

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-65068-7 - The Cambridge History of British Theatre: 1660 to 1895: Volume 2

Edited by Joseph Donohue

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
BRITISH THEATRE

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VOLUME 2

1660 to 1895

Volume 2 of *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* begins in 1660 with the restoration of King Charles II to the throne and the re-establishment of the professional theatre, interdicted since 1642, and follows the far-reaching development of the form over two centuries and more to 1895. Descriptions of the theatres, actors and actresses, acting companies, dramatists and dramatic genres over the period are augmented by accounts of the audiences, politics and morality, scenography, provincial theatre, theatrical legislation, the long-drawn-out competition of major and minor theatres, and the ultimate revocation of the theatrical monopoly of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, initiating a new era. Chapters on two representative years, 1776 and 1895, are complemented by chapters on two phenomenal productions, *The Beggar's Opera* and *The Bells*, as well as by studies of popular theatre, including music hall, sexuality on the Victorian stage and other social and cultural contexts, and the appearance of new departures in dramatic art and the first glimmerings of modernism.

JOSEPH DONOHUE is Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is the author of books and articles on the British and Irish theatre and drama, including *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age* (1970), *Theatre in the Age of Kean* (1975), 'The London Theatre at the End of the Eighteenth Century' (1980), and 'Distance, Death and Desire in *Salome*' (1997). He is the editor, with Ruth Berggren, of *Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest: A Reconstructive Critical Edition of the Text of the First Production, St James's Theatre, London, 1895* (1995).

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General Editor

PETER THOMSON, *University of Exeter*

The Cambridge History of British Theatre provides a uniquely authoritative account of the turbulent and often troublesome public life of performance in Britain. Whilst making full use of new research in a subject that is at the centre of current concern, the essays are designed for the general reader as well as for the specialist. Each volume is fully illustrated. Together, they offer a comprehensive and comprehensible history of theatre, of which plays are a part but by no means the whole.

The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 1: Origins to 1660

EDITED BY JANE MILLING AND PETER THOMSON

The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 2: 1660 to 1895

EDITED BY JOSEPH DONOHUE

The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 3: Since 1895

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JOSEPH DONOHUE is Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he has taught dramatic literature since 1971. He is the author of books and articles on the British and Irish theatre and drama, including *Dramatic Character in the English Romantic Age* (1970), *Theatre in the Age of Kean* (1975), 'The London theatre at the end of the eighteenth century' (1980), and 'Distance, death and desire in *Salome*' (1997). He is the editor, with Ruth Berggren, of *Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest: A Reconstructive Critical Edition of the Text of the First Production, St James's Theatre, London, 1895* (1995), which won the first Modern Language Association of America prize for a distinguished scholarly edition and the Barnard Hewitt Award of the American Society for Theatre Research for a distinguished work of scholarship. For a decade he was the editor of the Greenwood Press *Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies* and, again for a decade, editor of the journal *Nineteenth Century Theatre*. His long-term research programme, *The London Stage 1800–1900: A Documentary Record and Calendar of Performances*, has published *English Drama of the Nineteenth Century: An Index and Finding Guide* (1985), edited by James Ellis, and has overseen the publication in print and microfiche and later as an Internet website of *The Sans Pareil Theatre and Adelphi Theatre (1806–1900)*, a daily calendar of performances compiled by a team of contributors and edited by Alfred L. Nelson and Gilbert B. Cross. His chapter 'Actors and Acting' appears in the *Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* (2003).

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General preface

It is not the aim of the three-volume *Cambridge History of British Theatre* to construct theatrical history as a seamless narrative, not least because such seamlessness would be a distortion of the stop/start/try-again, often opportunistic, truth. Chronology has guided, but not bullied, us. The editorial privilege has been to assemble a team of international scholars able to speak with authority on their assigned (or sometimes chosen) topics. The binding subject is theatre, to which drama is a major, but not the only, contributor.

Each of the volumes includes some essays which are broad surveys, some which treat specific themes or episodes, some which are socio-theatrical 'snapshots' of single years and some which offer case studies of particular performance events. There is, of course, an underlying assertion: that a nation's theatre is necessarily and importantly expressive of, even when resistant to, the values that predominate at the time, but the choice of what to emphasise and what, however regretfully, to omit has rested with the volume's editor or editors. The aim has been to provide a comprehensive 'history' that makes no vain pretence to all-inclusiveness. The character of the volumes is the character of their contributors, and those contributors have been more often asked to use a searchlight than a floodlight in order to illuminate the past.

It is in the nature of 'histories' to be superseded. These volumes, though, may hope to stand as a millennial record of scholarship on a cultural enterprise – the British theatre – whose uniqueness is still valued. They are addressed to a readership that ranges from students to sheer enthusiasts. A 'history' is not the place for scholars to talk in secret to other scholars. If we have ever erred in that direction, it has been without the sanction of Victoria Cooper, who has shepherded these volumes through to publication with the generosity that is well known to all the authors who have worked with her.

Peter Thomson

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Acknowledgments

Over the course of a long period of organizing, researching, writing and editing a volume covering 235 years of theatrical and dramatic activity, a number of debts and obligations have inevitably been incurred. It is a pleasure to thank here the many persons and institutions that have contributed in one way or another to the preparation and completion of this volume of the *Cambridge History of British Theatre*.

First and foremost thanks are due to the seventeen contributors whose chapters make up the majority of this volume of the *History*: Mark S. Auburn, Christopher Baugh, Jim Davis, Görel Garlick, Derek Hughes, Robert D. Hume, Joel Kaplan, Joanne Lafler, Edward A. Langhans, David Mayer, Judith Milhous, Jane Moody, Kerry Powell, Dave Russell, Richard W. Schoch, Peter Thomson and Calhoun Winton. Peter Thomson, in addition to providing a much needed chapter on the drama and theatre of the late Victorian period, as general editor of the *History* read and advised on every chapter in the book, including my own two introductions, and on the historical and theatrical chronologies as well, much to their benefit. I am deeply appreciative of the great collective knowledge of these contributors and grateful for their ability to distil it into a coherent series of chapters covering so many important aspects of this vast, unwieldy and challenging subject. I thank them also for their timeliness in responding to editorial queries and for their flexibility in adapting their vision of the topic at hand to the requirements of a work that had to be at once comprehensive and of reasonable length. Their own acknowledgments are not recorded here except by way of a general and cordial tribute, which I offer on their behalf, to libraries and individuals around the world that played a part in the making of this book.

I also wish to thank the staffs of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Library and Photographic Services; of Smith College Library, especially the Josten Library of Performing Arts; of Amherst College Library; of the Folger Shakespeare Library, especially Georgianna Ziegler, Head of Reference; of the

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British Library; and of the Library of Congress. A special debt is owed the Harvard Theatre Collection, in particular its curator, F. Woodbridge Wilson; Annette Fern, Research and Reference Librarian; and Kathleen Coleman, Curatorial Assistant. This volume would be much the poorer without the research assistance they provided and without the presence of images, some never before published, gleaned from the holdings of this treasured resource.

At Cambridge University Press, Victoria L. Cooper, Commissioning Editor, and Paul Watt, Production Editor, piloted this work through to completion with expert knowledge, cheerfulness and aplomb. Hilary Hammond brought a sharp eye to the rigorous task of copy-editing, catching errors, omissions and inconsistencies that might otherwise have been perpetuated in print.

To this list I happily add a wide community of personal and professional benefactors: my many colleagues in the American Society for Theatre Research, most especially Don B. Wilmeth and Thomas Postlewait; my colleagues and friends in Valley Light Opera, particularly Bill Venman, with whom I have had the pleasure of performing almost all the musical works of Gilbert and Sullivan, an experience that has enlarged and enriched my love of the theatre; and uncounted students, graduate and undergraduate, taught since 1971 in courses in British and Irish drama at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who have contributed in so many ways to my understanding and appreciation of the endlessly engrossing subject of British theatre.

Chronology

	Theatrical events	Political events
1642	Closing of the theatres in London.	
1649–60		The Commonwealth.
1653–8		The Protectorate under Oliver Cromwell.
1656	William Davenant produces <i>The Siege of Rhodes</i> at Rutland House, employing changeable scenery designed by John Webb, a pupil of Inigo Jones.	
1658	Davenant's <i>The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru</i> is produced at the Cockpit.	
1658–9	<i>The Siege of Rhodes</i> transfers to the Cockpit.	
1659		Birth of Henry Purcell, composer (d. 1695).
1660	Charles II agrees to bestow royal patents on Davenant and Thomas Killigrew permitting the establishment of two public playhouses and two acting companies and forbidding all competition; although the effect of the creation of theatrical monopoly is felt mainly in London, the act sets up the fundamental circumstances for	Restoration of Charles II to the English throne. Samuel Pepys begins diary (last entry 1669).

Chronology

- theatrical production in England for almost the next two centuries, until the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843 abolishes patent rights.
- 1661 Davenant's company, the Duke's Men, move to their new playhouse, the former Lisle's Tennis Court. Coronation of King Charles II.
- 1662 The Smock Alley Theatre opens in Dublin; its patentee, John Ogilby, had in 1660 been reappointed to his old, pre-Interregnum post as Irish Master of the Revels. Founding of the Royal Society.
- 1663 Killigrew's King's Company moves from the renovated Gibbons's Tennis Court, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, to the first theatre royal, in Bridges Street, Drury Lane. Katherine Philips's *Pompey*, a translation of Corneille's *La Mort de Pompée*, is brought out at Smock Alley, Dublin, the first play by an Englishwoman to be performed in public.
- 1664 George Etherege's *The Comical Revenge; or, Love in a Tub*, appears at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Richard Flecknoe publishes *A Short Discourse of the English Stage*. Molière's *Tartuffe* is presented at Versailles and promptly banned.
- 1665 King Charles employs John Webb to build a house in Whitehall for ballets, masques and plays.

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Chronology

- 1666 Aphra Behn serves as an English spy in Antwerp; beginning in 1670 she will commence her career as a writer, the first to make a living as a professional woman of letters. Great Fire of London. The plague.
- 1667 Birth of Jonathan Swift (d. 1745).
- 1670 Birth of William Congreve, dramatist (d. 1729).
- 1671 Under Davenant family control (Davenant had died in 1668), a new theatre, costing some £9,000, opens in Dorset Garden. George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, *The Rehearsal* (Theatre Royal in Bridges Street). Birth of Colley Cibber, actor, dramatist and manager (d. 1757). John Dryden, *Marriage A-la-Mode* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
- 1672 25 January: the theatre in Drury Lane burns. Thomas Shadwell, *Epsom Wells* (Dorset Garden). Birth of Joseph Addison, essayist and dramatist (d. 1719).
- 1673 Elkanah Settle, *The Empress of Morocco* (Dorset Garden).
- 1674 *March*: the new Drury Lane Theatre, built at a cost of £4,000, opens.
- 1675 Elizabeth Barry begins her 35-year career as the most admired and highly paid actress of her age, with a wide range from comedy to tragedy but especially successful in the Christopher Wren begins rebuilding St Paul's Cathedral (completed 1710).

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- latter, from ingenue to villainess.
 Dryden, *Aureng-Zebe* (Drury Lane).
 Thomas Shadwell, *The Libertine* (Dorset Garden).
 William Wycherley, *The Country Wife* (Drury Lane).
- 1676 Sir George Etherege, *The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter* (Dorset Garden).
 Wycherley, *The Plain Dealer* (Drury Lane).
 Twelve of Aphra Behn's twenty plays will be produced beginning in this year and up through 1682.
- 1677 Aphra Behn, *The Rover: or, The Banish't Cavaliers* (Dorset Garden).
 Dryden, *All for Love; or, The World Well Lost*, a rescension of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (Drury Lane).
 Nathaniel Lee, *The Rival Queens; or, The Death of Alexander the Great* (Drury Lane).
- 1678 The Popish Plot, which began with information given by Titus Oates concerning an alleged plot for the murder of Charles and establishment of Roman Catholicism in England.

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- 1679 Thomas Otway's *The History and Fall of Caius Marius* (Dorset Garden), one of numerous adaptations of Shakespeare in the Restoration period and one of many reflecting issues of contemporary politics, transposes the story of Romeo and Juliet to the first century BC and the civil war between Marius and Sulla, depicting Rome in the grip of two warring factions.
- 1680 Thomas Otway, *The Orphan; or, The Unhappy Marriage* (Dorset Garden).
- 1681 Nahum Tate's *The History of King Lear* (Dorset Garden) imposes a happy ending on Shakespeare's bleak tragedy: the Fool is eliminated altogether, Lear is restored to his throne, and Edgar and Cordelia marry at the end.
Tate's *The Ingratitude of a Common-Wealth* (Drury Lane), a sensationalized treatment of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.
- 1682 *November*: the United Company, formed from two separate companies, begins performing at Drury Lane.
Thomas Otway, *Venice Preserv'd; or, A Plot Discover'd* (Dorset Garden).
- The Exclusion Crisis, occurring in the wake of the Popish Plot, centred on attempts by Protestant nobles to exclude the Catholic James, Duke of York, King Charles's brother, from the succession, in favour of Charles's bastard son James, Duke of Monmouth, a Protestant, and creating great unrest lasting until 1681.

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- 1683 Henry Purcell becomes court composer to Charles II. Discovery of Rye House Plot to assassinate Charles II and his brother.
- 1684 Joseph Ashbury, a member of the original Smock Alley company, becomes manager and patentee of the theatre, holding the post for some thirty-six years, until his death in 1720.
- 1685 Death of Charles II; accession of James II. Duke of Monmouth's rebellion.
- 1687 Publication of Isaac Newton's *Principia mathematica philosophiae naturalis*.
- 1688 The Glorious Revolution brings William III to the English throne. King William III and Queen Mary (until 1694).
- 1689 Toleration Act grants freedom of worship to dissenters.
- 1690 Dryden's *Amphitryon*, staged at Drury Lane, is one of the few successful sex comedies of the 1690s, an indication that tastes and mores are changing in advance of Jeremy Collier's epochal diatribe against them, to be published eight years later. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. James II's invasion of Ireland thwarted at the Battle of the Boyne. Outbreak of War of Spanish Succession (ended 1713). Death of the exiled James II.
- 1694 Thomas Southerne's *The Fatal Marriage; or, The Innocent Adultery* (Drury Lane) and another of his tragedies, *Oroonoko*, produced in 1695 and

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- based on a fiction by Aphra Behn, among the best of the period, will hold the stage for a century or more, aided by a succession of accomplished tragediennes beginning with Elizabeth Barry and also by Garrick's canny adaptation of the play in 1757 as *Isabella; or, The Fatal Marriage*, whose title character will become one of Sarah Siddons's most distinguished roles.
- 1694–5 During this season Betterton and other principal players withdraw from the United Company, forming their own shareholding enterprise and undertaking a remodelling of Lisle's Tennis Court in Lincoln's Inn Fields; the new theatre opens propitiously in April with the première of Congreve's *Love for Love*.
- 1696 Colley Cibber, *Love's Last Shift* (Drury Lane).
Mary Pix's tragedy *Ibrahim, Thirteenth Emperor of the Turks* and her comedy *The Spanish Wives*, both mounted at Drury Lane, are the first of her six tragedies and six comedies to be produced over a decade of remarkable accomplishment.
Delariviere Manley, *The Royal Mischief* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
Sir John Vanbrugh, *The Relapse; or, Virtue in Danger* (Drury Lane).

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- 1697 Congreve, *The Mourning Bride* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
Vanbrugh, *The Provok'd Wife* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
- 1698 Jeremy Collier publishes *A Short View of the Immorality, and Profaneness of the English Stage*, a frontal assault on the unbridled sexual licentiousness which, in the view of Collier and, increasingly, of other observers as well, singles out contemporary dramatic comedy for opprobrium, even as the trend for writing this type of play is already noticeably waning.
Mary Pix, *Queen Catharine; or, The Ruines of Love* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
- 1699 Colley Cibber's redaction of Shakespeare's *King Richard III*, first performed this year, at Drury Lane, will become one of the sturdiest of star acting vehicles, lasting into the twentieth century.
- 1700 Congreve, *The Way of the World* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
Death of Dryden (b. 1631).
- 1702 Death of William III; succeeded by Queen Anne.
- 1703 Nicholas Rowe, *The Fair Penitent* (Lincoln's Inn Fields).
- 1704 Duke of Marlborough's victory at the Battle of Blenheim.

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- 1705 Vanbrugh completes the new Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket, called the King's from 1714, when George I succeeds Anne, until 1837, when it becomes Her Majesty's Theatre on the accession of Victoria.
- 1706 George Farquhar, *The Recruiting Officer* (Drury Lane).
- 1707 Farquhar, *The Beaux' Stratagem* (Queen's). Act of Union unites Scotland with England.
- 1708 By this date Vanbrugh's Queen's Theatre has become exclusively an opera house.
- 1709 The triumvirate of Colley Cibber, Robert Wilkes and Thomas Doggett (Barton Booth from 1713) take over as principal actors and managers of Drury Lane, until 1732; they are joined in 1715 by Richard Steele, a valuable ally because of his court connections.
- Susanna Centlivre's *The Busie Body*, produced at Drury Lane, along with *The Wonder! A Woman Keeps a Secret* (1714) and *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1717), proves to be among the most successful and long-lasting of her seventeen plays.
- Nicholas Rowe publishes his edition, *The Works of Mr William Shakespeare*, in nine volumes.
- 1710 Death of Thomas Betterton, tragedian (b. 1635).

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| 1709–12 | | Addison and Steele publish essays in the <i>Tatler</i> and the <i>Spectator</i> . |
| 1710 | Norwich magistrates, having continued to license visiting players, allow a six-week winter season presented by a troupe called the Duke of Norfolk's Servants – one of the early signs of a developing provincial theatre in England. | Birth of Thomas Arne, composer (d. 1778). |
| 1711 | George Frederick Handel's first London opera, <i>Rinaldo</i> , is performed at the Queen's. | Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury, publishes <i>Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions and Times</i> . |
| 1712 | Ambrose Philips, <i>The Distrest Mother</i> (Drury Lane). | Birth of Jean Jacques Rousseau (d. 1778). |
| 1713 | Addison's <i>Cato</i> , long delayed in reaching the stage, receives a triumphant response at Drury Lane from Whig and Tory alike. | Treaty of Utrecht ends War of Spanish Succession.
Birth of Denis Diderot (d. 1784). |
| 1714 | John Rich, son of Christopher Rich, manages a company performing in the third Lincoln's Inn Fields, rehabilitated by Christopher; it would not be until the next decade, when John Rich realizes the potential of pantomimes, that the theatre will begin to flourish.
Susanna Centlivre, <i>The Wonder: A Woman Keeps a Secret</i> (Drury Lane).
Rowe, <i>The Tragedy of Jane Shore</i> (Drury Lane). | Death of Queen Anne.
George, Elector of Hanover, becomes George I of England. |
| 1715 | | Death of Louis XIV, King of France.
First Jacobite uprising on behalf of the 'Old Pretender', |

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| | | James Stuart, son of James II.
Inauguration of the reading of
the Riot Act at sites of public
disorder. |
| 1716 | | Birth of Lancelot 'Capability'
Brown, landscape designer
(d. 1783). |
| 1717 | John Gay, Alexander Pope and
John Arbuthnot, <i>Three Hours
After Marriage</i> (Drury Lane).
Around this date John Rich
begins introducing
pantomimes at Lincoln's Inn
Fields. | Handel's <i>Water Music</i> first
played on the Thames. |
| 1718 | Centlivre, <i>A Bold Stroke for a Wife</i>
(Lincoln's Inn Fields). | London Society of Antiquaries
founded. |
| 1719 | | Danie Defoe publishes
<i>Robinson Crusoe</i> .
Thomas D'Urfey publishes <i>Wit
and Mirth; or, Pills to Purge
Melancholy</i> .
Handel becomes musical
director of the Royal Academy
of Music.
Westminster Hospital founded
in London. |
| 1720 | Another, smaller theatre in the
Haymarket opens, called the
Little Theatre.
Steele's theatre criticism
published in the <i>Theatre</i> , largely
devoted to stating his case for
patent rights at Drury Lane. | Birth of Charles Edward
Stuart, the 'Young Pretender'
(d. 1788).
Bursting of the South Sea
Bubble causes financial panic.
Act grants British Parliament
the right to legislate for
Ireland. |
| 1721 | Edward Young, <i>The Revenge</i>
(Drury Lane). | J. S. Bach composes the
Brandenburg concertos. |
| 1721-42 | | Administration of Sir Robert
Walpole as English prime
minister. |

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- 1722 Steele's *The Conscious Lovers*, intended by the author for the reformation of comedy by endorsing the role of sentiment in human relations and inspiring a 'joy too exquisite for laughter', appears at Drury Lane, to great applause, and goes on to become a staple of the comic repertory throughout the century.
- 1723 Birth of Joshua Reynolds, English portrait painter (d. 1792).
- 1724 Captured again after four spectacular escapes from prison, the notorious highwayman Jack Sheppard is executed before a crowd reputedly numbering 200,000.
- 1725 Alexander Pope publishes his translation of *The Odyssey* and his edition of Shakespeare. Jonathan Swift publishes *Gulliver's Travels*.
- 1727 George II accedes to the English throne. Birth of Thomas Gainsborough, English painter (d. 1788).
- 1728 10 January: Cibber's *The Provok'd Husband*, altered from Vanbrugh, a critical failure but a popular success, runs at Drury Lane for a then unprecedented twenty-eight nights; during the Garrick period, 1747–76, the play would amass a total of 189