

# GARRICK'S SHAKESPEARE JUBILEE IS FLOODED OUT AT STRATFORD

## Colman quits Drury Lane in quarrel over Casting

1767: George Colman, the 35 year old playwright and theatrical entrepreneur, has quarrelled with David Garrick over the casting of a revival of "The Jealous Wife". This play, by Colman himself, has been a huge success over the past six years since its premiere. Colman has bought out the lease on Covent Garden and intends to run it in opposition to Garrick.

## Kitty Clive's Farewell

1769, 24 April : Kitty Clive gave her farewell performance as Flora in "The Wonder", and received a rapturous reception from audiences who have long held her as their favourite comic actress. She is 58 years old, and has been a favourite at Drury Lane for the past forty years. Her only regret is that Garrick never allowed her to play the great tragic roles she aspired to, and for much of her career she and Garrick have been at loggerheads. She was famous for her passionate rages and vulgarity, and was said to be the only actress whose temper frightened Garrick. She was also famous for her generosity and total lack of vanity - even though she was frequently painted by artists as famous as Hogarth.

To mark her retirement, Horace Walpole has presented her with a small house on Strawberry Hill. He has called the house Clive's-Den, and she is expected to use it for regular social gatherings for wit and conversation with friends and admirers like Dr Johnson.

## Death of Mrs Pritchard, the "old-style" favourite

1769: Hannah Pritchard has died at the age of 57. Although part of the "old style" performers, she was a favourite of Garrick, and, indeed, her last performance on 24 April last year was as Lady Macbeth opposite David Garrick.

1769 : Stratford-on-Avon, with under 3,000 inhabitants and only one inn, offered David Garrick the Freedom of the Town if he would perform an opening ceremony at their new Town Hall. Garrick accepted willingly, and promised to donate a statue of Shakespeare and a portrait of himself in return for the honour. In addition, he offered to organise a three-day "Jubilee" in the town, on September 6th, 7th and 8th, and to bring the entire Drury Lane company to Stratford with a concert to mark the occasion. The town authorities built a temporary amphitheatre on the river bank ready to receive around 200 performers and an estimated 800 audience.

Every household was urged to provide accommodation for the visitors. Local carpenters made hundreds of beds, fitting some sixteen or twenty to each available room, and a universal rate of one guinea a night was set as the charge for lodgings.

After a frantic period of building and organising, Garrick announced three nights of firework displays, a whole series of illuminated "scenes" - giant transparencies on gauze frames illuminated from behind, illustrating themes from Shakespeare, a thirty-cannon salute each day, two assembly balls, a masquerade, a grand carnival procession of all the principal Shakespeare characters portrayed by leading London players, performances of an oratorio, musical items and the recitation of a Jubilee ode - and a Jubilee horse race.

The first day was a huge success, though the Town found it hard to cope with the huge numbers that attended. Everyone complained about queues and over-crowding. The first evening was marked with a spectacular display of Halley's comet - fortuitously making one of its once-in-a-lifetime appearances. On the second day it rained very heavily, and never stopped. The superstitious said the Comet was an omen. The carnival procession was postponed, the fireworks were cancelled, the transparencies were ruined. The afternoon performance of the "Ode" went ahead, with the amphitheatre (built to hold around 800) crammed with over 2,000 people. Garrick's brilliant performance saved the day - and though soaked, standing in mud, with their fashionable attire ruined, the visitors and locals alike claimed this was an unforgettable experience. The midnight masquerade ball was also unforgettable, though for completely different reasons. By the end of it the thousand people present were standing in a foot of water, their coaches were water-logged, and they waded through the fields back to their very primitive accommodation.

The third day saw no let up in the rain. The horse race went ahead, with the horses splashing through knee-deep on the flooded racecourse. The postponed procession could not be held because of the potential damage to the costumes. A planned repeat performance of the Ode was cancelled when the amphitheatre was discovered to be several feet deep in water, and the last night Ball was moved to the new Town Hall, where only a fraction of the numbers could get in. The rain stopped in the early evening, and a fireworks display was held, but by this time the majority of the visitors had given up and were caught up in a quagmire of bogged-down coaches and fallen horses in a log-jam on the roads leading out of Stratford.



*The late Hannah Pritchard in the role of Lady Macbeth*

## Provincial theatres approved

1770: In the past three years no fewer than five major theatres have been "legitimised" throughout the country, and have been granted Royal permission, allowing them, legally, to perform plays. Last year saw a major reconstruction of the Orchard Street Theatre in Bath, and major work was carried out on Thomas Ivory's Assembly Plain Theatre in Norwich. Both theatres have received official approval for their redeveloped buildings. Approval has also been granted at York, where the four year old theatre, originally built by Joseph Baker, has now come under the management of Tate Wilkinson, and to David Ross, the actor manager of a new theatre built this year in Edinburgh. The fifth theatre to receive the royal permission is at Hull following renovations to the 25 year old Lowgate Theatre. These theatres are entitled to style themselves "Theatre Royals" as a sign that they are officially approved.

Other towns to acquire theatres are Scarborough, Sunderland and Whitehaven. Liverpool's Drury Lane Theatre has closed for major rebuilding.