

1806-1807

Grimaldi's Mother Goose is a hit at Covent Garden

1806 : After many years the clown, Grimaldi, finally parted from Drury Lane following a quarrel with the management. He was immediately engaged to play "Harlequin and Mother Goose" at Covent Garden for the 1806/7 pantomime season, and has had the most astonishing success. Covent Garden has given him full scope to develop his individual style of clowning, and he is now the most popular attraction in the London theatre. Covent Garden is playing to full houses, and the whole town is acclaiming him as the greatest clown of all times.

False alarm causes fire panic and kills 23 at Sadler's Wells

1807 : Smoke emerging from the side of the stage at Sadler's Wells was produced by a smouldering cloth which was quickly extinguished. However, audience members started a cry of "Fire" which led to complete panic. The entire house rushed for the doorways, filling the passageways, and crushing against the doors which opened inwards. The people at the front were unable to open the doors and were quickly overwhelmed by more people pressing from behind them. People began to suffocate and suffer crushing injuries as more and more people clambered over the fallen in a fruitless attempt to reach the doors. When the doors were finally broken down, twenty three people had been killed and many more seriously injured.

Replacement theatres at Brighton & Swansea

1807 : Theatres in Brighton seem to last just 16 years. The North Street Theatre was 16 years old when it was replaced by the Duke Street Theatre. And 16 years on that latter theatre has just been replaced by a new Theatre Royal.

Swansea, too, has gained a Theatre Royal, but in that town it replaced a 26 year old building.

Sans Pareil Theatre is "True Blue" sign of a doting father

1806: John Scott, the inventor of the "True Blue" laundry aid, is extremely proud of his talented daughter, Jane. He has therefore invested £10,000 of his laundry profits and bought an old dairy creamery next to his shop in the Strand. On its site he has built a theatre called the "Sans Pareil" - and he has built it simply so that his daughter can achieve her ambition of "going on the stage".

The theatre opened on 27 November with "Miss Scott's Entertainment" - Jane Scott singing, reciting and doing impressions as well as managing the theatre.

The Sans-Pareil incorporates some new design ideas made possible by the development of structural iron. By using iron in the balconies and support posts the number of available seats has been greatly increased.



Olympic Theatre is built out of old warship

1806 : Philip Astley has built his Middlesex Amphitheatre out of timber recovered from an old French warship. The building is tent shaped, has a tin roof, and very little brickwork. The deck of the ship has been used to make the stage. It has cost £800 to build, and is situated on the site of a former public house in the Strand. Astley has been able to obtain a licence because of the influence of Queen Charlotte, who is a keen supporter of his equestrian productions.

