

## 1 Family Networks

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It is still not possible to write a satisfactory biography of Maurice E. Bandmann – and may never be. He left behind no personal papers that have survived and very few letters. This dearth of conventional biographical material is the result of a peripatetic existence. His life both as a child and as an adult was spent on the road, touring first with his parents and then with his own companies. In order to grasp his later success as the pre-eminent theatrical impresario in the Far East, it is necessary to explore the transition from an actor-manager model of theatrical production to a new way of producing and distributing theatre. This transition was both familial (his parents and sister were all established actor-managers) and organizational (Maurice ran several companies, not just one).

At least since the peregrinations of the *Commedia dell'arte* troupes, the family was the preferred model of itinerant theatrical production and distribution. From the perspective of economic sociology, actor-families were classic ‘closed-network groups’.<sup>1</sup> Densely self-referential, they have closer relations within than beyond the group and have few bridges to other networks. They are self-contained units of theatrical production and are therefore less likely to innovate, because they have difficulty forming multiple ‘weak’ alliances. This principle is illustrated by the Bandmann family or families, which was itself a kind of theatrical actor network. Both parents, Daniel E. Bandmann and Millicent Bandmann-Palmer, were prominent actors, and his sister, Lily, pursued a career together with her husband as a respected touring actress in the English provinces.

It is also important to locate the Bandmann family network within the emerging biopolitical regimes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the world of censuses, shipping records and, after the outbreak of the First World War, requirements to carry passports. Biopolitical

<sup>1</sup> Ronald S. Burt, *Brokerage and Closure: An Introduction to Social Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 12.

data provide one of the keys to reconstructing Bandmann's personal and theatrical life and that of his family. If family and kinship can be seen as 'the deployment of alliances', then the Bandmann theatrical network was deployed to great effect, as both children, despite being the product of a dysfunctional marriage, immediately embarked on the same career as their estranged parents and no doubt profited from the experience and contacts they provided.<sup>2</sup> Theatrical families in the Victorian period functioned 'as engines of induction, training and inheritance within the profession', as Jacky Bratton has argued, and this was certainly the case for the Bandmanns, a family in which the parents inducted both children, albeit reluctantly.<sup>3</sup>

The theatrical history of the Bandmann family (which endured but two full generations) coincides with what has been termed the largest migration flows in history, with tens of millions of people emigrating to the New World and beyond.<sup>4</sup> Both parents and children were caught up in those flows, which also exerted considerable influence on theatrical culture as it followed the migratory movements and expanded exponentially. Migration and the modern nation state emerge at roughly the same time, which is paradoxical, as Charles Tilly argues, because the latter is predicated on sedentary populations.<sup>5</sup> The nation state's fundamental premises – territory and borders, clearly defined citizenship and sovereignty, statistical accountability and predictability – are challenged by people who move. There are moments when the biopolitical regime pins down the peripatetic actor, when he or she applies for naturalization papers, for example, or is required to fill out a census form. But these are nothing more than brief snapshots and not even necessarily accurate when they give false information, as Daniel Bandmann was wont to do. From a biopolitical perspective, then, the Bandmann families defy prevailing understandings of the family as a localized unit, accessible to governmental surveillance: they appear only sporadically

<sup>2</sup> Ștefan-Valentin Voicu, 'Making the Family: Actors, Networks and the State', *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology* 3 (2012): 117–27, here 119.

<sup>3</sup> Jacky Bratton, *New Readings in Theatre History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 178.

<sup>4</sup> Reliable figures are impossible. From Britain alone 22 million people emigrated to the United States and British colonies between 1815 and 1914. See John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: The Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Penguin, 2012), 95. See also Adam Mckeown, 'Global Migration, 1846–1940', *Journal of World History* 15 (2004): 155–89. It is important to note that migration was multi-directional, involving large numbers of Chinese and Indians as well. See Geoffrey Barraclough, ed., *Times Atlas of World History*. 3rd ed. (London: HarperCollins, 1989), 208–9.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Tilly, 'Migration in Modern European History', in W. H. McNeill and R. S. Adams, eds., *Human Migration: Patterns and Policies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 48–72.

in the biopolitical regimes of statistical analysis such as censuses, birth certificates, ships passages and passport applications. Of which ‘population’ are these peripatetic actors in fact a part? Maurice travelled on an American passport, although he never lived in the United States. Such biopolitical data that have survived provide, however limited they may be, the means to follow the Bandmanns’ travels and cast particular spotlights on processes of mobility.

As actors, the parents were highly visible, and their careers – especially in the case of Bandmann senior – better covered in the press than that of the son. Maurice was professionally active, however, and he was also present in the press, especially outside Britain, and so it is possible to trace his activities and movements from the moment he becomes a professional actor. His media presence was a prerequisite for his work. All theatre, but itinerant theatre in particular, has a symbiotic relationship with the press, and Maurice Bandmann utilized all the familiar devices to keep himself and his companies in the public eye.<sup>6</sup>

The Bandmann theatrical lives raise ethical questions, too – especially father and son. In his discussion of Thomas Betterton, David Roberts defines actors as social beings in three senses: as professional artists in company with others, as performers who embody and inflect ideas about society, and as people who have lives beyond the theatre. Heeding Levinas, Roberts urges the biographer to find the ‘being rather than the concept’, but because of the intrinsically mediatized nature of theatrical lives, this is easier said than done.<sup>7</sup> All the Bandmanns lived highly public lives, and their private misdemeanours were frequently an integral part of their professional activities, on occasion blurring the distinction between the two dimensions.

### Daniel E. Bandmann

Maurice Bandmann’s father, Daniel E. Bandmann (1837–1905), epitomized the actor-manager model of the nineteenth century, which he practised in three countries and three languages. Born in Cassel, Germany, in the Jewish faith, he probably emigrated to the United States in 1852 with his parents and obtained citizenship in 1858, before

<sup>6</sup> As the father was mainly active in the United States and that country has by far the best coverage of digitalized historical newspapers, the information on his activities is disproportionately good.

<sup>7</sup> David Roberts, ‘Writing the Ethical Life: Theatrical Biography and the Case of Thomas Betterton’, in Claire Cochrane and Jo Robinson, eds., *Theatre History and Historiography: Ethics, Evidence and Truth* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 33–47, here 36.

returning to Germany that same year and making his professional debut at the Court Theatre of New Strelitz, also in 1858.<sup>8</sup> He plied his trade as a young actor at various theatres in German-speaking Europe before returning in 1863 to New York, where in January of that year he made his English-language debut at Niblo's Garden as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Billed as 'the celebrated German tragedian', Bandmann effectively switched languages within a very short time. According to one account he gave in Australia, he had been performing in German in the New York Bowery district (the German quarter) when he was urged to try his hand at an English rendition of Shylock and learned the part in six weeks with the help of an 'English lady'.<sup>9</sup> By September, he had added the title role in *Narcisse or The Last Days of the Pompadour*, and Hamlet, which, together with Shylock, he performed to great acclaim throughout his career. From New York he toured across the country and acquired not only modest theatrical fame but also his first wife, Anne Herschel of Davenport, Iowa, whom he married in 1865; however, the union seems to have been short-lived.

In February 1868, Bandmann made his first appearance in London at the Lyceum Theatre in *Narcisse* under his preferred stage name of Herr Bandmann, which intentionally foregrounded rather than concealed his German origins. The play was an adaptation of Emil Brachvogel's popular German play dealing with Madame Pompadour and the twilight of the ancien régime. Bandmann's calculation that he could only make an impression in a little-known play paid off.<sup>10</sup> *Narcisse* garnered both critical acclaim and trenchant criticism ('Narcisse is but a melodrama and not a lively specimen of its class') but was a commercial success.<sup>11</sup> One of the supporting actors was a twenty-three-year-old actress by the name of Millicent (Milly) Palmer. A year later, they married. As a sign of his newly won prominence, Bandmann was invited in April 1868 to address the annual dinner of the Royal Theatrical Fund, where

<sup>8</sup> This is the information he provided to the 1900 federal census, which is, however, not entirely reliable. He claimed to have been married to his last wife, Mary, for eleven years, although the couple were only legally married in 1893; he also claimed to have been born in 1840, which is not correct, but his given age at 64 is accurate. Ancestry.com: 1900 United States Federal Census. There exist naturalization papers for a Daniel Bandmann for the year 1858.

<sup>9</sup> 'Herr Bandmann', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 17 September 1869, 5.

<sup>10</sup> This argument was made after the successful London premiere: 'A new actor, especially if he happens to be also a foreigner, enjoys more likelihood of success in an unknown work than by attempting to attach interest to his exertions in a hackneyed part. If the new play succeeds the new actor almost invariably succeeds with it.' *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 February 1868, 10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 11. *Punch* found it excessively wordy and published a satire on its loquacity and Bandmann's accent.

he delivered a controversial speech, claiming Shakespeare as a German author.<sup>12</sup> Despite this act of sacrilege, Bandmann formed a deep connection with his wife's country and language, eventually becoming a naturalized British subject.

In August 1869, Bandmann and Milly embarked for Australia, where they began an extended tour that was punctuated by court cases against Daniel for various misdemeanours ranging from slander to assault. Early in the tour, 'Herr Bandmann', as he was figured in all advertising, was fined for forcibly removing photographs of himself from a photographer's shop because they were caricatures rather than the role portraits he had sanctioned.<sup>13</sup> The tour was exceptionally well documented in the local newspapers. The articles alternated between hyperbolic puff, which Bandmann wrote himself or dictated to willing journalists, and more critical reviews and reports on his on- and offstage (mis)deeds, which included inadvertently stabbing the actress playing Emilia to Bandmann's Iago (Fig. 1.1).

The Sydney season in 1870 was judged highly successful, with Bandmann's company providing a standard mid-nineteenth-century repertoire of Shakespeare (*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Richard III*, *Macbeth*) and melodrama (*The Corsican Brothers*), as well as some other works with more advanced literary pretensions, such as Schiller's *The Robbers*. The Bandmann company continued to play there until June, including a two-week run of Goethe's *Faust* in an opulently staged version by Tom Taylor – a somewhat unusual offering for the English-speaking stage, with Rosa Cooper playing the male lead (*Faust*) to Milly Palmer's Margaret (*Gretchen*) and Bandmann's Mephistopheles.

The tour continued to Melbourne and then Adelaide. Here reviewers began to comment on Bandmann's German accent, a topic that would dog him throughout his early stage career.<sup>14</sup> This was, however, more a problem for certain 'discerning' critics than for the public at large, which tended to respond favourably to his forceful acting style. The tour continued in Australia until December 1870, when the couple sailed to Auckland for a short season in a local music hall before shifting to the more commodious Theatre Royal. By this time, Auckland

<sup>12</sup> *London Evening Standard*, 9 April 1868, 6.

<sup>13</sup> *The Argus* (Melbourne), 21 September 1869, 5.

<sup>14</sup> *South Australian Register*, 9 August 1870, 8. A reviewer for the *Border Watch*, of 13 August 1870, stated that Bandmann has a 'disadvantage of an accent and also moves in a foreign way', 108–9. Other reviewers praised him for his complete lack of a German accent. Over time, his accent became less pronounced, but it could always be used as a weapon against him.



Figure 1.1 Daniel E. Bandmann. (Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.)

and other cities in New Zealand had become of ports of call on the Pacific tours of itinerant troupes, despite quite small populations.<sup>15</sup> The Bandmanns began by giving Shakespearean recitals before acquiring local actors necessary for the larger-cast productions. But even so, performances were often marred by the lack of rehearsals, poor blocking and dropped lines. The season continued until the end of January 1872, when the couple sailed for San Francisco via Honolulu.

The years 1872 to 1878 were spent touring the United Kingdom with a Shakespearean repertoire plus some newer plays such as *Dead or Alive*, a melodrama by Tom Taylor. In August 1873, Bandmann was

<sup>15</sup> In 1878, Auckland had a population of 29,000; in 1870, it was probably closer to 20,000. *Brett's New Zealand and South Pacific Pilot* (Auckland: Henry Brett, 1881), 31.

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convicted of assaulting the manager of a Manchester theatre, one of his many court cases which invariably involved verbal and sometimes physical violence. In 1878, a short tour to the Continent was included where Bandmann performed in France and Germany in those countries' respective languages. In 1879, the Bandmanns returned to New York for a season at the Standard Theatre, which although a critical success was marred by indifferent houses. A short season in Boston on the way to Canada was more successful, while the Toronto season at the Grand Opera House met with disaster when the theatre burned down and Bandmann lost over \$20,000 in lavish costumes.<sup>16</sup> Soon afterwards, the couple separated and Milly returned to England with the two children. A return season in New York in June 1880 at the Standard Theatre was underwhelming, with the critic of the *New York Times* remarking, 'Mr. Bandmann brought his own company with him, and a worse assemblage of bad actors it has seldom been the misery of men to look upon. ... Mr. Bandmann's Hamlet was, to say the least, a very unfortunate performance, pretentiously original, but in fact, false to the core.'<sup>17</sup>

Shortly afterwards, Bandmann embarked for Australia on his second 'world tour', a journey that would last nearly four years and include New Zealand, India, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Hawaii. The company also included a new leading lady, the twenty-one-year-old French-Canadian actress and singer Louise Beaudet (1859–1947). The couple, whose relationship was more than strictly professional, were dubbed mischievously by the San Francisco press as 'the great B and the little B'.<sup>18</sup>

Bandmann was, of course, still remembered in Australia, especially for stabbing his co-performer, Mrs Steele, with a real dagger ('Why is Bandmann the cleverest man in the world? Because he can draw blood out of Steele!').<sup>19</sup> The fourteen-strong troupe, billed occasionally as the Bandmann-Beaudet Company, continued on to New Zealand, where over the course of 1881 they literally played the length and breadth of the country, from Invercargill in the south to Auckland in the north, visiting around a dozen towns (some twice) and providing free readings for school pupils. The company returned to Australia

<sup>16</sup> *The New York Times*, 30 November 1879, 7.

<sup>17</sup> *The New York Times*, 13 June 1880, 10.

<sup>18</sup> 'The Critic', *The Observer*, 25 September 1880, 14. Beaudet stayed with Bandmann for the rest of the decade before moving to London (in 1895), where she performed to great acclaim at George Edwardes' Daly Theatre and became a dominant figure on the English musical comedy and vaudeville stage. She returned to New York shortly before the First World War, alternating between stage and screen before finally retiring in 1934.

<sup>19</sup> 'The Critic', *The Observer*, 11 December 1880, 111.



in December 1881, where Bandmann divested himself of most of his actors before continuing on to India accompanied by a skeleton company, some of whom had to pay their own way.

He recorded the second trip, in considerable self-congratulatory detail, in a book entitled *An Actor's Tour; or, Seventy Thousand Miles with Shakespeare*.<sup>20</sup> Bandmann's three-and-a-half-year, 70,000-mile tour with Shakespeare was remarkable for the sheer length of time he was away and the number of places he played in, some of them extremely remote. Daniel Bandmann travelled the world – or at least many parts of it – not just to spread the word of Shakespeare but also to make money. He employed about a dozen actors and actresses for the roles besides his own, paid them little and kept the bulk of the profits for himself. For the two-month Calcutta season alone he claimed to have made £4,000 'clear profit'.<sup>21</sup>

The *Actor's Tour* book itself is part travelogue, part theatrical diary, and while being somewhat pedestrian in style, it nevertheless provides a fascinating account of what it meant to tour a stock company through Australasia and Asia in the 1880s. By his own account – which is substantiated by contemporary press reports – the Bandmann-Beudet company was a theatrical sensation, especially because of the heavy Shakespearean repertoire, unusual for the time. The Shakespearean performances drew almost entirely Indian audiences in Calcutta and Bombay, the Bard being too highbrow for the English colonials, who preferred burlesque and light comedy. Bandmann's son, Maurice, perhaps drawing on his father's experiences, only occasionally toured a Shakespearean company and seldom under his own brand.

After completing the 'world tour', the Bandmann-Beudet company resumed performing in the United States with a mainly Shakespearean repertoire supported by the old standards, *The Corsican Brothers* and *Narcisse*. Bandmann and Beudet parted company at the end of the decade only to encounter one another again in court in 1892, when Beudet sued Daniel for withholding monies owed to her. In July 1888, Bandmann purchased two ranches in Hellgate Canyon near Missoula, Montana, which became his home. Although he regularly announced the end of his stage career, he in fact continued to perform until shortly before his death. In the late 1880s, he attempted unsuccessfully to reconquer the London stage with an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and*

<sup>20</sup> Daniel Edward Bandmann, *An Actor's Tour; or, Seventy Thousand Miles with Shakespeare*. Ed. Barnard Gisby (Boston: Upham and Co., 1885).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.



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*Mr Hyde*. Bandmann had reportedly seen the first adaptation by the young actor-manager Richard Mansfield in New York and promptly commissioned his own version. Like *The Corsican Brothers*, the subject matter provided potential for virtuosic acting, with both title roles being played by one actor. Although the American stage, with its lax copyright laws, could quite happily accommodate two or more adaptations of the same work, the situation in London was different. When Bandmann opened his version at the Opera Comique, London, on 6 August 1888, he was immediately issued with a writ by Mansfield, who had begun a season at the Lyceum two days earlier. Bandmann's production closed after three performances, and he returned to the United States.<sup>22</sup>

The years 1892 and 1893 were dominated by two high-profile court cases which put Bandmann back in his preferred state of being in the limelight. In May 1892, he married a young actress, Mary Kelly, after she gave birth to a daughter, Eva, in January of that year. In June, Louise Beudet brought a lawsuit for monies owed to her from the Australian-Asian tour, and in July, Millicent filed a suit to have the marriage with Mary annulled because she and Daniel were still legally married.

The Beudet case, heard at the circuit court in Helena, Montana, proved to be a crowd pleaser, because both plaintiff and defendant were present and both played to great effect.<sup>23</sup> Beudet claimed that Bandmann had invested the proceeds of their tours (estimated at around \$50,000) in the ranch, thus depriving her of her rightful share. Unfortunately for Beudet, all agreements had been verbal. Bandmann treated the courtroom like a stage, and his testimony resounded with dialogue reminiscent of his melodramas: 'I was madly in love with the girl. I want the truth to come out. I have only to fear my folly. There can be nothing against my honour. She had open checks of mine till the November following separation, when I found out her treachery.'<sup>24</sup> He repeatedly pronounced in court how he had loved 'that woman', prompting his own counsel to remark, 'Oh, leave the sentiment out.' Beudet, in turn, made the dramatic revelation that Bandmann had forged a

<sup>22</sup> For an account of the stage history, see Martin A. Danahay and Alex Chisholm, *Jekyll and Hyde Dramatized* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2005). On 10 August 1888, the *New York Times* reported that Bandmann had been threatened with contempt of court for not closing immediately, and several days later that Mansfield had sold the provincial rights of his adaptation for a large sum while reserving rights for the larger provincial centres (*The New York Times*, 10 August 1888, 1, and 19 August 1888, 1).

<sup>23</sup> Beudet's case is outlined in detail in 'Beudet the Soubrette', *The Helena Independent* (Helena, MT), 10 June 1892, 5.

<sup>24</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, 10 December 1892, 1.

letter she had ostensibly written outlining their business arrangement.<sup>25</sup> The dramatic encounter became so intense that the local newspaper was moved to speculate that ‘they (might) join hands again in the profession, kiss and make up, and once more put the old, two star combination on the road’.<sup>26</sup> Finally, the case was annulled because of a lack of documentation of the parties’ financial affairs.

The divorce case was more clear-cut. Millicent Bandmann-Palmer was able to provide definite evidence from London that the marriage was never legally dissolved, rendering the new marriage bigamous. Bandmann thereupon began divorce proceedings and made the perjurious claim that he had no contact with his wife, not even knowing where she resided. This was quickly proven false with the help of testimony from his son, Maurice, who signed an affidavit stating that his father knew full well where his wife lived and that he had met his father in London in 1888 and subsequently accompanied him to Missoula in that year as well as on a theatrical tour in 1890. Furthermore, the younger Bandmann stated ‘that he had seen indications of adultery on the part of his father and that in his early youth he had seen his father drag his mother by the hair and threaten to kill her with a knife’.<sup>27</sup> In her own affidavit, Millicent claimed that ‘for 11 years he treated her with cruelty; that he was guilty of adultery, and she therefore left him and returned to her home’.<sup>28</sup> The final divorce settlement left Millicent with the family house in Gloucester Road, Kew, Surrey, and a monthly alimony of \$25 (which Daniel later tried to suspend claiming undue financial hardship).

Indeed, the years 1892 and 1893 were burdensome for Daniel. He lost most of his money in a stock market crash (but retained his ranch), had to finance two trials and was soon father of three children (a fourth child, Daniel E., was born in 1905 just before Daniel senior’s death). During the rest of the 1890s, he established himself as a rancher and horticulturalist of some note. He continued to perform with local (often amateur) companies the old reliables such as *The Merchant of Venice*, *Narcisse* and *The Corsican Brothers*. In 1901, he returned to New York with a stock company and reprised many of his famous roles at the Murray Hill Theatre. By this time, however, the stock company star system with its changing bills was giving way to the more economical long-run approach, and a heavy Shakespearean repertoire could only be sold at discount prices. He also tried his hand on the vaudeville circuit, with short excerpts from his Shakespearean roles.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> *The Anaconda Standard*, 25 December 1893, 5.

<sup>27</sup> ‘Stage and Green Room’, *The Anaconda Standard*, 16 July 1893, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.