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978-1-107-04360-2 - Celebrity, Performance, Reception: British Georgian Theatre
as Social Assemblage

David Worrall

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CELEBRITY, PERFORMANCE, RECEPTION

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.

DAVID WORRALL is Professor of English at Nottingham Trent University. He is the author of *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). He has held fellowships from the Leverhulme Trust, the Lewis Walpole Library, the Folger Shakespeare Library, the Huntington Library and the Library Company of Pennsylvania.

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[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>List of figures</i>	page vi
<i>Preface</i>	vii
Introduction: theatre, performance and social assemblage theory	1
1 Theatrical assemblages and theatrical markets	25
2 Georgian performance and the assemblage model	47
3 Theatrical celebrity as social assemblage: from Garrick to Kean	72
4 Celebrity networks: Kean and Siddons	96
5 A working theatrical assemblage: 1790s representations of naval conflict	119
6 Theatrical assemblage populations: the Turkish ambassador's visits to London playhouses, 1794	157
7 Historicizing the theatrical assemblage: Marie Antoinette and the theatrical queens	183
8 The regulatory assemblage: <i>The Roman Actor</i> and the politics of self-censorship	201
Conclusion	235
<i>Appendix: Actor-network-theory</i>	238
<i>Notes</i>	242
<i>Bibliography</i>	280
<i>Index</i>	298

Figures

- | | | |
|-----|---|---------|
| o.1 | Thomas Rowlandson, <i>Comedy Spectators: Tragedy Spectators</i> , S.W. Fores, 8 October 1789, etching, hand-coloured. Courtesy of Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. | page 13 |
| o.2 | Thomas Rowlandson, <i>The Boxes: O woe is me t'have seen what I have seen seeing what I see. Shakespear [sic] / Opie inv.</i> [printed in reverse], 12 December 1809, etching, hand-coloured. Courtesy of Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. | 18 |
| o.3 | Thomas Rowlandson, <i>Pidgeon hole: a Convent Garden contrivance to coop up the gods</i> , Thomas Tegg, 20 February 1811, etching, hand-coloured. Courtesy of Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. | 19 |
| 2.1 | <i>Norwich [Theatre]</i> , T. Woodfall, 1 April 1805, etching, hand-coloured, pencil inscription. By permission of Folger Shakespeare Library. | 59 |
| 8.1 | James Sayers, <i>A peep behind the curtain at Drury Lane JS f.</i> , in script balloons, 'Play God save the King', 'D——n em don't play God save the King', Thomas Cornell, 14 January 1789, etching and aquatint. Courtesy of Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. | 209 |

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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.

I am grateful to Nottingham Trent University for its continuing support and for providing a lively research culture. My thanks also go to the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, the British Academy, the Lewis Walpole Library, the Houghton Library and the Folger Shakespeare Library, all of which awarded me the vital research grants enabling the archival visits on which this monograph is based. All of their staff are wonderful, patient and brimming with knowledge.

My greatest thanks go to Georgina Lock, who has enriched my life beyond anything I ever imagined.