British Military Theatre in New York in 1779

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by Jared A. Brown

The year 1779 marked the second year of Sir Henry Clinton's tenure as commander in chief of the British army in America. Like Burgoyne (in Boston) and Howe (in New York and Philadelphia) before him, Clinton sponsored a series of theatrical entertainments featuring British officers and supplemented by American civilians. In 1778, the first group of these productions under Clinton had been given in New York, and it had proven to be highly popular with the theatergoing public. Ostensibly given for the benefit of the widows and children of slain British and Hessian officers, the productions were financed so lavishly that little income remained at the end of the season to distribute to charity. Nevertheless, Clinton's officers, whose winters were devoted to leisure so that they might be more fit for battle when good weather arrived, seem to have given no thought whatever to curtailing their theatrical endeavors.

Accordingly, a notice appeared in *The Royal Gazette* on December 9, 1778, informing all interested civilians that a new series of performances was imminent, and that their participation would be welcomed. "As it seems to be the general Wish to have the THEATRE opened this Winter, and that, as early as possible," the notice began, "Such Gentlemen as are inclined to give their Assistance to that useful and extensive Charity, are requested to signify it by a sealed Note directed to the Managers, to be left at Mr. John Barrow's, in Broad Street, near the Main-Guard." The announcement appeared on December 9, 1778, and reappeared in the following issue on December 12. It was placed again on the 16th, the 19th, the 23rd, the 26th, and the 30th of December, perhaps indicating that the response was less than overwhelming. Actors, stagehands, and musicians were recruited somehow, however, for the Theatre Royal (known before the revolution as the John Street Theatre) reopened on January 9, 1779, with a lavish entertainment which included two plays as well as "an Occasional Prologue to each Piece, and Songs between the Acts." In addition to "the Officers of the Navy and Army" who portrayed the principal characters, the "Parts of the QUEEN, MAIDS OF HONOUR, Lady PENTWEAZLE, & c." in *Chronotonthologos* were played "by young Ladies and grown Gentlewomen, who never appeared on any Stage before."

The 1779 theatrical season sponsored by the British military in New York is the most thoroughly documented of all the theatrical endeavors during the American Revolution, largely because the treasurer's book containing all the receipts for the bills paid by the theatre in that season still exists. The receipts tell us a great deal about many aspects of the theatre's operation: how much money was expended for actors' salaries, costumes, properties, and the like; what kinds of jobs were necessary in order to make the theatre function, and who performed them; how the actors managed to acquire a sufficient number of scripts; and a vast miscellany of additional detail.

From newspaper advertisements and a list of admission receipts kept by the managers, we learn that twenty-two performances were offered in 1779:

- **January 9:** *Chronotonthologos* and *Taste*
- **January 22:** *The Lyar* and *The King and the Miller of Mansfield*
- **January 28:** *The Lyar* and *The Mock Doctor*
Performances scheduled for February 13, May 31, June 4, and June 5 were advertised but not given; and the performance on April 21 is not recorded in the receipt book, so it, too, may have been cancelled at the last moment.

The performance of The Lyar on January 22 was the most popular of the season, bringing in slightly more than £274. Richard III was also excellently attended; the receipts on March 6 exceeded £264, and when the play was repeated on March 18, it still drew £225. By far the worst showing at the box office occurred on May 22, for the second performance of Fielding's The ~Miser. The play had drawn £150 on May 5, but at the repeat performance, only £96, 19 shillings were taken in.

In general, the performances given in the cold-weather months of January, February and March proved to be much more popular than those given during April, May and June, when New Yorkers were able to engage in outdoor activities, and when the theatre was likely to be uncomfortably hot. The average nightly box-office income for the season was slightly in excess of £192, 14 shillings; for the first three months, average nightly income exceeded £210, but the average figure for a performance given in the second half of the season dipped to less than £150.

The attractiveness of Richard III to the paying audience was not an unusual phenomenon. Although Shakespeare's plays were produced infrequently at the Theatre Royal, they always played to sizable audiences. It was also predictable that the audience for the repeat showing of
Richard III would decline. Whenever a play was repeated during the 1779 season, it drew a smaller house than it had on its first appearance.

Ticket prices for the first performance of the season were advertised as "Box and Pit Tickets, One Dollar each, Gallery, Half a Dollar." For all subsequent performances the prices were listed in their British equivalents as "Boxes and pit, 8s - Gallery, 4s." These prices remained stable not only during 1779, but they continued to be used throughout the remaining four years of the military performances.

According to an abstract of receipts and expenditures published in The New York Gazette: and the Weekly Mercury at the end of the season, the price of Sir Henry Clinton's box in 1779 was £186, 13s. 4d. exactly twice what he had paid the year before. Other boxholders were Lord Rawdon, who was charged £70, 8s., Major General Tryon, who paid £46, 11s., 4d., and Rear-Admiral Gambier, who seems to have used his seats infrequently, as he paid only £28, 16s.

The advertisement for the first production of the season attempted to make clear all procedures dealing with the purchase of tickets, time of performance, and the proper mode of arrival at the theatre entrance. It read, in part:

The Managers advertise the Public, that as they have issued as many Tickets as the House will contain, no money will be taken at the Door of the Theatre. Places for Boxes to be taken, at the Theatre, where attendance will be given from 11 o'clock till 2 in the Afternoon, and it is requested that Gentlemen who send their servants to keep places, will give a note of their name, and the number of places to be kept. Ladies and Gentlemen are requested to order their carriages to draw up with their Horses heads toward Nassau-Street, and to go off that way in order to prevent confusion ... The Doors to be opened at Five o’clock and the Performance to begin precisely at Seven.

All season long, the managers fretted about the proper use of the tickets sold to the audience. An advertisement on February 3 stated: "Some abuses having arose from the former mode of issuing Tickets, a fresh set will in future be struck off for every Play, and no other Tickets will gain admittance to any part of the Theatre." The "abuses" referred to apparently involved the attempt to use tickets for one play (but not specifically identified as such) for another. The problem was emphasized in a notice in the Mercury, explaining that tickets issued for performance of The Busy Body on February 13 (which had to be cancelled "on Account of the Indisposition of a principal Performer") would be accepted for the February 17 performance of Douglas; "but Ladies or Gentlemen who have taken Boxes for the Busy Body, and do not ch use to make use of them, will please to return their Tickets where they were purchased, this morning before XII o’clock, and the Money will be returned, as a new Set of Tickets will be issued when the Busy Body will be performed.

A similarly involved message appeared on May 15, announcing the postponement of one play along with the procedure for patrons to receive refunds. With frequent cancellations and postponements of productions necessitating a never-ending parade to and from the ticket sellers for purchases and refunds, it sometimes seems surprising that the military performers were able to assemble any audience at all for their productions.
A related problem that confronted the managers throughout 1779 was that of insuring that customers who paid for specific seats would not leave them for better ones, thus irritating theatregoers who found their higher-priced seats usurped. On February 27, through the medium of The Royal Gazette, the managers requested "that Gentlemen who have places in the same box, will upon coming to the House, occupy those seats ONLY for which they are registered in the Box-keepers Book; and that servants sent to keep places may not be turned out, or otherwise molested."\(^\text{13}\)

The custom of sending servants to occupy box seats until their employers arrived may have been a convenience to the boxholders, but it was a nuisance for the managers, who found themselves pursuing servants who made their way into the pit, illegally taking seats, after their employers had assumed their places in the boxes. A notice on February 20 was placed in the Gazette in an attempt to eliminate the difficulty, requesting that "Gentlemen will put a stop to such practice in future."\(^\text{14}\)

The behavior of the pit audience was occasionally unruly. This audience was sharply rebuked for misbehavior on February 27:

The disturbances made in the Pit on the last night of performance, having compelled the Managers to the disagreeable necessity of interfering, in order to preserve the decorum due, not only to the audience, but also to the gentlemen concerned in the Theatre, it is hoped such improprieties will not be again attempted.\(^\text{15}\)

The manager of the theatre at the beginning of the 1779 season was Dr. Hammond Beaumont. His tenure lasted only from January 9 to February 20, however, after which Dr. Michael Morris - who had been co-manager in 1777 – assumed the managerial responsibilities. The names of Beaumont and Morris (each listed as "treasurer"), along with the dates during which they held their positions, were listed in the abstract of receipts and expenditures published in the Mercury.\(^\text{16}\) However, it is clear that most of the day-to-day work of maintaining the theatre was taken over by Thomas Barrow, the sub-manager. It was Barrow who paid the bills and who was responsible for the safekeeping of all money taken in at the door until he turned it over to the manager. Notices in the newspaper periodically suggested that "the Managers propose settling the Accounts of the Theatre every Fortnight. Such persons as have any demands, are desired to send their accounts sealed, directed to the Managers, at Mr. Thomas Barrow's, No. 233, in Broad Street."\(^\text{17}\)

One of the managers' thornier responsibilities was to acquire scripts of the plays the actors wished to perform, and to see that a sufficient number of copies was available. In the January 13 issue of The Royal Gazette, the management announced to the public (some of whom, it was hoped, might own personal copies of the plays) that "The following Pieces are much wanted: The Lyar, Tom Thumb, The Orphan of China, Tancred and Sigismunda, High Life Below Stairs, Hob in the Well The Guardian The What d'ye Call It?, The Wonder or a Woman Keeps a Secret and The Cheats of Scapin."\(^\text{18}\) Only two of the plays asked for were performed during the season, so the response to the announcement must have disappointed the management.
At least one detailed answer to the request was received. A citizen identified only as "S.M." wrote to the managers:

GENTLEMEN:
HAVING seen in one of last week's papers an Advertisement from you, signifying you wanted the Comedy called 11u: Wonder a Woman Keeps a Secret; an acquaintance of mine having this same play in his hands, together with the four following Comedies, viz. The Provok'd Husband, The Recruiting Officer, the Suspicious Husband, and The Tunbridge Wells, in one volume, being the 7th of the English Theatre, desired me to inform you, that he'll lent [sic] you this volume upon condition of receiving One Half Johannes for each play therein contained, and a promissary note for the book, assuring the restitution of the same within a fortnight, or at highest three weeks time.

If you please to take them upon these conditions, please to direct an answer to S.M. and leave it at the Coffee-house in Water-street.

I am, Gentlemen,
Your most obedient Servant,
S.M.

To the Managers of the Theatre at New York.

P.S. From the same hand may be had, though upon no other conditions as those made above, and no more than one volume at a time, the other seven volumes of the English Theatre. 19

Beaumont and Barrow responded sardonically that they were "much indebted to S.M. for the disinterested attention he has paid to their Advertisement, and would most readily have embraced his generous offer, had they not, the very day before, purchased the English Theatre, compleat, for Twelve Piastres. 20

When the Theatre Royal found a copy of a play it wished to produce, the next step was to provide sufficient copies of the play to the actors. In 1779, William Kirby was employed by the theatre to copy scripts by hand. Rather than reproduce each play several times, Kirby probably copied out only what was necessary in order for each actor to function: the actor's lines and the last words of the cue lines. On six occasions in 1779, the receipt book lists payments to Kirby for his work, totaling £54, 4 shillings. 21

Scripts may occasionally have been carried by the actors during performances. Minimal rehearsal time makes this a probability, although a prompter was present at all performances, ready to aid an actor in distress.

Maintaining the theatre and its appointments in good condition necessitated several expenditures in 1779. In the managers' abstract published after the season had ended, £308, 8s., Sd. was listed as "Total expence on fitting up the house" for the first six weeks of operation. 23
upholsterers, *et al.* benefited from the Theatre Royal's existence. The money paid to them for various jobs performed for the theatre must have provided a handsome supplement to their regular incomes.

Properties for use in the productions represented a moderate expense. But if the expenditures for props were reasonably economical, those for costumes and accessories seem to have been particularly extravagant. £20, 13s., 6d. was paid for a "Lord Trimmet dress" on April 12, for example. But the audience must have looked forward to seeing new costumes, as well as new plays, which may help to account for the lavishness of the expenditures. The advertisement in the *Mercury* advised theatregoers that "new Dresses" would be a prominent feature in the production of *The Orphan of China* on May 18.

For the first six plays alone, the bill for "sundry new dresses" came to £429, 13s., 8d. The costume bill for the remainder of the season cannot be precisely determined, because the abstracts of receipts and expenditures printed in the *Mercury* simply lumped all expenditures for the final sixteen performances together, claiming that £2440, 9 shillings had been paid out "for expences incurred, after being examined and, approved by the Managers." The job of caring for the costumes and accessories fell to a Mrs. Martin and to David Coutant, who seems to have shared the responsibility with Mrs. Martin at the beginning of the season but who eventually became sole wardrobe-keeper. Coutant received various payments throughout the season for "attendance on the wardrobe." Wigs represented an enormous expense. Alexander Leslie received £37, 6s., 8d. for "Wig &c. and attendance" on February 10. And on February 25, Leslie was paid £16, 17s., 4d. for "sundry wigg - headdresses and attendance." On March 23, he received an additional £40, 3s., 8d. "for attendance and making sundry wiggs &c. for the Theatre."

The theatre was lit primarily by candles in chandeliers over the stage and auditorium. Several entries in the receipt book demonstrate that the supply of candles was being replenished constantly throughout the season. For example, five boxes of Spermacetti candles cost the theatre dearly: £85, 16s., 9d. were paid out on March 23, less than two weeks after John Slidell had been given £4, 4s., 6d. for supplying tallow candles.

On February 27, John Aymar Sr. received £1, 7 shillings "in full for 3 Night attendance the lamps and fires below the stage." A similar entry is recorded for March 12. This may indicate that footlights that rose and sank during the performance were used at the Theatre Royal, requiring Aymar's "attendance." Or perhaps it refers only to an area underneath the stage that Aymar maintained and kept heated.

Oil was used for lighting, as well, but it cannot have been used often, as the only entry in the receipt book to mention its use occurred on April 23, when "Money" was "disbursted" for "Candles and lamp oil."

Civilian stagehands were paid for their work at the theatre in 1779, as an entry for April 23 attests. Barrow noted that "the Scene Shifters and other Stage attendants" were paid more than
£12 for "2 plays and 1 rehearsal." Peculiarly, the receipt book does not indicate any expenditures whatever for the painting or building of scenery in 1779. Evidently the drops and wings from the previous seasons were found suitable for the new productions.

One Martin Cregier seems to have been in charge of hiring and supervising the doorkeepers and boxkeepers, each of whom was apparently paid one dollar per performance, according to an entry on January 26. Other functionaries performed various odd jobs, some of which cannot be specified. E. Smith, for example, was paid almost £14 "for his Work for the theatre," and John Aymar Jr. was given £4, 1 shilling "for attendance and Errand-Man on the Theatre."

William Dunlap, in his History of the American Theatre, written in 1833, claimed that fourteen musicians were employed in 1777, each being paid at the rate of one dollar per night. If Dunlap's recollection was correct, then the orchestra neither grew in size nor received a higher salary two years later, for the receipt book confirms that there were indeed fourteen musicians in 1779, and they were paid "a dollar each man." Phillippe Pfeil, who evidently conducted the orchestra, signed receipts regularly throughout the season. The rate of pay never varied, except for an extra payment of £1, 4 shillings for a rehearsal of Richard III and "a new comic dance." Pfeil's orchestra perhaps deserved extra pay on the two occasions on which The Mock Doctor, an operatic afterpiece, was presented in 1779, but no such bonus was received.

Although The Mock Doctor was the only production in which musical elements predominated, singing and dancing were significant ingredients in many of the performances. The production of The Absent Man on March 13 featured "Entertainments of singing, &c. between the Acts." Richard III was enhanced, on its second performance, by a "New Comic Dance" added "by particular Desire."

Military performers continued, as before, to play most of the roles in the plays during the 1779 season, but more civilian amateurs and professionals took part than had been the case in the two previous seasons. Among the officers, Lieutenant Smith was evidently featured in women's roles, for an entry in the receipt book on January 26 indicates that £2, 15 shillings were paid for "Necklace and Earrings" for Lieutenant Smith.

Major John Andre was active during this season; his contemporary, William Smith, noted in his diary that Andre "has acted upon the stage all winter." Andre's performances in 1779 were his last. This brilliant young officer, whose rise in the British army was meteoric, owing partly to his military acumen and partly to his charismatic personality, seemed to have a brilliant future in 1779. But Andre, who negotiated Benedict Arnold's treasonous activities, was captured by American militiamen and died on the gallows in 1780.

Major Williams, who had appeared at the Theatre Royal in 1777, did so again in 1779; and a Captain Watson acted in 1779 as well, as several entries in the receipt book testify. These are the only names of officer-actors in 1779 that can be positively verified, but the advertisements continued to refer to "Characters by the Officers of the Navy and Army" throughout most of the season. On May 15, the notice omitted mention of the Navy: "The Characters to be by the GENTLEMEN of the ARMY." It may be that Naval officers severed their connection with the theatre during the 1779 season at this time or at some prior date.
There is some reason to believe that Robert Hampden Pye and Frederick Madan acted with the company, although the receipts they signed do not make it clear if they were performers or if they provided other services for the theatre. If they acted, they were evidently not paid for performing.

Some actors were paid, however, the rate of pay varying with the importance of the role portrayed and - probably - with the experience of the performer. Mr. Earl, who had played with the military actors in 1778, was paid £8, 8 shillings for his performance on April 21, 1779. It is unclear whether he acted in *The Minor* that evening, or in the afterpiece, *The Mayor of Garratt*. Shoes were purchased for Mr. Earl's use on March 23, indicating that he probably performed on other occasions as well.

A Master Shaw acted at least twice in 1779. On March 9, his father received "one shilling sterling" for "my son's performance in Richard III;" and on March 18, father and son appeared together in the repeat performance of Shakespeare's play, Mr. Shaw receiving £1, 17s., 4d. for "myself and son's performance ..." Whether Shaw the elder acted in the first production of the play and was not paid for it, or whether he was added to the cast for the second production only is a matter for conjecture. We do know that Mr. Shaw was occupied as steward and stage door-keeper when he wasn't performing, and that he was paid for those duties at the rate of one dollar per night.

Another actor who appeared in the March 18 performance was Thomas Selly, who received £1, 177s., 4d. for playing "the guard in the play of Rich 3d the second time." One wonders if Master Shaw, who probably played either Prince Edward or the young Duke of York when he was paid only one shilling for the performance on March 6, knew that Thomas Selly was given nearly £2 for playing the much smaller role of a guard on March 18. W. Bettles seems to have been employed primarily as a handyman around the theatre, but he must have acted as well for he was paid for six weeks' attendance and performance from December 21 to February 1.

A number of actresses were seen at the Theatre Royal in 1779. In general, we only know the names of those who were paid, but it is clear that some women performers played without reimbursement. One such was Major Williams' mistress, who called herself "Mrs. Williams," and who had acted with the military players in 1778. No payment to her is recorded in the receipt book, but reference is made to services performed for her in lieu of payment.

Among the professionals, foremost was Anna Tomlinson who acted several times during the season and was well-recompensed. An entry in the receipt book on March 9 indicates that Mrs. Tomlinson received "twenty two pound Eight shillings for the 7th, 8' and 9' night performance and three pound fourteen shillings /8d due on the two preceding nights and addition to my Sallerv commencing the 5' night." Mrs. Tomlinson's daughter, Jane, was also paid for her performances, although at a less generous rate than that which was given her mother.

Mrs. Margaret (or Margrcat) Shaw acted in Mrs. Tomlinson's benefit performance at the close of the 1778 season, and in 1779 she was active once again, receiving £3, l4s., 8d. on February 10 for "one Nights Performance in the Minor." This was the same rate of pay Jane Tomhnson
received for each performance. Evidently Mrs. Shaw's value to the theatre increased in subsequent years, for she was permitted to have her own benefit in 1781.

In 1779, however, the only benefit accorded to any of the professionals was given to Mrs. Tomlinson. The date of the performance was June 19, which must have concerned the actress, since no performance in 1777 or 1778 had been given so late in the season at the Theatre Royal. The advertisement in The Royal Gazette announcing her performance carried a note of concern: "Mrs. TOMLINSON humbly hopes for the kind protection of her friends, the Gentlemen of the Navy and Army, and the City in general, by their honouring her with their appearance at her benefit on that evening." A note at the bottom of the advertisement tried to allay fears concerning the climate: "The greatest care will be taken to keep the House cool." 38

The receipt book did not record the income for Mrs. Tomlinson's benefit, so we cannot know whether her appeal to her friends was answered generously or not. On the last two evenings on which performances were given before June 19, admission receipts were low, averaging less than £110, which certainly seems to indicate that individuals were reluctant to attend the theatre in warm weather. Perhaps, however, the special nature of the occasion drew more customers than would otherwise have attended.

If the actors were not always well-paid, they certainly seem to have been well-fed. Throughout the season, large quantities of food and drink were ordered from various merchants to be delivered to the theatre. Some of it was probably used on the stage as edible props, but the bulk of it surely must have been consumed by the actors, musicians, stagehands and door-keepers during rehearsals and after performances. On January 26, for example, only fifteen days after the theatre had reopened, £6, 11 shillings were paid for five and one-eighth gallons of old rum, and £14 for a "Quarter Cask of Sherry." 39

A coach to and from the theatre was provided for the use of the actors and the theatre staff. Joseph Stevens' bills "for Coach-hire attending the Theatre" ranged from £7, 4 shillings on January 28, to £10 on February 11, to a staggering £40, 16 shillings on April 12. This service was a genuine luxury, since New York was still a small town in 1779, and the Theatre Royal was easily reached by a short walk from every section of the city.

The extravagances indulged in by the officers and their friends were deeply resented by those few Whigs who remained in New York in 1779. One referred derisively to "the military gentlemen" who "amuse themselves with trifles and diversions." 40 But the officers who were performing at the Theatre Royal in John Street would probably have taken little notice of such sentiments. They were surrounded by approving soldiers and admiring Tories, who seem to have taken no offense whatever at the officers' avid pursuit of pleasurable activities. It must have been difficult for some of the officers to remember that a war was in progress. Indeed, the war seems rarely to have intruded upon their theatrical presentations. Occasionally, reality would assert itself, and a performance would have to be postponed "On Account of the indispensable Absence of a principal Performer," 41 and one performance had to be cancelled because a "Number of Performers" were "absent on Duty," 42 but military commitments rarely interfered with the theatre's schedule in 1779.
The patrons of the Theatre Royal demonstrated their firm support of the officers' theatrical ventures by paying a total of £4,187, Ss., 10d. to see the plays presented in 1779, a considerably higher amount than had been spent in either of the previous two years. The theatre's expenditures were listed by the managers as £3,896, 18s., 2d., permitting them a profit of more than £70, even after they had donated the rather meager total of £219, 19s., 8d. to charity.43

The charitable contribution of 1779 - less than £220 out of an income that exceeded £4,000 - offered a potential embarrassment to the Theatre Royal's managers, so they apologized for it at the time the donation was made. In the abstract of receipts and expenditures published in the Mercure at the end of the season, this note was included:

N.B. The great expence incurred previous to opening the Theatre last season [i.e., in 1779], and the many new dresses the Managers were under the necessity of purchasing to conduct it with propriety, deprived them of the means of extending this Charity to as many objects as they could have wished: but these reasons being now in a great measure obviated, they flatter themselves that a very considerable sum will be applied in the course of this season [i.e., the season that began in December, 1779, and continued until July 20, 1780] to the relief of disabled Seamen, Soldiers, Widows, Orphans and others who may be considered as proper objects of this Charity.44

The apology apparently failed to still criticism, however, for early in 1780, the managers donated another £179, Ss., 4d. to charity. On January 20, an advertisement in The Royal Gazette announced the disbursement of twenty shillings each to forty-four widows, "1 pair shoes and 1 pair stockings" for forty widows at a total cost of £27, a payment to seventy-two children of twenty shillings each, and, finally, a gift of £36, Ss., 4d. to sixteen orphans.45 Perhaps this belated contribution from the profits of 1779 satisfied those who may have been critical of the small amount of money given to charity in that year.

Charity - the ostensible purpose for which the plays were being given - may not have benefited greatly from the military performances, but there can be no doubt that the theatre in America did. A theatergoing tradition was becoming firmly established in New York through the efforts of the British officers, and, to a lesser degree, the same process was occurring in other American cities. Although the performers were British in 1779, audiences in New York would eagerly patronize the performances of American actors when the revolution came to an end only four years later.

FOOTNOTES

1The Royal Gazette, New York, published by James Rivington, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, December 9, 1778.
2Ibid., January 9, 1779.
4From advertisements in various issues of The Royal Gazette, 1779; and from the Receipt Book, Theatre Royal, 1 779.
5The Royal Gazette, January 9, 1779.
6Ibid., January 27, 1779.

The Royal Gazette, January 9, 1779.

Ibid., February 3, 1779.

Mercury, February 15, 1779.

Ibid.

The Royal Gazette, May 15, 1779.

Ibid., February 27, 1779.

Ibid., February 20, 1779.

Ibid., February 27, 1779.

Mercury, December 13, 1779.

The Royal Gazette, January 13, 1779.

Ibid.

Ibid., January 20, 1779.

Ibid.

Receipt Book, Theatre Royal, 1779.

on March 9, £30, l 9s., 9d. were paid out for "gilding and painting [the] dome" of the theatre; Adrian Dow received £5 on January 26 for making six chairs for the theatre; and two weeks later John Davis was given more than £15 for "Upholsterer's work in fitting up the Theatre."

This included £165, 0s., 6d. "to cash paid the carpenter's bill for materials and time for the repairs of the house previous to its opening, and other expences for the six first plays." £64, 5s., 9d. "to cash paid ironmongery and tin-work, &c. and for new stoves," £36, 12s., 6d. paid to the "upholsterer for the General and Admiral's Boxes, papering ditto and carpeting for the stage," and £37, 6s., 8d. "to repairs of scenes, painting, and other decorations, and glazing lamps and lights, &c.," Mercury, December 13, 1779.

Sarah Warden was paid £4 for delivering ten masks to the theatre on April 12: Isaac Stymes received £3, 4 shillings for "two stars" on February 6, and an additional payment was made for two more on April 12. The theatre expended £1, 2 shillings for "A shield for douglas" on February 27, Receipt Book, Theatre Royal, 1779.

Other examples: A feather made by Fred Guion for the use of Major Williams cost nearly £2; a "Dress to Lady Pentweazel" earned its maker, Grove Bend, £11, 2 shillings; John Cashman was given £29, 5s., 6d. "for sundry dresses" for Othello and The Jealous Wife; and Cashman received another payment in excess of £27 for "making and altering sundry dresses;" S. Stuven charged £9, 1 Ss., 3d. for "Ribbands, Gloves, &c. for the Theatre;" and shoes for various performers were purchased for prices averaging approximately £1, 9 shillings per pair.

Mercury. May 17, 1779.

Ibid., December 13, 1779.

Receipt Book, Theatre Royal, 1779.


Receipt Book, Theatre Royal, 1779.

Ibid., March 13, 1779.

Ibid., March 17, 1 779.

Receipt Book, Theatre Royal, 1779.

William Smith, quoted in William B. Willcox, Portrait of a
In addition, on February 6, "a supper sent to the Theatre for the King and Miller of Mansfield" cost £4, 14 shillings. The theatre spent nearly £4 for what must have been an enormous quantity of "Bread and Butter" on March 6. The officers evidently enjoyed the supper served them in February, for three more followed in March and April. On March 3, John Kirk was paid "Eight pounds twelve shillings in full for two suppers for the Theatre;" John Marshall received £9, 8s., 6d. on April 15 for having furnished "2 Suppers including liquor (for the Play and Rehearsal of Venice Preserved);" and Marshall took away another £5, 3s., 6d. only nine days later for having delivered "a supper and liquor for the gent. performers" who were rehearsing The Jealous Wife. No expense seems to have been spared in order to keep the "gent. performers" in good spirits.

41 *The Royal Gazette*, May 29, 1779.
43 *Mercury*, December 13, 1779.
45 *The Royal Gazette*, January 20, 1779.