton\(^\text{16}\) (1635-1710) to the age of John Philip Kemble\(^\text{17}\) (1757-1823) acting styles fluctuated between the two polarities of art and nature:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Betterton</th>
<th>Nature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colley Cibber and Quin</td>
<td>Art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrick and Macklin</td>
<td>Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kemble and Sarah Kemble Siddons(^\text{18}) (1755-1831)</td>
<td>Art</td>
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16. Thomas Betterton: The best contemporary English writers, such as Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Samuel Pepys, and Alexander Pope, highly praised his impersonations. Betterton is best known for his portrayal of the role of Hamlet.

17. John Philip Kemble made his first stage appearance at Wolverhampton in 1776 in the tragedy Theodosius. From 1783 to 1802 he acted at the Drury Lane Theater, often appearing with his famous sister Sarah Siddons. He was manager of the Drury Lane (1788-1802) and later of Covent Garden. He retired in 1817. Philip Kemble was noted for his portrayal of such Shakespearean roles as Hamlet, King John, Othello, and Coriolanus; his declamatory style of acting was much imitated.

18. In 1782 Sarah Kemble Siddons appeared at the Drury Lane as Isabella in Isabella or the Fatal Marriage by Thomas Southerne. Her performance in this role established her reputation.
But at no point was either school wholly suppressed; acting styles varied in degree rather than in kind.\textsuperscript{19}

Although Macklin and Garrick did not bring a permanent end to the formalistic school of acting, they did improve upon and temporarily revive what might be designated Betterton's naturalistic school. They endeavored to convince performers that a good voice, graceful manner of delivery, and easy treading of the stage were not the only qualifications essential to acting; nor was it enough to be the parrots of the poet's words without having any idea of their true meaning.\textsuperscript{20} Macklin urged players to speak a passage as they would in ordinary life and then to heighten it to suit the stage. Kitty Clive was one of the many performers who followed this suggestion and attempted to render lines in a conversational tone. She was so successful in this endeavor that, when one of her maid-servants, to whom she had given an admission to see her act, was asked how she liked her mistress on the stage, she said ",... she saw no difference between her there and at home."\textsuperscript{21} Macklin also stressed the importance of mastering variety of tone and pause to indicate transitions of thought and associations of ideas. On a notable occasion one of his long psychological silences was suddenly broken short by a prompter who

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1785} she played chiefly in Shakespearean roles and became known as the greatest English actress of her time.}

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Appleton}, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 151-52.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Burnim, op. cit.}, p. 51.

assumed that he had had a lapse of memory. Given his cue, Macklin cried out angrily, "The fellow interrupted me in my grand pause."\textsuperscript{22}

Macklin's and Garrick's easy and familiar, yet forcible style in speaking, at first brought disapproving words from the critics who had become accustomed to an elevation of the voice. But after the two actors had played a variety of roles in which they 

\[ \ldots \text{gave evident proofs of consummate art, and perfect knowledge of character, their [the critics'] doubts were turned into surprise and astonishment, from which they relieved themselves by loud and reiterated applause.}\textsuperscript{23} \]

In addition to endeavoring to convince performers to render lines in a conversational tone, Macklin and Garrick also asserted the actor's right to re-interpret a role according to his own peculiar genius. In 1741 Macklin determined to play Shylock seriously as a villain and to represent his conflicting passions realistically; the rich Jew had always before been portrayed as a low comic figure. Months previous to the play's première Macklin began to study the manners and appearance of the Jews then in London:

He made daily visits to the center of business, the 'change and the adjacent coffee-houses; that by a frequent intercourse and conversation with "the unforeskinned race" he might habituate himself to their air and deportment.\textsuperscript{24}

On the night of the first performance of the play Macklin came a

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{22}Appleton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 158.
\bibitem{23}Davies, \textit{Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.}, I, 40.
\bibitem{24}Appleton, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 46.
\end{thebibliography}
little defiantly into the green room, the natural lines of his face deeply scored in black, a wispy beard on his chin and wearing a red hat and loose black gaberdine, the distinctive dress of the Venetian Jews of the sixteenth century; never before had an actor paid any attention to the historical accuracy of his dress. Macklin then mustered all the courage he could and "... threw myself on the stage, and was received by one of the loudest thunders of applause I ever before experienced." Macklin's Shylock met with such success that Garrick determined to effect a similar revitalization of King Lear. Macklin has described how the young Garrick transformed himself into a little old man with spindle shanks and tottered across the stage, looking about him with the dim eyes of old age; how when he uttered the curse, the audience shrank with horror, and how the pathos of his scene with Cordelia drew tears from the whole house. "In short, the little dog made it a chef d'oeuvre, and a chef d'oeuvre it continued to the end of his life." The natural style of acting which Garrick and Macklin had revived was very popular with England's playgoers. An essay in the Lady's Magazine for September, 1760, discussed the change and went on to describe in detail the acting of Thomas Sheridan, which was a still surviving example of the older kind of acting. When

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27 Ibid., p. 107.
Garrick and Sheridan played Rowe's *Fair Penitent* together, in November of the same year, a discussion was published comparing them in this particular performance: of Garrick it was said that he was able, in his acting of Lothario, to give to the fair Calista the appearance of genuine passion and at the same time persuade the audience that he was dissimulating; of Sheridan's acting the following paragraph gives some vivid details:

Against him are a person by no means agreeable, a stiffness in his manner of walking: his action, 'tis true, is often loose, bold, and expressive, but sometimes affected, particularly his manner of almost always holding one hand across his belly, and frequently spitting. His face if considered as a mere picture is but indifferent, and his voice uneven, sometimes piercingly shrill, at others rough and croaking.28

Many eighteenth century theater critics joined with this essayist in praising the natural style of acting. Thomas Davies wrote in his memoirs that Garrick could, without the least preparation, transform himself into any character, tragic or comic, and seize instantaneously upon any passion of the human mind. "He could make a sudden transition from violent rage, and even madness, to the extremes of levity and humour, and go through the whole circle of theactric evolution with the most surprising velocity."29 And Charles Dibdin praised the revived style of acting when he wrote that Susannah Maria Cibber actually became the character she represented. "Love, rage, resentment, pity, disdain,

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and all the graduations of the various passions she greatly felt and vigorously expressed."

Never exposed to the more realistic and natural acting revived by Garrick and Macklin, the colonial actors, who were definitely not as talented as were their London contemporaries, had been trained by players of the old school of dramatic rant, and unfortunately there was always a trace of the podium in their declamations. On stage, even Lewis Hallam, Jr.'s actions were "... stiff and prim ...," while his delivery irked some spectators who complained he was always "... either mouthing or ranting ..." But most American playgoers, while acknowledging that the Hallam Company and Douglass' troupe were not equal to the great actors of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, felt that they were entitled to distinct credit for the courage and persistence with which they carried on their dramatic pioneering in a new country. In fact, many colonists, not having had the opportunity to hear such greats as Garrick and Macklin, did not know a natural school of acting even existed and, in consequence, loudly praised those actors of the old school who had ventured to America. A Maryland poet, for example, celebrated the genius of

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32 Crawford, op. cit., p. 25.
From earliest youth, with raptures oft
I've turned great Shakespeare's page;
Pleased when he's gay and soothed when soft
Or kindled at his rage.

Yet not till now, till taught by thee,
Conceived I half his power!34

And YZ, a theater critic for the Maryland Gazette, had nothing but praise for Nancy Hallam's 1770 characterization of Shakespeare's Imogen: "She exceeded my utmost idea! Such delicacy of manner! Such classical strictness of expression! The music of her tongue—the vox liquida, how melting!"35

Although the colonial players were not as competent as were the London performers, they were effective enough that even the provincial Anglican aristocracy, who had some knowledge of the natural style of acting, flocked to their performances. The theater was a favorite haunt of George Washington, a Virginia legislator. On September 20, 1768, he "... and Mrs. Washington and ye two child'n [John Parke, fifteen, and Martha Parke Custis, thirteen] were up to Alexandria to see the Inconstant or way to win him acted."36 And during one seven day period in the same

33 Nancy Hallam; the daughter of William Hallam and the niece of Mrs. Douglass.
34 Stanard, op. cit., pp. 244-45.
35 Seilhamer, op. cit., p. 278.
year he attended the theater five times. Even officials appointed by the British Crown were greatly impressed by the colonial players; when in the summer of 1753 the Hallam Company left Williamsburg for New York, Governor Dinwiddie gave the actors a letter endorsing their ability as comedians and their personal conduct. The moral behavior of many of the English players also gained for them the favor of aristocrats. The decency of Frances Abington's conduct in private life attracted the notice and garnered for her the esteem of many persons of quality of her own sex. She received visits from, and returned them to ladies of the most distinguished worth and highest rank.

David Garrick, although his conduct in private life was generally above reproach, gained the acceptance of the aristocracy in a different manner. In eighteenth century England private theatricals, elaborately produced, were extremely popular among those rich enough to afford them, and Garrick gained entry into many great houses by his readiness to help in procuring the scenery and supervising rehearsals. And one invitation led to many more, for his hosts found him the perfect guest, talkative and amusing, with a fund of anecdotes which he told with the skill of

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38 Stanard, op. cit., p. 239.

a professional entertainer. England’s aristocracy also considered Garrick to be one of its favorite hosts; guests at one of his lavish dinner parties included such dignitaries as Horace Walpole, the Duke of Grafton, the Spanish Minister and the Lord Chamberlain. Royalty, as well as the aristocracy, was fascinated by the players of Drury Lane and Covent Garden; George III frequently attended performances at both of these theaters. And in 1746 Frederick, Prince of Wales, commanded three plays to be presented in Covent Garden for the entertainment of his brother-in-law, the Prince of Hesse, two of which were Othello and The Stratagem. In fact, the London players, who were esteemed as highly by England’s aristocrats as were the provincial performers by influential Anglican colonists, were so well accepted by royalty and the aristocracy that the 1738 marriage of Lady Henrietta Herbert, daughter of Earl Waldegrave, to John Beard, "... who sings in the farces at Drury Lane," caused scarcely a murmur of gossip.

Many of England’s aristocrats were so entranced by the players that they eagerly took upon themselves the responsibilities of the patron; they willingly donated enormous sums to the performers of both Covent Garden and Drury Lane. The players were also paid fairly meager weekly stipends. The usual salary
for a beginner was one guinea a week but the principal performers
received somewhat larger sums: Garrick, 630 pounds a year; Macklin,
at 9 guineas per week, and 6 guineas for his wife, 525 pounds;
Peg Woffington, at 7 guineas a week, 364 pounds; Hannah Pritchard,
250 pounds; Kitty Clive, 525 pounds. There was a great deal of
rivalry among these stars; each player was extremely jealous of
those of his colleagues who received higher salaries. Kitty
Clive once wrote the following protest note to her manager, David
Garrick: "You gave Mrs. Cibber 600 pounds for playing sixty
nights, and 300 pounds to me for playing 180, out of which I can
make it appear it cost me 100 pounds in necessaries for the
stage." Until 1791 it was the practice of American companies
to pay their members shares of the profits rather than weekly
stipends. Shares were divided among the members of the Hallam
Company as follows: William Hallam, 2 shares and one-half of the
profits; Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Hallam and family, 6 shares and one-
half of the profits; Mr. and Mrs. William Rigby, 2 shares; Mr.
and Mrs. Thomas Clarkston, 2 shares; Miss Palmer, 1 share; John
Singleton, 1 share; Mr. Herbert, 1 share; Mr. Winnell, 1 share;
William Adcock, 1 share; Patrick Malone, 1 share. Each share
was worth from four to ten pounds weekly. Thus it would appear

43 Fitzgerald, op. cit., p. 31.
44 Ibid., p. 77.
45 Dunlap, op. cit., p. 6.
that the income of the provincial player was comparable with that of the London performer. However, because the shilling was not worth as much in the colonies as it was in England, the provincial actors actually received a good deal less than their English contemporaries.

By way of compensation for the meagerness of their wages the principal members of both American and English companies were "... thrown the sop of an annual benefit." The benefit system was actually nothing more than a genteel moan for alms; actors humbly went from house to house soliciting patronage for their benefit nights. The players, in order to augment their incomes, even went so far as to devise previously unheard-of methods of advertisement. One evening in or about 1770 Edward Shuter, a well-known English comedian, put his head through the hole in the green curtain and shouted to the audience "Remember me to-morrow!" Shuter's benefit was on the program for the next night. The door to door soliciting and the outlandish modes of advertising were evidently quite successful, for spectators always flocked to the theater and gladly paid the advanced prices frequently charged on benefit nights. On the night of Hannah Pritchard's 1768 benefit the house "... was crowded with the

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47 Lawrence, Old Theatre Days and Ways, p. 99.
48 Thaler, op. cit., p. 85.
first people of distinction, at advanced prices."49 Frequently and especially in the colonies benefits were given for reasons other than a mere augmentation of income. Mrs. Davis, a New York actress, announced in 1751 that a benefit had been given to her to enable her to buy off her time. It was the practice at that time for masters of vessels to bring passengers from Europe to the colonies upon the condition that they should be sold immediately upon their arrival as servants to any person who would pay their passage money. They were sold for a definite period of time and were called Redemptioners, of which class Mrs. Davis appears to have been one. In that same year Mr. Jago humbly begged that all gentlemen and ladies would be so kind as to favor him with their support, as he had never had a benefit before and had just been released from prison; and Henrietta Osborne appropriately selected the play of The Distressed Mother and published the announcement that this was the first time she, a poor widow, had had a benefit and, having met with many hardships and misfortunes, she then appealed to the benevolent.50

The proceeds from annual benefits in addition to regular weekly stipends made the theater a profitable place of business for the managers and the great performers. For example, David Douglass died in the West Indies in 1786 having accumulated a

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49 Ibid.
50 Daly, op. cit., pp. 8-9.
fortune of 25,000 pounds from his American theatrical ventures. And the English players were nearly as fortunate. Drury Lane's performers earned the following sums during the 1742-1743 season:

Catherine (Kitty) Clive
Salaries: 525 pounds
Benefit: 200
Clothes: 50
Tickets at her benefit: 21
**Total:** 796 pounds

David Garrick
Salaries: 630 pounds
Two benefits: 500
**Total:** 1130 pounds

Hannah Pritchard
Salaries: 250 pounds
Benefit: 180
Clothes: 50
**Total:** 480 pounds

Peg Woffington
Salaries: 364 pounds
Benefit: 130
Clothes: 50
**Total:** 544 pounds

Susannah Cibber
Salaries: 200 pounds
Benefit: 100
**Total:** 300 pounds

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51 Seilhamer, *op. cit.*, p. 89.
52 Melville, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.
53 Fitzgerald, *loc. cit.*
54 Melville, *op. cit.*, p. 113.
Charles Hacklin
Salary .......................... 525 pounds
Benefit .......................... 230
TOTAL .......................... 755 pounds

In spite of the great earning power of the stars, the average income of Drury Lane’s fifty-six actors and actresses in 1765 was only about 3 pounds 10s. a week.\(^{58}\) Players could easily obtain board and lodging in London for thirty pounds a year and rooms were available to let at ten shillings a week. There were modest ordinaries as well, where for as little as sixpence a man could enjoy a two course dinner, good conversation, and the use of the newspapers.\(^{59}\) The cost of living in the American colonies was also comparatively low. The house the Hon. Rip Van Dam, the wealthy governor of New York, lived in was worth only about 500 pounds. It was of brick and was two stories high. The value of his household furniture and Negro slaves was estimated at a mere 250 pounds.\(^{60}\) But even with this comparatively low cost of living many of the English and colonial performers needed pensions

\(^{57}\) Fitzgerald, loc. cit. (The income of the London player, when compared with that of the English minister, appears to have been quite sufficient. The mid-century village curacy was worth perhaps 30 pounds to 40 pounds per annum. The minor bishoprics such as St. Asaph’s, Oxford, or Bristol were worth 300 pounds p.a. and extremely wealthy sees such as Winchester, Durham, or London were worth 3,000 pounds.)

\(^{58}\) Thaler, op. cit., p. 96.

\(^{59}\) Appleton, op. cit., p. 25.

\(^{60}\) Hornblow, op. cit., p. 96.
or other aid when they grew old. Public and players joined forces in 1758 to ensure the success of a subscription issue of an old play for the relief of Mary Porter, an aged London performer.

The most talented players of both London and America were generously reimbursed and vigorously applauded for their dramatic efforts by appreciative audiences. In England the eighteenth century was the age of the great actor, and London's performers, especially those under the influence of Charles Macklin and David Garrick, thrilled spectators with unusually fine characterizations. The provincial players were not nearly so gifted as were their English counterparts, nor were they trained in the naturalistic style of acting which was so appealing to the mid-century Londoner. And after expending enormous sums for the construction of crude playhouses in the primitive American environment and spending weeks urging the Quaker fathers to permit a play to be performed in Philadelphia, the colonial theater manager simply did not have the will or the resources to take on the difficult task of convincing talented actors to leave London and to perform in the provinces. But the theater was a novelty in America and, even though the provincial players were not as gifted as London's actors, many colonials attended theatrical productions regularly and frequently praised the players far more highly than their talents merited.
CHAPTER IV

THE PLAYGOERS

Interest in the drama and the theater was remarkably high in mid-eighteenth century London and this interest was not limited to certain social classes or economic groups. The anonymous author of Theatrical Biography (1772), explaining why he undertook to edit the memoirs of the actors, felt that...

Such a large number of Britons attended the theater during the mid-century period that securing a seat in the playhouse often necessitated waiting outside the theater for as much as an hour. Mrs. Boscawen, the wife of a famous admiral, wrote in her journal in 1748 that "Mr. Garrick is so crowded that I have no chance of seeing him, but when some charitable body provides a place and invites me to it." And in 1768 Mrs. Delany wrote to Miss Dewes that...

1Lynch, op. cit., p. 199.
2Ibid., p. 200.
3Ibid.
In London it was distinctly the smart thing to do to attend the theater. It was always fashionable to be seen at Drury Lane and during the latter portion of the century Covent Garden was also considered by London's elite to be an acceptable haunt. And of course David Garrick was the favorite player with Hannah Pritchard and Kitty Clive among the most popular. Fashions in plays frequently depended upon fashions in actors; Garrick's *Lethe* could always be counted upon to draw large numbers of spectators. Sizable crowds also flocked to the theaters of the colonial South. According to John Esten Cooke, a nineteenth century novelist, the Williamsburg playhouse was always "... nearly full, and the neatness of the edifice was lost sight of in the sea of brilliant ladies' faces and strong forms of cavaliers." But while great crowds of Anglican Southerners, anxious to patronize that which Londoners considered to be fashionable, attended the dramatic productions of the playhouses of Williamsburg, Charleston and Annapolis; many of the Puritans, Quakers and Presbyterians who resided in the northern colonies completely tabooed the theater, which they considered to have an evil influence upon society.

Both English and colonial theatergoers of the higher ranks of society regularly occupied the boxes, which lined both sides of the eighteenth century playhouse. The part of the audience that sat in the boxes did not always attend primarily to see the

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4Cooke, *op. cit.*, I, 45.

5Quinn, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.
play. On April 19, 1771, Colonel Hudson Muse of Virginia wrote his brother in Maryland that he had been in Williamsburg eleven days and had "... spent the time very agreeably at the plays every night." The Colonel evidently looked just as frequently upon certain other spectators as he did upon the players; because, although he pronounced Nancy Hallam to be an excellent actress, he was forced to confess that "... her lustre was much sullied by the number of beauties that appeared at that court." And Mrs. Boscawen, writing to Mrs. Delany in 1770, revealed another primary reason for attending the theater:

... on Thursday, when Garrick acted, Mrs. Montagu had Lord Chatham's children at dinner, and carried them to the play. His lordship himself was to have been of her party, had not the gout intervened; but for this contretemps I think my friend's box would have been honoured with the acclamations of the upper gallery.

Those who came rather to be seen than to see the play frequently invaded the stage itself, where they sat on temporarily erected benches which occupied much of the rear of the stage. At various times the managers of both English and American theaters attempted to stop the practice, which many in the audience found annoying. One who called himself a six-penny pamphleteer, for example, complained to Garrick in 1748:

6Stanard, op. cit., p. 245.

7First Earl of Chatham is otherwise known as William Pitt (1708-1778).

8Ibid.

9Lynch, op. cit., pp. 201-02.
... this Seat of Decorum is once more over-run by the Goths and Vandals: At present the Beaux pop in and out with as little Opposition as Modesty; and have made so absolute a Burrow of the Stage, that unless they are ferreted out by some Means or other, we may bid farewell to Theatrical Entertainments.

The players, as well as a large portion of the audience, were extremely unhappy with these unruly spectators who insisted upon sitting on the stage during the performances. In both England and the colonies drunken beaux would frequently stray onto the apron itself and interrupt the action of the play by kissing the leading actress or by mingling with the extras. Both David Garrick (King Lear) and Peg Woffington (Cordelia) were horrified by what transpired during a performance of King Lear. When the old king was recovering from his delirium and sleeping with his head on Cordelia's lap, a gentleman stepped out onto the apron and threw his arms around Peg Woffington. Garrick was so mortified by this incident that in 1762 he issued an order forbidding spectators to so much as visit the scenes of the playhouse. In the same year Douglass was forced to publish a similar notice in a New York newspaper:

Complaints having been several Times made, that a Number of Gentlemen crowd the Stage, and very much interrupt the Performance: and as it is impossible for Actors when thus obstructed, should do that Justice to their Parts they other wise could; it will be taken as a particular Favour if no Gentleman will be offended that he is absolutely refus'd

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11 Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esc., I, 339-41.
Admittance at the Stage Door, unless he has previously secured himself a place in either the Stage or upper boxes. In both London and the colonies ladies and gentlemen of quality attended the theater in order to not only see the play but also be seen by both social rivals and inferiors. When the aristocrats became so vociferous that the more lowly elements of the audience complained, both David Garrick and David Douglass reacted by severely limiting their freedom of movement.

Just as the boxes were occupied by spectators of the higher ranks of society, the London and colonial pit audience was made up of merchants, clerks and professional men. The anonymous author of a letter to Caleb D’Anvers described the pit audience: "... the Patrons of the Stage ... include most People of Wit and Taste, as well as Multitudes of good Sense and exemplary Virtue." Unfortunately these words cannot also be used to describe the rabble which occupied the galleries. The gods expressed themselves either with a shower of decaying fruit, dried peas and rotten eggs or with thunderous applause and more often than not their actions determined the success or failure of a new play. Authors could do nothing but joke about their servility to the gallery gods. Said the prologue to Hugh Kelly’s A Word to the Wise when that ill-fated comedy was brought out at Drury Lane in 1770:

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12 Rankin, op. cit., pp. 97-98.
13 Lynch, op. cit., p. 204.
A roasted poet is a glorious meal—
and oft I've known a miserable wit,
Through downright laughter fasten'd on the spit,
Basted with cat-call sauce for very fun,
Not till quite ready—but still quite undone.

And players who did not meet the expectations of the inhabitants of the galleries frequently were forced to leave the stage amid a shower of bottles and eggs. This practice became so prevalent in the colonies that in 1762 David Douglass felt compelled to announce that "A Pistole Reward will be given to whoever can discover the person who was so very rude as to throw Eggs from the Gallery upon the stage last Monday." 

Sometimes the gallery gods became so disgruntled with the management of a particular theater that they joined together in order to conduct a full-scale riot. In Philadelphia the Sons of Liberty, in their efforts to force the English performers to leave the colonies, created such disturbances in the galleries that Douglass often had to get a constable to help him keep order in the playhouse. And Thomas Davies' memoirs contains an account of a similar riot at Drury Lane occasioned by the charging of full prices to The Two Gentlemen of Verona. In January, 1763, a Mr. Fitzpatrick and his confederates circulated a printed advertisement throughout all the coffeehouses, taverns and other public

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14 Lawrence, Old Theatre Days and Ways, p. 170.
15 The pistole is the old quarter doubloon of Spain.
16 Crawford, op. cit., pp. 36-37.
17 Hughes, op. cit., p. 42.
houses; wherein they had set forth the great injustice of the managers of Drury Lane to presume to exact the full prices on the night of a revived play. David Garrick refused to oblige Mr. Fitzpatrick and reduce the admission prices; because, it had always been a custom to demand full prices on the acting of a revived play which had cost additional expense for decoration. The consequence of not giving in to the gods was "... the tearing up the benches, breaking the lustres and girandoles, and committing every act of violence to which they [the spectators] were prompted by their ungovernable rage and malice." The destruction was so great that the play had to be given up and the money was returned.

Often, however, it was not the rabble which inhabited the galleries but the ladies and gentlemen of quality, who were inveighed against. On January 31, 1735, Aaron Hill received a letter complaining about loud conversation during performances at the theater. The correspondent had been seated near two dukes, an earl and a foreign minister but had not been able to hear a single word uttered by the actors. He then moved to the other side of the theater where he had observed three very attentive ladies.

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18 A lustre is a decorative object, as a chandelier, hung with glass pendants.

19 A girandole is an ornamental branched candle holder.

20 Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq., II, 5.
... but I soon found I had not changed to advantage, for they thought it necessary likewise to manifest their qualities the same obstreperous way.

Perhaps, Sir, they think the superiority of their quality puts them above showing respect to any person inferior to themselves. If so, it may be necessary to tell them that it better becomes high birth to set an example of polite behaviour than to be marked out for any impropriety that shocks good manners.21

And John Bernard, an English gentleman, was rather disturbed with one Captain Stanley who irritated his fellow spectators in yet another way:

He was a frequent visitor to our boxes; but, however great his gratification or sympathy, he could not at all times command his senses, and would fall asleep; the result of which was that he would favour the audience with an original melody (in a pretty high key) by his nose.22

In both England and America spectators of all ranks of society frequently caused disturbances which were irritating to the players and to the more sedate theatergoers; but, these troublemakers comprised only a small portion of the basically benevolent mid-eighteenth century audience. For example, Drury Lane playgoers, under the influence of a few critics who took upon themselves the trouble of judging for all the rest of the spectators, treated Elizabeth Griffith's Platonic Wife with uncommon severity on its opening night. The critics were so clamorous that the writer gave up her play for lost and Charles Holland and William Powell, who acted the principal parts in it and were not


22 Lawrence, Old Theatre Days and Ways, p. 139.
used to the noise of cat-calls, hisses, groans and horse-laughing, were so intimidated that they entreated the managers to put an end to the play that very night. But the good-natured part of the audience insisted upon the play having the chance of a new trial. "Against the next representation it was altered, to the general satisfaction of the public, and the author had the good fortune to obtain two benefits." And a letter from Kitty Clive, a stage veteran, to Jane Pope, a young actress, testifies further to the benevolence of the English audience. The great comedianne first commended Jane Pope for a Saturday night's exquisite performance and then urged her to endeavor to act even better in the future and to expect to receive less applause:

The violent thunder of applause last Saturday, on your first appearance, was not all deserved, it was only benevolently bestowed to give you the pleasing information that they were well delighted, and had their warmest wishes that you would hereafter merit the kindness they bestowed you.24

This basically benevolent English audience had its favorite players and on these idols it lavished ever increasing amounts of tears, laughter and applause. A remarkable instance of public regard was shown to Hannah Pritchard when she first brought her daughter on the stage. Hannah Pritchard stooped to play Lady Capulet in Romeo and Juliet in order to introduce Miss Pritchard in her attempt to act Juliet. The daughter's timidity was contrasted by the mother's apprehensions and these were incessantly...

23 Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq., II, 87-88.
24 Fitzgerald, The Life of Mrs. Catherine Clive, pp. 89-90.
and obviously interchanged by stolen glances at each other. This scene of mutual sensibility was so affecting that many of the audience burst into involuntary tears. The house was again deeply moved on April 24, 1768, the night of Hannah Pritchard's final farewell, when Garrick played Macbeth and she Lady Macbeth with a terrific power and effect such as the eighteenth century audience was little accustomed to. "Her 'Give me the daggers' on that night was as grand as her 'Are you a man?' and when the curtain descended, such another intellectual treat was not looked for in that generation." Just as Hannah Pritchard was idolized by the mid-century English audience so also was George Anne Bellamy universally loved as a charming creature and admired as an excellent actress. Whenever she played some poor distraught lady, "... the stoutest heart under embroidered or broad-cloth waistcoats, crumbled away, often into inconceivable mountains of gold-dust." Audiences reacted similarly to the executions of their favorite player of all: David Garrick. John Thomas Smith wrote in his Book for a Rainy Day that one night, when Garrick was acting the part of Lear, one of the soldiers who stood on the stage ready to quell disorders began blubbering like a child. Garrick, who was extremely fond of such compliments, sent for the man as

25 Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq., II, 182.
26 Melville, op. cit., p. 118.
27 Ibid., p. 261.
soon as the play was over and gave him half a crown.  

The colonial audiences were just as warm as were the English audiences. On January 24, 1735, The Orphan, or the Unhappy Marriage was presented in the Williamsburg court room to a standing-room-only audience. "The curtain was drawn amid deafening applause, followed by an expectant hush." The play was as much of a success as was Williamsburg's 1772 performance of Kelly's A Word to the Wise. This new comedy was received every night "... with the warmest marks of approbation; the sentiments with which this excellent piece is replete were greatly and deservedly applauded." And America's first printed theatrical criticism, which appeared in the Maryland Gazette in 1760, clearly describes an extremely benevolent audience:

Monday last the Theatre in this city was opened when the tragedy of Orphan and Lethe was performed in the presence of his Excellency the Governor to a polite and numerous audience who all expressed their satisfaction. The principal characters both in the play and entertainment were performed with great justice, and the applause which attended the whole representation did less honor to the abilities of the actors than to the state of their auditors.

Although large numbers of Anglican colonists, in imitation of their London contemporaries, regularly flocked to the theater and rewarded their favorite players with thunderous applause, the Continental

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28 Lawrence, Old Theatre Days and Ways, p. 232.
29 Willis, loc. cit.
30 Stanard, op. cit., p. 248.
Congress on October 20, 1774, just as America's fight for independence from England was beginning, banned all stage productions:

We will discontinue and discourage every species of extravagance and dissipation, especially all horse-racing, and all kinds of gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shows, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments.

This is extremely harsh language for such enlightened colonial leaders as George Washington and Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, John Jay of New York, Edward Rutledge of South Carolina and John Dickinson of Pennsylvania.

But our forefathers felt that the strict enforcement of the edict was necessary for three important reasons: the English players must not be permitted to perform in the rebelling colonies; there must be an "... encouragement of frugality, economy, and industry, and a promotion of agriculture, arts, and the manufactures of this country, especially that of wool;" and, most important of all, the land must be rid of "... every species of ... dissipation. ..." The Congressional ban of dramatic activities was, then, a partial vindication of the Puritan belief that the theater, as an evil influence upon society, must not be permitted to become part of the cultural life of Americans.

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32 The Continental Congress was organized by the delegates of twelve of the thirteen American colonies (Georgia did not send any representatives) at Philadelphia in 1774 to petition the British government for redress of grievances.


34 Ibid.
Shortly after receiving a letter from Peyton Randolph, President of the Continental Congress, informing him of the passage of this edict, David Douglass and his company set sail for Jamaica not to return to the American continent until peace had been restored. In 1776, two years after Douglass left the rebellious colonies, the incomparable David Garrick retired from the stage; a great era in the history of the English theater had come to an end.

Unfortunately the period could boast of very few really notable playwrights. This dirth of good drama can be partially attributed to events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Elizabethan dramatists believed that poetry could and should be useful as a means for rising in the world. The arts were social accomplishments in an age when accomplishment could open many doors. It was a proof of worth, of virtue in the Tudor sense of virtuosity; it stood warrant for a man's claim to preferment. It was a way of catching a patron's favor and attested the all-round ability that might do a patron good service. Henry VIII sometimes chose impoverished dramatists for his administrative, diplomatic and propaganda work. William Shakespeare's talents as a playwright brought him numerous monetary rewards from Elizabeth I. The conventions of high society were stilted and artificial to an extraordinary degree and the ability to pun, to turn a euphuistic compliment or to improvise a sonnet carried immense weight. During the sixteenth century, then, the dramatic art flourished at least partially because Tudor generosity enabled such great playwrights as William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe to pursue
their chosen profession.

The Tudors have frequently been criticized for their generosity to artists and to members of the gentry class. In fact, much of this generosity was calculated policy; they knew the danger in the dissipation of the revenues of the Crown, but they, being acquainted with the English mind, knew also that it was vital to have around them a strong and contented court comprised of the always influential writer and the most powerful members of the increasingly wealthy middle class. Unfortunately the Tudor system of patronage began to break down in the 1590's, when the steep rise in European prices, coupled with the Spanish war and revolt in Ireland, put the crown finances to an intolerable strain. Then in 1603 James VI of Scotland became James I of England and he and his Stuart successors, who never really understood their English subjects, did not even attempt to continue the Tudor system of patronage. This disinterest of the Stuart monarchs and the increased expenditures of the English government, both of which combined to result in a dwindling of crown patronage, left the playwright, who was now all but completely dependent upon the transient favor of the frequently impressionable theater audience, in straitened circumstances. Not until the latter portion of the eighteenth century would the English dramatist begin to regain the favored position which he occupied during the Tudor era and not before the advent of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan did any British playwright reach the heights which Marlowe, Jonson and Shakespeare attained.
For England the seventeenth century was a time of turmoil; two kings were deposed, aristocrats were exiled and from 1649 to 1660 England was a republic. Civil war, followed by exile and persecution, demoralized the men and women of the court and its hangers-on. Family life was shattered for most of them, and education interrupted. They lived through a generation of jeopardy. They knew instability and insecurity. Such people could neither create nor enjoy a truly national theater or even a theater that was true to the best life of London. The seventeenth century, then, because of decades of civil war and revolution and because of miscalculations by Stuart monarchs, was void of outstanding dramatic compositions by English playwrights.

In contrast with the seventeenth century, a certain life was to be found in the theater of the age of Walpole (1722-1742) because it was a battleground for politics. Gay's Beggar's Opera and Fielding's Tom Thumb were vigorous and powerful attacks on a government which most of London hated for its overt use of bribery. But after Sir Robert Walpole's fall the temperature of politics dropped rapidly and the drama reached a pitch of dreariness unparalleled since Gorboduc (circa 1560). Dramatists concentrated on high moral tone, sentimentality, elegant diction; whether or not their characters resembled human beings interested them not at all. After the passage of the Licensing Act in 1737 political wit became dangerous and was avoided, and throughout the mid-century period moral uplift was regarded as more important than entertainment.
There are several explanations for the dreariness of the dramas produced during the mid-eighteenth century: the Stuart and early Hanover monarchs did not support dramatists as completely as did the Tudors, the Licensing Act of 1737 did not permit playwrights to include political wit in their writings and, of course, it took many years for the instability of the seventeenth century to reach an equilibrium. And there are other reasons for the dirth of good mid-century drama. For example, trade was a national preoccupation and the constant concern of the eighteenth century English government, for all mid-century Britons agreed that trade was the cause of their country's increasing wealth. In the expanding world of commerce there was an ever multiplying demand for clerks, and charity schools and grammar schools were founded to provide them. The artisans' and small shopkeepers' children; who, in these schools, received, for the first time, at least a minimal education; frequently made the profession of letters a side-line. Vast quantities of plays, the greatest portion of which were poorly written, were produced by these aspiring dramatists. Not having received much encouragement from a largely apathetic court, training or opportunity for experience; these charity school graduates wrote merely to please the eighteenth century audience and, consequently, their plays do not have the universal appeal of Shakespeare's and were, therefore, short-lived.

A final primary reason for the eighteenth century's lack of good drama is the personality of Dr. Samuel Johnson. Samuel Johnson dominated the intellectual life and culture of the middle
years of the eighteenth century. By the sheer force and strength of his will, he secured himself a unique position in English literature; he became the intellectual John Bull for generations of Englishmen. He was truculent to the living, but no man had a greater respect for tradition. This, and his arrogant insularity, endeared him to his countrymen, who were confidently striving to establish England as the world power. Yet, strangely enough, the greater part of Johnson's work belongs to the past, to the Augustan age of Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) and Alexander Pope (1688-1744). Fundamentally he lacked creative imagination, and he was more at home with literary techniques which were dominated by a strict sense of form. He had little sympathy with new tendencies in poetry and prose which were to give rise to the astonishing literary achievements of the romantic revival. But because he was such a forceful individual he commanded respect and even adulation and, therefore, his unimaginative style of writing was widely imitated by mid-century playwrights. Because of the influence of Samuel Johnson, the founding of charity schools, the passage of the Licensing Act, the instability of the seventeenth century and the lack of patronage; the eighteenth century would have come to a close without having produced a truly great dramatist had it not been for the genius of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan. First Goldsmith with The Good Natured Man (1768) and She Stoops to Conquer (1773), and then Sheridan with The Rivals (1775) brought new life to the theater. Sheridan followed up his success between 1777 and 1779 with The Critics, The School for Scandal and A Trip
to Scarborough. He brought life and wit back to the stage and his plays have never ceased to entertain.

Although the mid-eighteenth century period could boast of very few really notable dramatists, David Garrick and Charles Macklin did bring many innovations to the English stage. During the eighteenth century London's theaters for the first time made use of historically accurate costumes, oil winglights, elegant and appropriate stage settings and the act-curtain. In addition, the Georgian player, under the tutelage of Garrick and Macklin, revived Thomas Betterton's naturalistic school of acting. Therefore, the mid-century period, while it lacked great dramatists, is very definitely the age of the actor and the theater.

The American colonial theater was all but identical to the English theater of the early 1700's or prior to the advent of Garrick and Macklin. Early in the eighteenth century English players traveled to the provinces and brought the London theater as they knew it to the colonists. Most provincials considered themselves to be Englishmen and, therefore, they were eager to assist the immigrant comedians in constructing playhouses similar to those in London and in acquiring dramas recently written by Britons. Soon the declamatory style of acting, stock scenery, contemporary costumes and candle chandeliers became as familiar to provincial playgoers as they were to Londoners. But because the players who ventured to America were not London's best and because it was difficult to transport scenery over rough provincial roads, erect playhouses in every colonial city and combat
Puritan, Quaker and Presbyterian intolerance; the colonial theater was unable to adopt the innovations brought to the English stage during the mid-century period by David Garrick and his associates. Nevertheless the players did bring a lively and vigorous entertainment from the Old World to the New and demonstrated that a tiny colonial capital, such as Williamsburg or Annapolis, could sustain one of the important ornaments of civilized life, a repertory theater.
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2. Periodical Literature


APPENDIX
APPENDIX A. MORAL DIALOGUES

Kings Arms Tavern--Newport
Rhode Island

On Monday, June 10th, at the Public Room of the Above Inn will be delivered a series of

MORAL DIALOGUES

In Five Parts

Depicting the Evil Effects of Jealousy and other Bad Passions, and Proving that Happiness can only Spring from the Pursuit of Virtue.

MR. DOUGLASS will represent a noble and magnanimous Moor named Othello, who loves a young lady named Desdemona, and after he has married her, harbors (as in too many cases) the dreadful passion of jealousy.

Of jealousy our being's bane,
Mark the small cause and the most dreadful pain.

MR. ALLYN will depict the character of a specious villain, in the regiment of Othello, who is so base as to hate his commander on mere suspicion, and to impose on his best friend. Of such characters, it is to be feared, there are thousands in the world, and the one in question may present to us a salutary warning.

The man that wrongs his master and his friend,
What can he come to but a shameful end?

MR. HALLAM will delineate a young and thoughtless officer, who is traduced by MR. ALLYN, and getting drunk, loses his situation, and his general's esteem. All young men, whatsoever, take example from Cassio.

The ill effects of drinking would you see,
Be warned and keep from evil company.

MR. MORRIS will represent an old gentleman, the father of Desdemona, who is not cruel or covetous, but is foolish enough to dislike the noble Moor, his son-in-law, because his face is not white, forgetting that we all spring from one root. Such prejudices are very numerous and very wrong.

Fathers beware what sense and love ye lack,
'Tis crime, not color, makes the being black.

MR. QUELCH will depict the fool, who wishes to become a knave, and trusting one gets killed by him. Such is the friendship of rogues--take heed.

When fools would knaves become, how often you'll perceive the knave not wiser than the fool.
MRS. MORRIS will represent a young and virtuous wife, who, being wrongfully suspected, gets smothered (in an adjoining room) by her husband.

Reader, attend: and ere thou goest hence
Let fall a tear to hapless innocence.

MRS. DOUGLASS will be her faithful attendant, who will hold out a good example to all servants, male and female, and to all people in subjection.

Obedience and gratitude
Are things as rare as they are good.

Various other dialogues, too numerous to mention here, will be delivered at night, well adapted to the minds and manners. The whole will be repeated on Wednesday and Saturday. Tickets, six shillings each, to be had within. Commencement at 7. Conclusion at half past 10, in order that every spectator may go home at a sober hour, and reflect upon what he has seen, before he retires to rest.¹

APPENDIX B. AN ENGLISH PLAY BILL--1761

The Fifteenth Night.

By His Majesty's Company, at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, this present Thursday, the 10th April, will be presented a New Comedy, call'd

The Clandestine Marriage!

The Principal Characters By

Mr. Holland, Mr. Powell, Mr. Yates, Mr. King, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Love,
Mr. Lee, Mr. Baddeley, Mr. Aickin, Mr. Watkins, Miss Pope, Mrs.
Palmer, Mrs. Abington, Miss Plym, and Mrs. Clive.

Boxes, 5s.  Pit, 3s.  First Gallery, 2s.

Upper Gallery, 1s.

Places for the Boxes to be had of Mr. Johnston, at the Stage Door. No Money to be received at the Stage Door nor any Money returned after the Curtain is drawn up.

Vivant Rex et Regina.

To-Morrow, King John, with the Capricious Lovers.

For the Benefit of Mr. Havard. 2

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2 Fitzgerald, The Life of Mrs. Catherine Clive, p. 68.
Theatre in Chapel Street.
By Permission of his Honor The Lieutenant-Governor
By a Company of Comedians at the New Theatre in Chapel Street
This day will be presented a Tragedy written by Shakspere, call'd

Hamlet

Prince of Denmark

and a Baled Farce, call'd A

Wonder! An Honest Yorkshireman

The Principal Characters By

Hamlet

Hamlet.............Mr. Hallam
King..............Mr. Douglass

Horatio........Mr. Reed
Ghost............Mr. Quelch
Polonius........Mr. Morris
Laertes........Mr. Allyn
Gravediggers. (Mr. Quelch
Ophelia............Mrs. Morris

Gaylove........Mr. Quelch
Blunder........Mr. Allyn
Slango..........Mr. A. Hallam
Gravediggers. (Mr. Tomlinson
Queen............Mrs. Douglass
Player Queen. Mrs. Hallam

Honest Yorkshireman

Muckworm.......Mr. Morris
Sapscull.......Mr. Sturt
Arabella.......Mrs. Morris

No Person to be admitted without tickets, which are sold by Mr. Hugh
Gaine, Printer in Hanover Square.

Boxes 8s.
Pit 5s.

No Money to be received at the Doors, which will be open'd
at Four and the Play begin exactly at Six o'clock. No
Person to be admitted behind the scenes.

Vivant Rex et Regina. 3

3Selkner, op. cit., pp. 133–34.