

# BETTERTON LEADS DRURY LANE "WALK-OUT" IN SALARY ROW

## "Benefits" to boost wages

1696: Christopher Rich has established the "benefit" performance as a regular, rotating occurrence for his actors. The manager will deduct an agreed sum for expenses, after which the entire takings go to the "benefit" of the named player or players. The other actors receive no payment for that night, but will gain in their turn when their own benefit comes round. This additional boost to the actors' income is seen as yet another ploy by Christopher Rich to lure back those actors who have set up a rival company at Lincoln's Inn Fields.

## Gallery collapses at Norwich - One dead, many injured

1699 : A fatal accident on January 27th was reported in a local newsletter in Norwich. It took place at the Angell Theatre in St Peter of Mancroft, Norwich. According to the report "the House being very full, it broke down the Gallery, which killed a young woman outright and dangerously bruised and wounded a great many people". The theatre opened seven years ago.

## Watch language, says Censor

1699 : The Lord Chamberlain has sent a warning to both Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatres. He instructs them to remove all profane and indecent expressions from their future productions.

## Scum Goodman dies

1699 : Scum Goodman, the actor, spy, would-be assassin and man who twice cheated the gallows, has died at the age of 50 in France.

1694 : The Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, under the management of Christopher Rich and Sir Thomas Skipworth, is currently without actors. Following a dispute, and the arbitrary reduction of their salaries, the actors have staged a "walk-out". Many members of the audience are refusing to buy tickets whilst the dispute goes on even though Rich has managed to gather some provincial performers and is offering a programme of sorts. The breakaway group of actors, led by Thomas Betterton, have applied for royal permission to reopen the former theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields so that they can set up a rival company.

## Betterton to form "Civil War" in Theatres rival company A Clash of Hamlets

1695 : England's leading actor, Thomas Betterton, has been granted a Patent to form a new theatre company at the renovated Lincoln Inn's Fields Theatre. His modesty, generosity to young performers, and scrupulous honesty have persuaded King William to allow him to act as a rival to the King's Men, headed by Christopher Rich, at Drury Lane.

Both Drury Lane and the Queen's Theatre (formerly known as Dorset Gardens) wish to challenge the decision because of the threat to their own businesses. The Dorset Garden venue claims audiences for musical entertainments and operas are falling, and it has recently been forced to stage acrobatic and wild beast shows.

Thomas Betterton will launch his new company on April 30th with William Congreve's new play, "Love for Love"

1695: Rivalry between London's two theatre companies is now intense. Colley Cibber has thrown in his lot with Rich at Drury Lane, whilst Congreve has signed a contract with Betterton at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Two of Betterton's leading players, Mrs Vanbruggen and Joseph Williams, who originally left Drury Lane as part of the protest, have now decided to desert Betterton and return to Rich.

Betterton opened his new season with Congreve's new play "Love for Love" and had a huge success. He then announced a revival of "Hamlet" - the role in which he has previously had outstanding success - to open on the following Tuesday. Rich immediately announced that a Drury Lane "Hamlet" would open on the Monday, a day before.

Not to be outdone, Betterton announced his "Hamlet" would also open on the Monday. Rather than risk two "Hamlets" on the same night, Rich changed his plans again, announcing a revival of Congreve's hit play "The Double Dealer".

## Drury Lane holding out in "war of the actors"

1696 : Christopher Rich seems to be holding out in the "civil war" between Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre. Colley Cibber has written a play, "Love's Last Shift", with an excellent part for himself, the role of Sir Novelty Fashion. This has been such a success at Drury Lane that Sir John Vanbrugh has immediately written a sequel called "The Relapse" in which Sir Novelty has been elevated to the peerage, as Lord Foppington. The success of these two plays means that audiences have been flocking to Drury Lane, and it is reported that Betterton's "break-away" company is playing to very poor houses.

## Theatres "corrupt society" Leading players change sides

1698 : Jeremy Collier's pamphlet, "A View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage" has caused a tremendous sensation. Many people feel he has sensible and long-overdue reforms to suggest, but others feel that future generations will recognise that Restoration Theatre is a mirror reflection of a genuinely corrupt society.

1697 : Betterton's leading comic actor at Lincoln's Inn Fields has deserted and returned to join the opposition at Drury Lane. Meanwhile, one of Drury Lane's top attractions, the actor, James Verbruggen, intended to desert the other way but was prevented from doing so by order of the Lord Chamberlain. He has instructed Verbruggen to remain at the Lane at least until the end of the present season.