

1745-1747

GARRICK QUILTS DRURY LANE FOR DUBLIN



Garrick Club

David Garrick, portrayed as towering above the symbols of Comedy, Tragedy and Music.

1745 : The new owners of Drury Lane, Messrs Green and Amber, were relying on David Garrick's star status to make their venture a success. To make doubly sure, they tempted James Lacy away from Covent Garden - so they would be able to offer two major star actors to the public. They are horrified to discover that Garrick is leaving. He has accepted the job as co-manager of the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, following an offer by Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the Irish theatre proprietor. Garrick says that the Rebellion Troubles with the Young Pretender's invasion together with the attendant financial problems ensuing are factors in persuading him to leave London for Dublin.

GARRICK TAKES OVER DRURY LANE

1747 : David Garrick is back from Dublin. After a brief appearance at Covent Garden, he has returned to Drury Lane - this time as the manager. Although only 30 years old, Garrick is now firmly established as the leading theatre personality of the age. He has assembled a group of friends in the City and has raised £8,000 for his share in buying the lease, furnishings and share of the Patent. "Garrick's Drury Lane" opened in September with Charles Macklin giving his ever-popular performance as Shylock.

Garrick intends to recruit the country's leading players - he already has Macklin, Kitty Clive, Peg Woffington, Mrs Pritchard and Mrs Cibber - and intends to establish a stylish unity in his company. He also intends to reform audience behaviour, banning seats on the stage, forbidding audience members from coming backstage during the performance, and doing away with reduced price tickets for those who come late or leave early. He has also announced that, from next season, the starting times of the performance will be one hour later. All shows will commence at 6pm instead of the present 5pm. However, in spite of his reforming zeal, he assured audiences in an opening address for the new management:

"The drama's laws the drama's patrons give,
For we, who live to please, must please to live"

Lacy "poaches" Garrick's new find

1745: James Lacy has failed to persuade David Garrick to return and help change the fortunes of the beleaguered Drury Lane Theatre. Business has fallen off considerably since Garrick left to work in Dublin. However, Lacy has pulled off a coup of sorts. Whilst in Dublin he observed the performances of a young actor called Spranger Barry - a new discovery of Garrick's, and a young man whom Garrick was grooming for stardom. Lacy has managed to tempt the young actor away from Garrick's company and to engage him for Drury Lane.

Saxmundham Theatre

1745: The small market town of Saxmundham in Suffolk claims to have built a theatre. It is almost certainly a "multi-purpose" hall for the Ipswich touring circuit and will only house plays on rare occasions. It seems nowadays even small towns like to boast of having their own theatre.

Samuel Foote gets round restrictions

1747: Samuel Foote has taken over at the Haymarket and faced the problem of a crackdown on the licensing laws.

Macklin's recent seasons were strongly protested by the Patent Theatres. Foote gets round the law by running a coffee house - inviting audiences to buy tea, coffee or chocolate at inflated prices and then providing them with "free" entertainment. He specialises in impersonations and satire, and his shows are proving very popular with the public.

Play abandoned as joyful news arrives

1746 : Despite the Rebellion and bloodshed racking the land King George decided to attend the play at Drury Lane. During the Second Act a dispatch rider, caked with mud, demanded audience with the King. The King left the royal box and was handed dispatches from the Duke of Cumberland. They announced the complete defeat of the Young Pretender at Culloden Moor. The King, overjoyed, rushed back to the box and stood waving his papers at the astonished players and audience. All action stopped as the King tried to tell them, but his English failed him in his excitement. The King simply yelled "Hey! Hey! Hey!" An equerry came to the rescue and announced the news. The house went wild, with cheers and choruses of the newly composed national song "God Save the King". The performance was abandoned in the general joy.