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978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

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Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.

The most influential actor of his age, David Garrick (1717–79) shaped the London stage for over three decades as theatre manager at Drury Lane. He popularised a more natural style of acting, and did much to make Shakespeare the most revered English playwright. First published in 1780 and reissued here in the second edition of that year, this two-volume biography was written by Thomas Davies (c.1712–85). Samuel Johnson, a friend of the Garrick family, notably provided Davies with anecdotes and information on Garrick's early life. The work does not dwell on gossip or private life; it offers instead an informed portrait of the stage in Garrick's time. Davies had inhabited this world as a much less successful actor himself, before becoming a bookseller. His work is therefore a direct and valuable witness to theatrical London in the eighteenth century. The first volume covers the years 1717–63.

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Frontmatter

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Frontmatter

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VOLUME 1

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781108070669

© in this compilation Cambridge University Press 2014

This edition first published 1780

This digitally printed version 2014

ISBN 978-1-108-07066-9 Paperback

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

T H E
L I F E
O F
DAVID GARRICK, Esq.
V O L. I.

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)



D. GARRICK.

Engraved from M^r. Pingo's seal for the Theatrical Fund.

Published by T. Davies, April the 25th 1780.

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

M E M O I R S
 OF THE
 L I F E
 OF
 DAVID GARRICK, Esq.
 INTERSPERSED WITH
 CHARACTERS AND ANECDOTES
 OF
 HIS THEATRICAL CONTEMPORARIES,
 THE WHOLE FORMING
 A HISTORY OF THE STAGE,
 WHICH INCLUDES
 A Period of THIRTY-SIX YEARS.

By THOMAS DAVIES.

— Quem populus Romanus meliorem virum quam
 histrionem esse arbitratur, qui ita dignissimus est scena propter
 artificium, ut dignissimus sit curia propter abstinentiam.

Cicero pro Q. Roscio Comædo.

A N E W E D I T I O N .

V O L . I .

L O N D O N :

Printed for the AUTHOR, and sold at his Shop in Great
 Russell-Street, Covent-Garden.

M. DCC. LXXX.

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Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

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Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

T O

Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Esq.

S I R,

IN the following sheets I have endeavoured to do justice, as far as my abilities would permit, to the memory of your predecessor, in the management of the stage; a man universally acknowledged to have been superior to all competition in his profession as an actor, and esteemed in his private life a shining ornament of society.

A 2

The

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

DEDICATION.

The propriety of addressing these volumes to you will not, I believe, be contested; but, independent of your being the immediate successor of Mr. Garrick, and a most eminent writer in dramatic poetry, the author of the most pleasing and successful entertainment of the stage which has ever been presented; besides too, your being endowed with many shining qualities and amiable virtues, I confess I had another motive for this dedication; gratitude was my strongest incentive to it; your kindness shewn to me at a time when I most stood in need of your friendship, can never be blotted from my remembrance.

This

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

DEDICATION.

This is a subject which I could with delight enlarge upon; but I am convinced, from the constant pleasure you feel in conferring favours, you would rather do a thousand generous actions than be told of one.

I am, SIR,

Your most obedient,

and obliged humble servant,

THOMAS DAVIES.

Great Russell-street, Covent-
Garden, April 22, 1780.

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ADVERTISEMENT.

IF this little book should by good chance afford an hour's amusement to the candid reader, he will owe that pleasure to Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, who has long honoured me with his friendship and patronage. He prompted and encouraged me, justly diffident as I was of my abilities, to write the life of David Garrick; a work which should comprehend A HISTORY OF THE STAGE, during his administration of it, with characters and anecdotes of other actors, his contemporaries.

To him I am indebted for the early part of Mr. Garrick's life. Dr. Johnson was familiarly acquainted with his nearest relations; and often had the pleasure, as he informs us himself in his *Life of Edmund Smith*, to meet him at the house of their common friend, Mr. Walmsley, register of Lichfield.

To the same excellent friend I am indebted for several diverting anecdotes in
this

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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this narrative; and I heartily wish I could boast of farther assistance from one so able to give it.

A long acquaintance with the stage, and an earnest inclination to excel in the profession of acting, to which I was for many years attached, afforded me an opportunity to know much of plays and theatrical history.

I can truly say, that I have no where willingly misrepresented either fact or character. Mistakes I may have fallen into; but I shall not incur the charge of falsehood, for that implies an intention to deceive.

To the great indulgence of the public I owe the rapid sale of the first edition of the *Memoirs of David Garrick*. In this second impression I have amended a few mistakes, which had escaped me with respect to dates and facts. I have also endeavoured to remove some inaccuracies of style.

A 4

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Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CONTENTS

OF THE

FIRST VOLUME.

CHAP. I.

Some account of Mr. Garrick's family—His early acquaintance with Mr. Walmsley and Dr. S. Johnson—His voyage to Lisbon—Return to England—Becomes pupil to Dr. Johnson—Sets out in company with him for London. Page 1

CHAP. II.

Mr. Garrick's arrival in London—Death of his uncle—He boards with Mr. Colson—Death of his father and mother—Seriously resolved to commence actor—Introduced to the playhouse managers—Sets out with the comedians for Ipswich—His success there. P. 13

CHAP. III.

Characters of the actors in tragedy when Mr. Garrick commenced player. P. 19

CHAP.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

ii C O N T E N T S.

C H A P. IV.

Account of the old actors continued. Page 29

C H A P. V.

Mr. Garrick's first appearance on a London stage—His success—Mr. Pope's opinion of him—Actors a variety of characters—Envied by Quin—Spoken slightly of by Colley Cibber—Shares the profits of Goodman's-fields theatre with the manager. P. 37

C H A P. VI.

Managers of Drury-lane and Covent-garden uneasy at the success of Goodman's-fields theatre—Threaten Giffard and Garrick with a law-suit—They are engaged to Fleetwood—Mr. Garrick plays for Mrs. Harper at Drury lane—Goes to Dublin—Returns to London. P. 48

C H A P. VII.

Mr. Garrick acting at Drury-lane theatre—His Abel Drugger compared with Cibber's—His great attention to propriety of character—His Hamlet described. P. 53

C H A P. VIII.

Prelude to the revolt of the comedians of Drury-lane—Fleetwood's character and conduct—Account of his favourite diversions and companions—Farms the theatre to his treasurer—Mr. Garrick and several other players secede from Drury-lane—Their application to the lord chamberlain—Their petition rejected—Contest between Garrick and Macklin—Theatrical storm Tancred and Sigismunda—Mr. Garrick and Mrs. Cibber. P. 59

C H A P

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)C O N T E N T S. iii

C H A P. IX.

Fleetwood sells the remaining term of his patent, which is purchased by two bankers—Mr. James Lacy admitted a third sharer—Mr. Garrick's second voyage to Dublin—Mr. Sheridan's success in acting—Obliges Quin to leave Dublin—Messrs. Sheridan and Garrick joint managers—Their success—Mr. Barry's first acting, and reception from the audience—Mr. Garrick returns to England—Plays at Mr. Rich's theatre, and shares the profits with the manager. P. 7

C H A P. X.

Revolutions in the theatrical world—Garrick, Quin, Mrs. Cibber and Mrs. Pritchard, at Covent-garden—Barry, Mrs. Woffington, Macklin, and Mrs. Clive, at Drury-lane—Characters of John Rich and James Lacy—The rise of pantomime—The different success of the theatres—Mr. Garrick purchases the moiety of Drury-lane patent—Profits of Covent-garden theatre, 1747. P. 89

C H A P. XI.

*The managers of Drury-lane divide their several provinces—Mr. Garrick's particular emoluments—Mr. Rich deserted by the best part of his company, who engage themselves to Mr. Lacy and Mr. Garrick—Prologue on opening Drury-lane theatre—Revival of *Every Man in his Humour*—*Macbeth*, as originally written—*Romeo and Juliet* acted at both theatres. P. 107*

C H A P.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

iv C O N T E N T S.

C H A P. XII.

Irene, a tragedy—Parts disposed with propriety—Its success—Some account of the play—Cavils of critics—Defence of it—Desertion of Barry and Mrs. Cibber to Rich, who unite with Quin and Woffington—Romeo and Juliet at Covent-garden and Drury lane—Miss Bellamy—Garrick and Woodward carry all before them—Queen Mab, &c. P. 119

C H A P. XIII.

Character of Aaron Hill—His various occupations and projects—His love of the stage—His dramatic pieces, and his instructions in acting—Intimacy with Booth—His generosity to authors and actors—Reduced to the necessity of acting his Merope for his own emolument—Its success—Lord Bolingbroke's letter to him—His correspondence with Mr. Garrick—His death. P. 131

C H A P. XIV.

Managers complained of for not rearing theatrical plants—Mr. Garrick engages Mr. Dexter—Rofs—Mossop—Their various abilities displayed. P. 158

C H A P. XV.

New tragedies acted in 1753, 1754—The Gamester—The Brothers—Creusa and Boadicea—Anecdotes relating to them, and remarks on their success. P. 165

C H A P.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

C O N T E N T S. v

C H A P. XVI.

*The Chinese Festival—Preparations for it—Com-
mended by the king—Account of the disturbance
occasioned by it.* P. 177

C H A P. XVII.

*Royal taste in acting—The Chances revived—
Mrs Cibber's choice of a comic character—She
resigns it—Mrs. Abingdon's excellence in Con-
stantia.* P. 184

C H A P. XVIII.

*Mr. Foote's frequent engagements with the mana-
gers of Drury-lane—His Fondlewife in the Old
Batchelor—Ben in Love for Love, &c.—
Speaks a prologue, written by Mr. Garrick—
His character of Cadwallader—Disputes about
it—How ended.* P. 189

C H A P. XIX.

*Dr Browne's Barbarossa and Athelstan—Some
observations on them—The author's friendship
for Mr. Garrick and Dr. Warburton—His
eulogium of them in his Estimate of the Times—
His vindication of himself against Dr. Lowth—
His character.* P. 197

C H A P. XX.

*A manager's difficulty arising from the offer of new
plays and farces—Reasons assigned for refusing
them—Colley Cibber's behaviour to authors—
Mr. Garrick puts a negative on Douglas—
Cleone and the Orphan of China—Agrees to
refer*

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi C O N T E N T S.

refer the merit of the latter to the arbitration of Mr. Whitehead — Obligated to aēt it — Manœuvres of the author and manager. P. 207

C H A P. XXI.

Mr. Ralph — His application to poetry — Partnership with H. Fielding — His Astrologer — Acquaintance with Mrs. Cooper — His political writings — Introduction to Mr Garrick — Their quarrel — His progress in politicks — And Death — Mr. Shirley's Edward, the Black Prince — Its success — His Eleētra — His resentment of Mr. Garrick's refusal of it — Their reconciliation — Dr. P. Hiffernan — Education, &c. — Satire on managers — Dramatic writings — Quarrel and reconciliation with the managers, &c. P. 223

C H A P. XXII.

Account of Woodward's desertion — Is invited by Barry to become a partner in his Irish expedition — His proposal to Garrick rejected — Reasons for refusing it — He sets out for Ireland — Unsuccessful there — Returns to England — His character. P. 257

C H A P. XXIII.

Archibald Bower's quarrel with Mr. Garrick ; with an account of the aētor's resentment — Purposes to make him a subjeēt for the stage — His correspondence on that occasion with lord Lyttleton — Is diverted from his intention. P. 270

C H A P.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

C O N T E N T S. vii

C H A P. XXIV.

*Winter's Tale, and Catherine and Petruchio—
Their alteration from Shakespeare by Mr. Gar-
rick—Acting of these plays—Merits of the
several actors.* P. 275

C H A P. XXV.

*Dr. Smollet—His quarrel with Mr. Garrick, and
his severe censures on him and Mr. Quin—His
application for the acting of a farce—Its suc-
cess—Mr. Garrick's generous conduct to him—
Mr. Garrick's letter to the doctor—Smollet's
letter of acknowledgment.* P. 280

C H A P. XXVI.

*Mr. Macklin's farce of Love a la mode—Its suc-
cess—Mr. Sheridan's engagement with the
managers of Drury-lane—Terms of agreement
—Mr. Sheridan supposed to have raised the jea-
lousy of Mr. Garrick by his merit in acting—
Brooke's Earl of Essex—King John—The
king's opinion of the acting of that character—
The quarrel between Mr. Garrick and Mr. She-
ridan—Comedy of the Discovery—Sir Antony
Branville.* P. 288

C H A P. XXVII.

*Mrs. Woffington—Educated by Madame Violante
—Acts among the Lilliputians of Dublin—Her
Sir Harry Wildair in London—Lotbario in
Dublin—Her chief stage excellence—Stoops to
parts in low comedy—Lady Pliant and Mr.
Day—Colley Cibber her admirer—Cicisbeo and
inj:u&tor---*

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978-1-108-07066-9 - *Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq.: Interspersed with Characters and Anecdotes of his Theatrical Contemporaries: Volume 1*

Thomas Davies

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

viii C O N T E N T S.

instructor—Acts Ophelia and Cordelia with Mr. Garrick in Ireland—Her quarrels with Mrs. Clive—Visits Ireland in 1751—Her opinion of the conversation of women—Returns to London in 1754—Her character—Dies. P. 305

C H A P. XXVIII.

Churchill's Rosciad—The players alarmed—Their behaviour on the publication of the poem—Garrick exalted above all actors—Churchill angry at the players—He renews his attack, and obliquely aims at Mr. Garrick, who writes a defence of his conduct—Churchill's praises of his friends, particularly Mr. Lloyd and Mr. Colman—His contempt of the reviewers—His attack on Mr. Murphy, &c.—His friendship for Mr. Wilkes—Dies at Boulogne. P. 313

C H A P. XXIX.

Coronation at both theatres—Death of Mr. Rich—His character—Farmer's Return. P. 328

C H A P. XXX.

Stage reformation—All in the Wrong—Citizen, and Wisbes—Anecdote relating to the latter. P. 337

T H E