By 1800 London had as many theatre seats for sale as the city’s population. This was the start of the capital’s rise as a centre for performing arts. Bringing to life a period of extraordinary theatrical vitality, David Worrall re-examines the beginnings of celebrity culture amidst a monopolistic commercial theatrical marketplace. The book presents an innovative transposition of social assemblage theory into performance history. It argues that the cultural meaning of drama changes with every change in the performance location. This theoretical model is applied to a wide range of archival materials including censors’ manuscripts, theatre ledger books, performance schedules, unfamiliar play texts and rare printed sources. By examining prompters’ records, box-office receipts and benefit-night takings, the study questions the status of David Garrick, Sarah Siddons and Edmund Kean, and recovers the neglected actress, Elizabeth Younge, and her importance to Edmund Burke.

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CELEBRITY, PERFORMANCE, RECEPTION

British Georgian Theatre as Social Assemblage

DAVID WORRALL
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Preface

This study arises from a number of research problems I encountered while writing my three earlier studies, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship and Romantic Period Subcultures, 1773–1832* (2006), *The Politics of Romantic Theatricality, 1787–1832: The Road to the Stage* (2007) and *Harlequin Empire: Race, Ethnicity and the Drama of the Popular Enlightenment* (2007). What the books did not solve was the question of how to conceptualize for analysis theatrical performance in the state of its historical activity. *Celebrity, Performance, Reception* is an attempt to evolve a working, predictive, method of theatre history which can then be further adapted by other scholars to suit a range of performance types.

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