

1678-81

## Leading Playwright, Wycherley, is jailed

1681 : For the past ten years William Wycherley has been the darling of London society - favourite of the King, a friend of the Duke of Buckingham, and adored by the fashionable audiences who find his salacious comedies like "The Country Wife" very much to their taste. But all that changed last year when Wycherley was secretly married to the widowed Countess of Drogheda, bringing about the disapproval of King Charles II. Consequently he lost all his friends at Court and ended up in serious debt. His shrewish wife has just died, and Wycherley has been jailed for their joint debts. None of his powerful former friends have come to his rescue.

## Rochester, "Earl of Pornography" dies

1680: Just 33 years old and debauched from a life of excess, John Wilmot, the Earl of Rochester, has died. Towards the end of his life he forswore profanity and discovered his faith. His erotic poetry has some artistic merit, but his notorious play "Sodom" will never receive a public performance because of its pornography.

## Dryden's "All For Love" is a great success

1678 John Dryden, the Poet Laureate, has adapted Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" in the style of French classical drama. Concentrating on the last hours of the doomed couple and on the conflict between love and honour, he has created a magnificent blank-verse tragedy which has found enormous success with the public. Many people feel Shakespeare's works are lacking in the taste and refinement of the present age and are delighted when contemporary authors re-write and adapt Shakespeare for the modern theatre.

# QUARREL CLOSES DRURY LANE

## Company splits and half the players move to Edinburgh

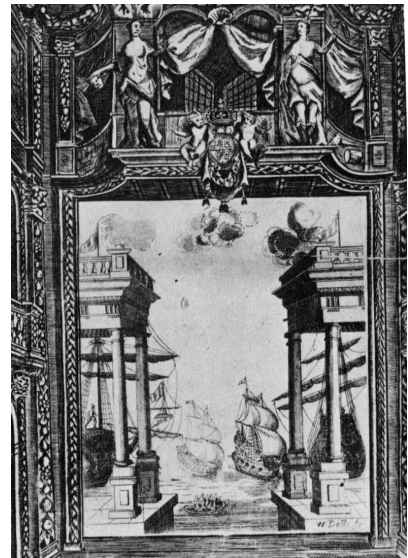
1678: A quarrel between Thomas and William, the Killigrew brothers, has brought things to such a pass that the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane has closed down. One part of the company - including its principal performers - have moved to Scotland. The Royal Patent prevents them from playing in London, so they have moved to Edinburgh and opened a theatre in a house in the Canongate. The new Scottish theatre is under the patronage of the Duke of York. The remainder of the players - a rag-bag of lesser talents headed by Sam Goodman - an actor of unsavoury reputation, hope to raise enough money to re-open Drury Lane.

## Troubled Drury Lane welcomes back rebels

1680 : The Duke of York has moved his court and entourage back to London from Edinburgh, bringing with his the "rebellious" theatre company - those players who quit Drury Lane nearly two years ago after quarrelling with the Theatre Royal's management.

The intervening two years have been disastrous for the London theatre, and the arrival back in London of these leading players is welcomed by everyone. Although the rebels will never admit it, their sojourn in Edinburgh has been an unhappy one. The venue in Edinburgh's Canongate Street totally lacks the excellent facilities at Drury Lane, and the Scottish audiences have not responded with any great enthusiasm to the English players. At the same time the audiences at Drury Lane have dwindled to practically nothing, and the theatre has been frequently closed for months on end, with the company so depleted that it has been unable to stage large-cast productions. Both sides have engaged in a truce, and the Drury Lane Theatre is about to launch a new season back to full strength.

## Opera flourishes at Dorset Gardens



*Dorset Garden Proscenium*

1680 : The Dorset Garden Theatre has been achieving much popular success with its recent productions of opera beginning with Davenant's adaptation of "Macbeth" in 1673. Other successes since then have included Thomas Shadwell's spectacular opera, "The Enchanted Island" - a musical adaptation of "The Tempest".

## Edinburgh's Halls

An existing hall used for musical evenings and small concerts in Edinburgh's Canongate has been converted for stage performances. It will be used by the company of London actors who have moved to Edinburgh following a quarrel at Drury Lane.

It appears that for the past fifteen years there has been another theatre in Edinburgh—though little is known about it. It is possibly another venue used mainly as a concert hall with occasional stage performances.

The people of Scotland have not, as yet, shown any great enthusiasm for theatrical performances, though a strong musical tradition is emerging.



*John Gay, Poet Laureate*