SAMUEL PHELPS AT SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE 1844-1862

by

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham
for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

The College of Arts and Law Graduate School
University of Birmingham
September 2019

ABSTRACT

Eileen Marie Cameron McCourt: Samuel Phelps at Sadler's Wells Theatre 1844-1862

(Under the direction of Professor Michael Dobson)

During Samuel Phelps's eighteen-year management of Sadler's Wells theatre (1844-1862), he revived thirty-one of Shakespeare's plays, distinguished by relatively full texts, ensemble acting and *mise-en-scènes* which illustrated rather than drew attention away from the text. Conventionally Phelps's management has been associated with an agenda designed to educate the working classes. Although it has recently been argued that Phelps was catering for a middle-class audience, demographic profiles constructed from census returns establish Phelps's local audience was, for the most part, artisans and domestic servants although his legitimate repertoire did attract members of the middle classes. To establish how Phelps catered for his disparate audiences I consider four of his Shakespearean productions: *Richard III*, which, I argue, deserves better recognition in its contribution to driving Cibber from the stage; *Timon of Athens*, which contributed to the contemporary debate on its authorship; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, probably the most renowned of his productions; and *Pericles*, certainly the most spectacular. I have found Bourdieu's tools of habitus, field and cultural capital offer theoretical assumptions which allow a discussion of the social context of Phelps's management and the agency of individuals. I conclude that Phelps's management was successful because it achieved cultural renown welded to popular success.

DEDICATION

For Annie and Patrick

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Over the past thirteen years, I have had cause to thank many people in the Shakespeare Institute for their kind involvement in my research. In the early years Kate McLuskie, John Jowett, Catherine Alexander and Robert Wilcher provided encouragement and wise counsel. At this stage in my Institute career, I am deeply grateful to Michael Dobson for his unfailing encouragement and patience as I worked on this thesis - often, in the last year, from far-flung places in the globe. Karin Brown and Kate Welch have been there throughout the thirteen years, always cheerfully helpful as has been Anne Phillips when she joined the Library. I would also like to thank Madeleine Cox at the Birthplace Library, and Julie and Bef at the ILHC. The librarians at both the V&A Reading Rooms and the Harvard Theatre Collection have answered queries courteously and promptly. Georgiana Zeigler and the late Betsy Walsh looked after me with great consideration at the Folger. Finally, I am simply unable sufficiently to express my thanks to my daughter to whom, together with my late husband who died before it was completed, this thesis is dedicated.

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The committee felt, acting for their countrymen at large, that to no fitter hands than those of Mr. PHELPS could be consigned the work of that day.

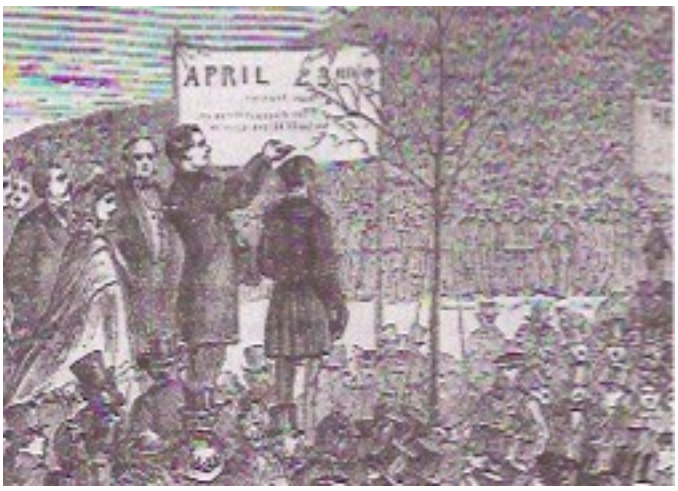


Figure 1
The Shakespeare tercentenary commemoration in London: planting an oak on Primrose Hill, 23 April 1864
(*Illustrated London News*)

The "work of that day" was the ceremonial planting of an oak tree on Primrose Hill in celebration of the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth. Why the committee, on whose behalf Richard Moore was introducing Samuel Phelps at the ceremony, felt Phelps was the appropriate choice for the work is elaborated in an *Illustrated London News*' article on the same event:

> The only public demonstration in honour of [the] Shakspeare [tercentenary] attempted on Saturday in London was that which was got up by the Working Men's Committee… Mr Phelps, who is deservedly a favourite of the London working men – having taught them to understand and enjoy Shakspeare by his high-minded management of Sadler's Wells – was received with the most enthusiastic welcome. (30 April 1864, p.422)

When Phelps planted the oak "in the name of the working men of England," it was just two years since he had given up the management of Sadler's Wells. During his eighteen-year tenure at the theatre Phelps's name became inextricably linked with the working class not least through the efforts of Henry Morley, who extolled the

educational advantages to be found in the theatre, and whose reviews for *The Examiner* frequently noticed Phelps's shows with approval. In his 24 January 1857 review of recent performances of *Twelfth Night*, Morley wrote:

> [Phelps] will have taught an audience mainly composed of hard-working men, who crowd a sixpenny gallery and shilling pit, heartily to enjoy the sweetest and noblest verse man ever wrote…There sit our working-classes in a happy crowd, as orderly and reverent as if they were in church, and yet as unrestrained in their enjoyment as if listening to stories told them by their own firesides.

Men who have had few advantages of education, Morley asserts, will inevitably have their minds and characters strengthened and refined when they are made accustomed to the kind of entertainment on offer at Sadler's Wells. Years later, Phelps echoed Morley's words. On 24 October 1876, at a banquet given for the theatrical profession by the Lord Mayor of London, Phelps replied to the toast, "The Shakespearean Drama" and specifically argued for Shakespeare's moral and educational powers:

> Some years ago I took an obscure theatre in the north of London called Sadler's Wells, and nearly the whole of my brethren in the profession, and many out of it, said it would not last a fortnight. It lasted eighteen years, and my stock-in-trade chiefly consisted of the plays of Shakespeare… I maintain, from the experience of eighteen years, that the perpetual iteration of Shakespeare's words…must and would produce a great effect upon the public mind. I have …in my possession hundreds of letters from men of all sorts and conditions who came to see me at Sadler's Wells as boys, and who have written to me as men to say that they received their first glimpse of education at that theatre. (*The Life and Life-Work of Samuel Phelps,* 338)

Phelps planted the oak tree in the name of "the workmen of England" and the Mansion House speech quoted above implies a didactic aim in his management. Is this the gloss of hindsight or is it possible to discern a high-minded agenda to Phelps's management of Sadler's Wells theatre from its outset? My purpose in this thesis is to establish demographic profiles of audiences during Phelps's management, then, through careful examination of four productions, to look for any evidence beyond an intent to popularise Shakespeare in order to achieve theatrical acclaim and

commercial success; that is, to look for evidence of the high-mindedness which purportedly changed the taste and behaviour of those audiences. I aim to supplement, complicate and extend existing studies of the playgoers who attended Phelps's shows at Sadler's Wells Theatre, and I hope to show how and why Phelps's repertoire appealed during his management and why the theatre failed after Phelps's retirement.

The sections below initially concentrate on the years prior to Phelps's management: the opening section gives some account of his career before his arrival at the Wells and the sources available to authorise such an account, and explores the influence of his early quest for success as an actor on his subsequent career as a manager. This is followed by a section on the history and the reputation of the theatre sub-divided into segments concerning the evolution of the theatre's buildings and the dramatic change in its physical surroundings. The available primary source evidence is then detailed. The final sections present a demographic profile of Clerkenwell and Pentonville, which incorporates an appraisal of current scholarship concerned with Phelps's audiences, with the aim of a more nuanced view than is presented there. The final section offers a commentary on the available primary source materials.

SAMUEL PHELPS

Phelps was born in Devonport (then Plymouth Dock) in 1804. Visits to London in 1813-14 and 1818-19, when he was taken to Covent Garden and Drury Lane by a cousin who was a drama critic, inspired a determination to be an actor. He helped backstage at the Devonport Theatre and was occasionally given walk-on parts in the afterpieces. However, at 16 he was left an orphan and was taken in by an older brother who advised him to abandon his theatrical ambitions in favour of earning a living. Phelps became a junior reader on the *Plymouth Herald*, a position he abandoned within a year when he ran away to London in the hope of employment in a

theatre. Forced, once there, to resume work as a reader, Phelps nonetheless determined to find fame as an actor. At a meeting of the Islington Antiquarian Society presided over by Harry Plowman, and reported in the *Islington Gazette* of 4 February 1910, W.H. Pratt was invited to deliver a paper on Samuel Phelps. After a brief account of Phelps's boyhood in Devon, Pratt moved to a consideration of his career after he arrived in London at the age of 17. Pratt establishes that his first appearance in a London theatre was at the Olympic theatre in Rawstorne Street off Goswell-road (within 300 yards of Sadler's Wells).[i] Asked by a member of this small theatre to perform for him on his benefit night and introduced to the audience as a gentleman amateur, Phelps played Eustache de St. Pierre, the main role in George Colman's popular historical drama, *The Surrender of Calais* (1791) and the Count de Valmont in William Dimond's melodrama, *The Foundling of the Forest* (1809). Buoyed by his success in the roles, Phelps abandoned journalism and accepted a professional engagement on the York circuit for eighteen shillings a week. This was to be the beginning of 11 years in the provincial theatres.

Much of this information comes from W. May Phelps's and John Forbes-Robertson's *The Life and Life-Work of Samuel Phelps* (henceforth, *The Life*), and an essential source on Phelps's biography. The main focus of *The Life* is a season-by-season account of Phelps's management of Sadler's Wells (the life-work) but in the opening chapter of their memoir, Phelps and Forbes-Robertson offer a narrative of Phelps's life up to the opening production of his management at the Wells. Their account contains a summary of his years in the provinces between 1826 and 1837. They emphasise that at this stage Phelps's ambition was fame as an actor and that this period of his career offered no hint of the moral and educational preoccupations John Forbes-Robertson ascribes to Phelps in the Preface to *The Life*:

> When the two great institutions… the Church and the Stage…are at one…only then may we hope to see light in dark places, and a worthy crowning to national education…[and these] …were ever present to the mind of our master. (x)

Such "strengthening hopes and possibilities," what Richard Foulkes argues (Foulkes, "Church", 89) is Phelps's achievement in advancing the *rapprochement* between the theatre, the Church and education, lay in the future. In 1826, Phelps's urgent quest was for fame and, if not fortune, then enough money to provide for his new wife and the family to come. He was "commencing systematically on the stage the arduous labour of trying to become famous" (*The Life*, 35).

Phelps's time in the provinces, acting before a variety of audiences, was to be an important influence on his managerial credo at Sadler's Wells. John P.Wearing argues persuasively in his DNB entry on Phelps that not only did his time in provincial theatre necessitate doggedness of character, it developed Phelps's hallmark traits as an actor - his well-studied conception of a role, his ability to move audiences, and his precise, distinct diction, exactly the qualities which were to become associated with his productions as a manager.

The first part of John Coleman's *Memoirs of Samuel Phelps*, which is dedicated to Esther, Phelps's youngest daughter, also concerns Phelps's time in the provinces. Coleman calls it, "Adventures during Fourteen Years in the Country, 1823–1837" (39-159). At the end of his career Phelps had taken an interest in John Coleman, then at the start of his theatrical adventures, and the older actor had regaled the younger with anecdotes from his past. It is a strange book, accurately described by Julia Swindells and David Francis Taylor in *Lives of Shakespearean Actors* as "highly subjective and idiosyncratic" (51-2). Its principal eccentricity is to keep to the form and sequence of what Phelps revealed over the course of their friendship and present it as a first-person narrative, what Swindells and Taylor call Coleman's act of

ventriloquism. Somewhat disingenuously, Coleman insists that he is absolutely dependent on his memory and cannot be responsible for dates. However, although there are inaccuracies, some of which are noted below, there are parts of Coleman's narrative which clearly anticipate Phelps's management at Sadler's Wells. For example, while Phelps was in a sharing company in Beverley, probably around 1827, business was so bad that carpenters, property men and bill deliverers were dispensed with. Phelps took on scene painting, with some assistance from the company prompter's son, William Telbin, who was to achieve renown as a scenic artist and whom Phelps would meet again during William Charles Macready's 1842 revival of *King John*. The company manager in Beverley, the actor Robson Daniels, by chance, acquired a manuscript of J. H. Amhurst's *The Battle of Waterloo* (1824). The acquisition coincided with an impending visit from the Yeomanry Cavalry. In exchange for agreeing to paint appropriate scenery, Phelps was given the part of Bonaparte, presented sympathetically by Amherst as a charismatic and honourable soldier who planned the battle with intelligence from a French peasant. Daniels, whom Phelps admired as a stage manager, managed the cavalry supernumeraries, grouping the "armies" on stage. *The Battle of Waterloo* was billed for Wednesday with the Cavalry to act the rival armies, their coats to be turned inside out for the French:

> The week before the Yeomanry came, we didn't open the theatre at all. The days from early morning were devoted to scene painting and rehearsals…I fished out a green footman's livery, and an old coachman's hat from our slender wardrobe…and [my wife] faced the one with white glazed calico, and transmogrified the other into some resemblance to a Chapeau Bras. (Coleman, "Memoirs", 84)

Spectacular grouping of supernumeraries on stage as armies or in processions was to become a feature of Phelps's productions at Sadler's Wells.

After Phelps's death, Tom Taylor wrote a piece for *The Theatre*, reproduced in *The Life*. Much of the preparation for *The Battle of Waterloo*, in the late 1820s, foreshadows Taylor's account of Phelps's rehearsals for his play, *The Fool's Revenge* (1859), with the scenery and costumes judiciously managed to be an integral part of performance:

> In consultation with Phelps, the period of the costume and scenery was fixed…[w]e were of one mind that…scenery and costumes [had to be] effective in themselves , and consistent essentially with each other…I never saw rehearsals more careful than those of my play at Sadler's Wells under Phelps…[it was] what rehearsal should be, continuous, well-considered, patient shaping of the play for public performance, in which not merely the groupings and movements of the personages were attended to, but the delivery of every speech watched – nay, the emphasis and pronunciation of every word noted. (qtd. in *The Life*, p.348)

By the winter of 1836, Phelps was appearing in Exeter where he attracted good notices in the local press. Reviewers compared his performances favourably with those of Edmund Kean. After his appearance at Exeter, he was billed to star in the theatre at Plymouth, where he played Hamlet for his benefit performance. The two extant Nicholas Crowley portraits of him in this role, one in the Plymouth City Council Museum and Art Gallery and the other in the Royal Shakespeare Company Collection, suggest that Phelps had certainly achieved celebrity in the provinces. The next year, in May, with an introduction provided by Louisa Nisbett, he was offered his London debut by Benjamin Webster, who had just taken over the management of the Haymarket Theatre. The date of his first performance was, eventually, set for 28 August 1837. While he was waiting for Webster to confirm the date of his opening, Phelps was fulfilling an engagement in Southampton. On 14 August, he appeared as Sir Edmund Mortimer in Colman's *The Iron Chest* (1795). Macready, who had heard of Phelps's prowess on the provincial circuits, went, unannounced, to see Phelps act and was impressed enough to offer him an engagement at Covent Garden. Phelps,

who knew that his Haymarket engagement began at the end of August and that Covent Garden did not open until October, believing both that Webster intended to bring the Haymarket season to an end at the end of September or the beginning of October, and that Webster knew of the negotiation, accepted Macready's offer. Webster then served Phelps with a notice prohibiting him to appear at Covent Garden. Macready retaliated with a notice prohibiting a Haymarket appearance. Matters were settled but Phelps had effectively put himself under Macready's control. In his 1948 account of the Webster/Macready dispute, Walter Macqueen-Pope concludes:

> This was Phelps's first big mistake, from which he was to suffer for years. He should have stuck to Webster. That man was not troubling about rivals, but only determined to get the best for his theatre. Macready, on the other hand, was determined to keep all other claimants to fame well clear of his own road. (Macqueen-Pope, 264)

The critics' reaction to Phelps's initial London experience at the Haymarket was disappointing. Webster had puffed him in the bills to such an extent that the *Spectator* observed that Mr. Phelps "of provincial celebrity" must be not merely a "star" but a "comet" (19 August 1837, p. 16). With so much expected of him, it is perhaps unsurprising the reviewers were hyper-critical in their reception, which was appreciative but not enthusiastic. The *Spectator*'s critic found him to be a respectable, useful actor, but not one to attract an audience by the force of his talent. The *Times*' critic, probably accurately, ascribed nervousness on Phelps's part as the reason for his disappointing debut. Indeed, Phelps eventually seems to have proved the *Spectator* wrong, alternating with Tyrone Power at the head of the Haymarket bills until 18 September and heading the bills after Power's departure from 28 September until 7 October, when his Haymarket engagement came to an end and his commitment to Macready at Covent Garden began. Webster regretted his departure:

> He is filling my treasury and I don't think a better proof could be given of his success. I am only sorry that I did not positively secure his services for as long

> a period as I could avail myself of them, instead of allowing another manager to profit by his abilities. (Macqueen-Pope, 266)

Webster's great-grand-daughter, Margaret Webster, writes of Macready's wariness of Webster's new discovery: "Young Phelps…was taken over from the Haymarket and politely smothered" (Webster, 44), a view with which Shirley Allen would certainly concur.

Allen's objective in *Samuel Phelps and Sadler's Wells Theatre* (1971), hereafter "Allen", and another vital resource in any consideration of Phelps, was "to reverse the verdict of history on the merits and accomplishments of Samuel Phelps" (xv). As the title implies, Allen's focus is on Phelps's management of Sadler's Wells but her opening chapter provides a meticulously detailed account of his acting career from its beginnings to his Haymarket engagement. In effect, she organises and supplements *The Life's* account of the period, presenting a clear chronology of the years between 1826 and 1837. A Note in her monograph endorses the Phelps/Forbes-Robertson biography as "accurate" unlike Coleman's which she dismisses as containing "so many errors it cannot be relied upon"(322).

Allen's second chapter traces the seven years from Phelps's advent at Covent Garden under Macready's management to the start of his own management of Sadler's Wells. It is clear from the *Preface* to *Allen* that she considers that his "undeserved obscurity" (xiii) may be blamed on Macready, both because of the influence the latter exerted over the London stage during the last years of the duopoly and because theatrical historians have dealt with this period primarily from Macready's point of view, taking material from his diary and from the writing of his friends, John Foster, the theatre critic of *The Examiner*, "a prince among busybodies" in particular (39). Allen deals summarily with Macready in her account of the years between 1837 and 1844, clearly, and with good and well-evidenced reasons, blaming him for holding Phelps

back as an actor. Again, much of what she writes corroborates the narrative of the same period in *The Life*, but in her attempt to rescue him from the "obscurity in which Macready tried to bury him" (*xiv*), Allen ignores both any positive influences Macready may have had on Phelps, and the fast, and important, friendship which *The Life* records eventually developed between the two men during Macready's management of Drury Lane (53). Allen, for example, takes issue with Alan S. Downer's assessment of Phelps in *The Eminent Tragedian* as Macready's protégé (4). It is certainly hard to see a portrayal of Phelps as his protégé as an actor, since Macready's jealousy so clearly thwarted his acting career. However, it is possible to make a distinction between Macready's negative impact on this aspect of his career and the more generous spirit in which he treated him as a manager. There is evidence that, when Phelps became the manager of Sadler's Wells, Macready saw Phelps as the heir to his legacy of restoring Shakespeare's texts and mounting productions in a worthy and illuminating way. In similar terms to those of Tom Taylor, quoted above, Downer writes of how Macready left nothing to chance in his productions. It was essential to his managerial creed that every part was acted well – each part to be perfect if the whole is to be perfect:

> Casting to strength, like propriety in designing scenery and costume, and careful planning of effects and stage business, was the first step in achieving the unity of a work of art. The second step was full rehearsal, the careful development of the plan. Until Macready…[t]here was almost no attempt to fit the characterizations together, to concentrate on the development of *scenes*…Macready rehearsed endlessly the standard plays of the repertory. (Downer, 242)

At the public banquet organised by Charles Dickens to mark his retirement, Macready spoke of the "one best qualified" to continue his work, who was to be found in a theatre which he had "raised…high in public estimation, not only due to the intelligence and respectability of the audiences, but by the learned and tasteful spirit of his productions" (*Era*, 2 March 1851, p.1)

In her attempt to establish Phelps's reputation as an actor every bit as accomplished as Macready, Allen glosses over Macready's influence on the very aspects of Phelps's management she finds noteworthy: the significance minor characters give to the total effect of the play, the importance of the manager imposing his own conception of the play and supervising both acting and staging to carry out his intention. Seven years of the experience of Macready as actor-manager can only have influenced Phelps's approach as he, with Mary Warner (née Huddart), another member of Macready's company, undertook the stage management of Sadler's Wells theatre.

SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE IN 1844

> As one moved further from the stage, the interest of historians lessened – so that the auditorium received less attention… the external appearance and physical surroundings of the theatre practically none at all. (Marvin Carlson, 1989)

This section considers the external appearance, the auditorium, the stage, and the physical surroundings of the theatre Phelps and Mrs Warner took over in 1844. For the topographical history of the Sadler's Wells site, I am very much indebted to Volumes XLVI ("Southern Clerkenwell") and XLVII ("Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville") of the *Survey of London*, (hereafter *Survey* XLVI and *Survey* XLVII). Published for English Heritage in 2008, with both edited by Philip Temple, the volume on Northern Clerkenwell and Pentonville, which provides information about the evolution of the buildings on the site from Sadler's Musick House to Sadler's Wells Theatre,was particularly useful. In addition, it provides data which enable some description of the development of the auditorium within the theatre. I have also consulted Volume Eight, "A History of the County of Middlesex" in the *Victoria*

County History series. All parish volumes from earlier editions of the *Survey* have gone online through the British History Online project as "part of English Heritage's commitment to widening access to its resources and scholarly activities" (*Survey* XLVI *Preface*). The digitised resource is to be found under Secondary Texts in the Sources section of British History Online, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/ as is the *Victoria County History*.

As the journalist and historian, Andrew Whitehead, noted in a review, "some of the ballast" for *Survey* XLVII is to be found in William John Pinks's *History of Clerkenwell* (1865), an exhaustive history of the parish (https://www.andrewwhitehead.net/clerkenwell.html). A valuable addition to Pinks is an earlier monograph on Clerkenwell by Thomas Kitson Cromwell (1792–1870): *The History and Description of the Parish of Clerkenwell* (1828). It was produced under the aegis of two Pentonville engraver-publishers, James and Henry Storer. The title page stated the account was "embellished with numerous engravings" by the Storers with the "historical department" undertaken by Cromwell. The text is divided into three parts: the first deals with the "History of the Site," the second with Clerkenwell's ecclesiastical history and the third, entitled "Particular History and Description" comprises a series of topographical "Routes through the Parish". Sadler's Wells is extensively considered in the course of the sixth route (Cromwell, 360-379). An engraving of the theatre illustrates the text. Both Pinks's *History* and Cromwell's monograph were preceded by John Lockie's *Topography of London*, described on the title-page as, "a precise local description of and direction to every square, street, lane, court, dock, wharf, inn, public-office, &c." in metropolitan London and, usefully, its environs. Lockie, an Inspector of Buildings to the Phoenix Fire Company, claims each description is the result of his "actual survey". In effect,

he provides a topographical database against which to check streets and terraces that appeared after 1810.

The land on which Sadler's Wells was built and much of the surrounding land was owned by the Lloyd Baker family whose personal and estate papers have been lodged with the Gloucestershire Archives, catalogued under two broad categories: Family and Property. Sadler's Wells is referred to in many of the estate papers and, in addition, material relating to the ownership of the theatre as it descends through the family may be researched through D4084 box 72/8. The website (http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/archives) warns that the arrangement of the archive is "somewhat confused" as the collection has received a great deal of attention from members of the family, biographers and researchers. It is, for example, frequently referred to in *Survey* XLVII.

Finally, as its name indicates, the Islington Local History Centre has a wide range of resources which may be researched for the history of the borough. It includes maps, photographs, census records, electoral rolls, rate books, trade directories and archive material from the H. G. T. Cannons' collection of artefacts to do with Sadler's Wells previously held in the Finsbury Public Library.

THE BUILDINGS

> Though there is nothing in the exterior of the theatre at Sadler's Wells worth describing, further than it is a strong brick building, fronted by a handsome house, its vicinity to the New River and the number of trees surrounding it, give the place a decided superiority over every other theatre near London. (James Peller Malcolm, 1803)

In the *Theatres Trust's Guide to British Theatres 1750 -1950* (2000), John Earl's entry on Sadler's Wells, he bemoans the neglect of its architectural history: "A fully researched architectural history of the various Wells theatres is long overdue" (138). Chapter V of *Survey* XLVII addresses Earl's concerns as it presents a

meticulously researched and carefully presented chronology of the evolution of the Sadler's Wells Theatre buildings which, ironically, disproves Earl's account of the origins of the theatre: a "wooden 'musick house' was erected on the site in 1683, after discovery of medicinal wells in the grounds of Thomas Sadler" (138). However, evidence is presented in *Survey* XLVII to suggest that there was a music house already in existence on the site before the discovery of wells there around 1683. Edward Sadler probably built his music house, "at least partly of brick," between 1671 when he took the 35-year lease of the site and 1674-5 when there is documentary evidence that he was required to pay tax on nine hearths (141 & 143). Although the preamble to the chapter sections dealing with each significant period in the architectural history of the theatre, insists that only sufficient aspects of the Wells' theatrical history to set the buildings in their context will be given, what clearly emerges is an idea of what kind of resort it became following the discovery of the wells. Described as the last survivor of the various spas, wells and places of entertainment scattered above the northern slopes of Clerkenwell, from its beginnings Sadler's Wells was particularly associated with alcohol and music (141). Probably because of the prestige of the well's mineral waters, thought to be therapeutic, it was initially diverse in its patronage, but before long it acquired a reputation as a venue for prostitutes and the dissolute, with a concomitant reputation for low-grade entertainment and rowdy behaviour.

After Sadler died in 1699, the building was taken over by James Miles. During his tenure, an advertisement in *The Gentleman's Magazine* alleged the music house was "improved and beautified" (144). Sometime before his death in 1724, Miles appears to have passed the business to his son-in-law, Francis Forcer, who significantly enlarged the buildings to occupy the full north-south depth of the site.

When Forcer died, the lease was assigned to a John Warren of Clerkenwell during whose management the Grand Jury of Middlesex censured Sadler's Wells, among other theatres and gaming houses, as "places kept apart for the encouragement of luxury, extravagance, idleness, and other wicked illegal purposes" (145) and, temporarily, closed it down, prompting further adverse publicity to haunt the Wells.

Survey XLVII's third section, "*Building and rebuilding by Thomas Rosoman*" deals with the theatre's architectural development during Rosoman's management (145-147). Possibly largely constructed of wood and built on to the back of the original music house, this theatre was built by Thomas Rosoman probably around 1748-9 and the building appears to have remained in this structural form until 1764 when the press announced that Sadler's Wells was now rebuilt and confidently enlarged. The new theatre covered more than twice the area of Rosoman's wooden building and seems to have occupied the site of both the 1748/1749 building and Sadler's original music house. It was oriented with the side of the auditorium and stage more or less parallel with the northern boundary of the site. Pinks maintains that this replacement theatre was "in its present form" (Pinks, 419). That is, in 1844, from the outside the theatre had remained substantially unchanged for nearly a hundred years. In his history, Cromwell describes the theatre looking west from St. John Street Road: "the appearance of the *Theatre*… is not without some features of the picturesque; especially since its dark brick walls have been coated to resemble stone, which adds much to the effect of the tall poplars and other trees surrounding it" (379).

THE AUDITORIUM

Between 1764 when Rosoman rebuilt the existing theatre and 1844 when the Phelps/Warner management began, the *Survey* notes that the theatre auditorium was

remodelled a number of times. It refers, for example, to an article in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of December 1813 on the history of Sadler's Wells:

> In 1778 the whole of the inside of the House was taken down and materially improved. The ceiling was raised considerably, which afforded an opportunity of making the boxes and back of the pit, &c. more lofty; whereby the spectator not only enjoyed a freer air, but also commanded at every part of the House a view of the whole of the stage. (*Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1813, p.562)

Nine years later, a cutting in the British Library Percival Collection revealed that the front part of the pit was made a continuation of the ground floor boxes, "'tis said to exclude ladies of a volatile disposition" (148). The frontispiece to this volume of the *Survey* is a C.H. Matthews watercolour based on an Anthony van Assen engraving (1794) of the altered interior.

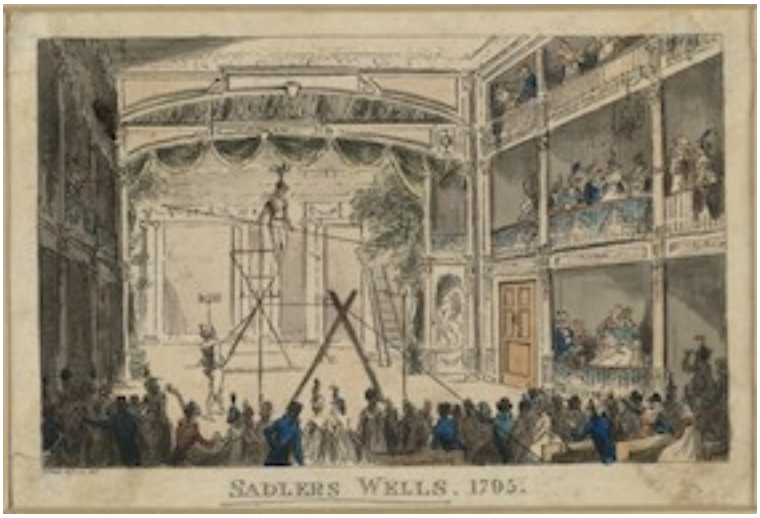


Figure 2
Anthony van Assen print showing the Sadler's Wells auditorium in 1795.
The Harry Beard Collection , V&A

What is of interest in the view of the auditorium is that there appears to be no division between the stage and the pit – the acrobats and their rope-walking equipment extend beyond the proscenium arch, "perhaps in the manner of the old show-room of Sadler's time" (148). Of even more interest is the lack of proscenium doors, as by the time of Rudolphe Cabanel's reconstruction in 1802, extant prints

show the proscenium doors are back. In *Architecture, Actor and Audience* (1993), Iain Macintosh discusses the use of the proscenium arch in theatre architecture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. First, he spends some time on the work of Febrizio Carini Motta, a seventeenth-century Italian "instructor in the science of theatre architecture" (26). It was Motta who pontificated on that area of the stage which projected into the auditorium. As how Phelps used the forestage is relevant to the case studies in the chapters which follow, I quote Macintosh at some length:

> [T]here is a revealing paragraph [in Motta's work] about the area under the proscenium arch…the area 'in which the players and speakers who walk on stage…perform, Voices that are usually restricted…gain added projection towards the audience because of the cavity of the opening…This is a most important and necessary point. Some say that performing in the aforementioned space is to come out of the stage picture and consequently not to be part of the scene, but in order to be heard in the auditorium it is best to do this, a lesser evil than to be behind the *scena*…and not be heard.'…the distinction of the acting stage being in front of the separate scenic stage is set down unequivocally. (Mackintosh, 28-9)

He goes on to argue persuasively that it was the eighteenth-century theoreticians of theatre architecture who "strove to force the actor back behind the proscenium arch to create a picture frame of illusion appropriate to Romantic sensibilities and to the staging of spectacle" (26).

Strove but failed. Mackintosh discusses Henry Holland's rebuilding of the stage and auditorium of Covent Garden in 1792 and the whole of Drury Lane in 1794, that is at around the time Sadler's Wells was reconstructed without proscenium doors: "At Drury Lane the architect dared even to abandon the proscenium arch doors…However, despite Holland's attempt to change this ancient theatrical practice…the doors were back within three years" (Macintosh, 32-3). Mackintosh goes on to discuss the fate of Benjamin Wyatt's rebuilding of Drury Lane in 1812 after Holland's building burnt down. Again the proscenium doors were abolished but

again, this time thanks to the actor William Downton, they went back for a second time.

The writer and journalist Godfrey Wordsworth Turner (1825 and 1891) wrote a number of articles for *The Theatre*, a monthly review of drama, music and fine arts. In one of these, "Scenery, Dresses, Decoration," he describes the "old proscenium" at Sadler's Wells, as the "last of a type now obsolete" (*The Theatre*, N.S. Vol. III March, 1884 129) and conjectures that the proscenium door "disappeared for ever with the old Sadler's Wells Theatre" .

Neither the article in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, nor the *Survey* give any indication of who was responsible for the architectural alterations in 1778 and 1787, but the next reconstruction, over the winter of 1801-2, was undertaken by Cabanel, who had modelled and built the stage at Drury Lane, when Holland remodelled the theatre: "It was elaborately equipped with machinery permitting all the elements of the scene to be changed simultaneously". He was a "significant' figure in the development of stage machinery in England although he also established himself as an architect: "[P]recisely how Cabanel obtained the technical training in stage mechanics, building and architectural design is not known." As well as Sadler's Wells, he designed, under supervision, a new Royal Circus Theatre (at a later date renamed the Surrey) and, in 1818, the Royal Coburg (DNB). The principal feature he introduced to Sadler's Wells was the building of a semi-circular circle and galleries, probably influenced by Holland at Drury Lane. There is a Pugin and Rowlandson print of the auditorium in 1807 with a water scene from Charles Dibdin's *The Ocean Fiend or the Infant's Peril* (see *figure 3*) which clearly shows the columns, the four stage boxes and the relative depth of the gallery and the circle – and proscenium doors.

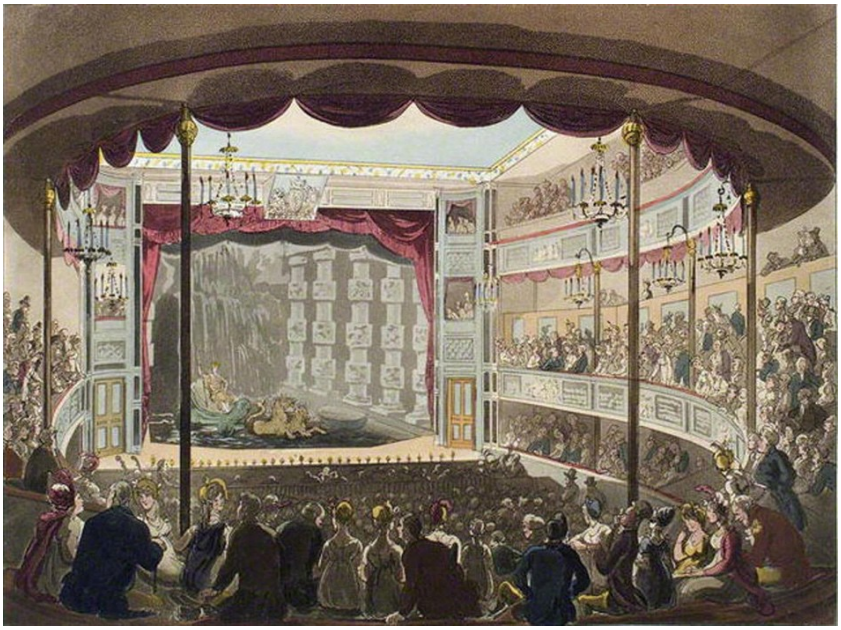


Figure 3
Pugin and Rowlandson print showing Sadler's Wells auditorium in 1807.
The Harry Beard Collection, V&A

Although altered and redecorated at intervals between 1801 and 1844, the basic form of the auditorium was not changed radically after 1801. The slim, cast-iron columns which supported the circle and galleries gave better sightlines than previously. The proscenium ends of the gallery and the circle had boxes on each side. *Survey* XLVII suggests that the dress circle was no longer filled with boxes. It notes that boxes are, of course, referred to in the bills but are out of view in most illustrations. Citing Richard Leacroft's *The Development of the English Playhouse* (1984) in support, he posits: "Probably these were relatively large boxes (not private boxes intended for one party), located side by side along the back of the auditorium, and considered superior to the undivided pit in front" (149). It was not until 1821, under Charles Dibdin's management, that the circle was converted into a series of boxes with six further boxes created at the proscenium ends of the gallery with two more stage boxes on either side. At the same time the pit and the gallery were enlarged. The Cruickshank sketch of a total abstainers' meeting at Sadler's Wells

from 1854 shows these private boxes, four at dress circle level and two level with the stage.

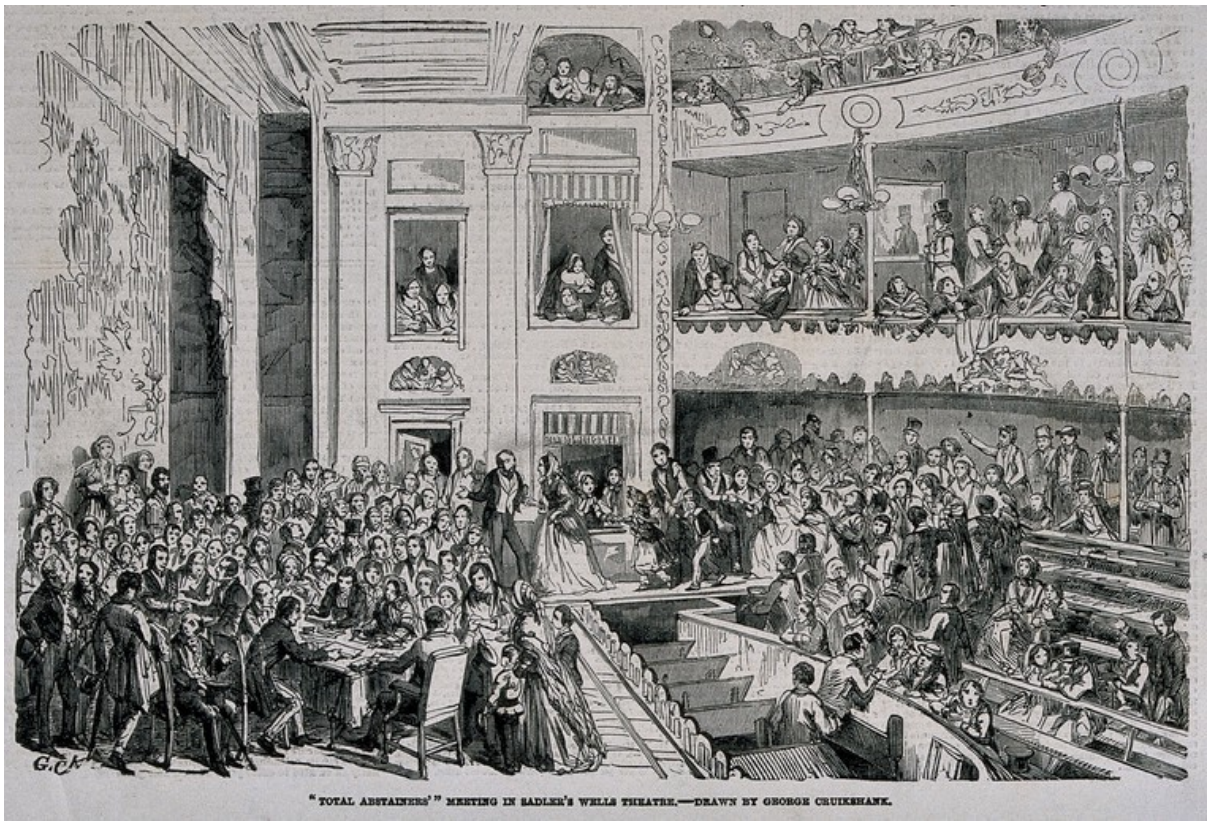


Figure 4
Cruikshank sketch of a Total Abstainers meeting at Sadler's Wells in March, 1854
(*Illustrated London News)*

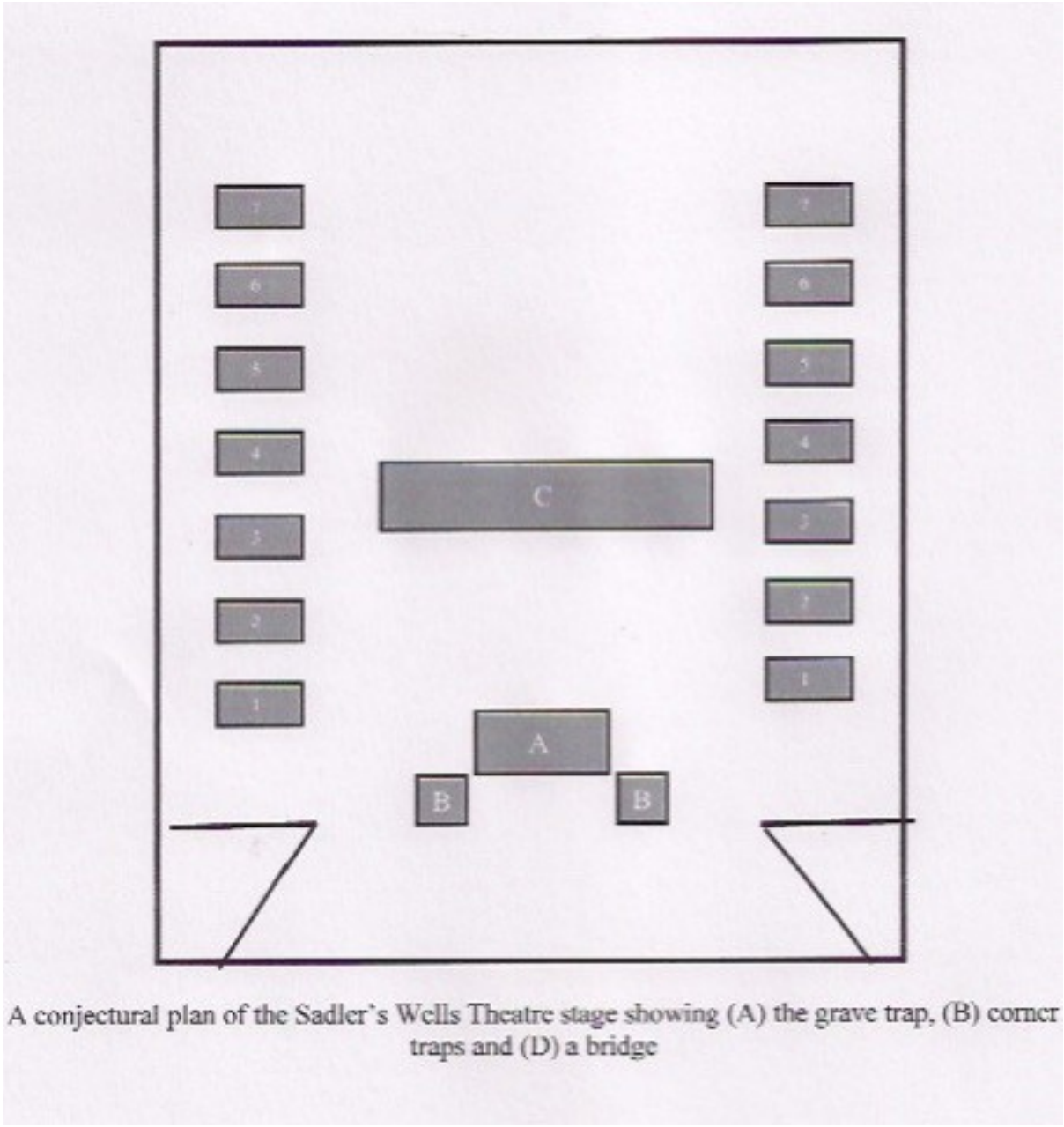
THE STAGE

Useful evidence of the measurements of the Sadler's Wells stage in 1841, three years before Phelps took over its management, is given in the "Chit Chat" column of the *Theatrical Journal* of 17 July, 1841. An article there is devoted to the "relative sizes of the metropolitan theatres" – a list "which [it] may be depended upon [is] perfectly correct". The width of the proscenium is given as twenty-seven feet. The width of the stage is fifty feet, its depth fifty feet and the measurement from the stage to the centre box is recorded as one hundred and fifteen feet (230). There is also an

essay in which Wilkinson gives details of various dimensions of the theatre which accord with the *Theatre Journal* figures.

The Wilkinson measurements and the *Theatre Journal* figures may be considered in comparison with figures to be found in the particulars of sale when the Sadler's Wells' lease was put up for auction in 1862. (The lease is dated 19 February, 1854.) The "Particulars" are reprinted in Appendix 1. They, too, enable some estimation of the state of the theatre in 1844. The lease figures estimate that the theatre could accommodate over two thousand people: the pit and the gallery respectively could each take a thousand people, the dress circle one hundred with another hundred and fifty in the upper circle boxes. In addition, there were six private boxes.

Two Ohio State University Doctoral Theses discuss the stage at Sadler's Wells: the first is John Charles Morrow's "The Staging of Pantomime at Sadler's Wells Theatre, 1828-1860" (1963) and the second Paul Jerold Bangham's "Samuel Phelps's Production of *Richard III*: an annotated promptbook" (1965). As both Morrow and Bangham point out, no ground plan of the Sadler's Wells Theatre stage is known to exist. However, with the details provided by sources such as Wilkinson and the particulars of sale, each provides a "conjectural" plan of the stage. What follows is an adaptation of both:



A conjectural plan of the Sadler's Wells Theatre stage showing (A) the grave trap, (B) corner traps and (D) a bridge

The 1862 particulars of sale give some idea of the theatre's stage equipment:

> Over the stage &c, are the upper and lower flies, carpenter's shop, and barrel loft; and conveniently disposed are the green room, painting room, music room, ladies' private dressing rooms, and general dressing rooms, and gentlemen's ditto ditto; private and general wardrobe rooms, property rooms, cellarage, and other conveniences.

Most scene changes involved wings, shutters and borders, although drops were used from time to time. Scenery was changed in full view of the audience at the command of bells and whistles. Scene changes were effected through the use of wings and

shutters (flats) and borders and drops. The shutters and wings moved laterally in grooves. The promptbooks indicate six grooves in which the wings and shutters are to stand. As early as *Richard III,* Phelps, influenced by Macready's production of *Macbeth,* made use of overlapping half flats positioned in different grooves to achieve a quasi-three-dimensional scene for the audience. Borders and drops were suspended from the flies and moved vertically. Phelps, in fact, was developing his productions in a theatre whose workings were still those of the provincial, Georgian playhouse in which he had built his reputation as an actor.

It is important to remember, too, that Phelps was also firmly entrenched in the repertory system of the Georgian playhouse with its traditional season, established holidays, multiple bills, and rotation of plays. In a thesis, "The evolution of the long run in the theatres of London, 1800-1870" (Ph.D thesis Indiana University, 1972), W. Craven Mackie argues that Phelps's management at the Wells represents the "last great stand for the repertory company" (81). The bill in the *Era* announcing *Richard III* as the performance for Easter Monday, 1849, for example, announces that *The Minister of Finance* is to be the afterpiece. The playbill, a copy of which is held in the Islington Local History Centre, promises a performance of Julien's *Drum Polka* before the afterpiece. On the opening night of *Timon of Athens* (15 Septenber 1851), a bill held in the V&A Sadler's Wells' performance files, reveals the afterpiece was a "Musical Farce", Charles Dibdin's *The Waterman*, a two-act comic opera first played at the Wells in 1830. As a consequence of the repertory system, there were no unusually long runs under his management and few instances of plays running for longer than twenty successive performances. Phelps seldom changed the bill daily but had a change of bill once or twice each week. In his eighteen seasons of management, there were only thirty instances of runs exceeding twenty successive performances.

Of these, eighteen were the Christmas pantomimes, and of the other twelve, two were *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with thirty-six successive performances and *Pericles* with forty-seven. By the time of the 1861 revival of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, he was beginning to subscribe to what Donahue (256) describes as a "new format" consisting of a short play (the 'curtain raiser') preceding the main event. A bill held in the ILHC for the week of 28 October 1861 contains the following "Notice":

> To meet the convenience (and frequently expressed desire) of many Patrons of the Establishment, the Manager has arranged the Performance of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" shall commence as nearly as possible to Eight o' Clock, the same being preceded by a short Comedietta, commencing at the usual hour.

The comedietta, *Who's my Husband*, was, presumably, to accommodate the dining habits of certain members of the audience.

In the opening chapter of *Changeable Scenery*, Richard Southern observes that the changing of scenes, "visible transformation as part of the spectacle," (17) was part of the show, an accepted convention. However, Southern goes on to note that what was still an accepted convention in the early part of the nineteenth century had disappeared by the century's end. With the possible exception of *Pericles*, the promptbooks reveal that with his concern for the harmony of his productions, Phelps's attitude to scene-changing also altered throughout his tenure at Sadler's Wells and to preserve dramatic illusion the distraction of such spectacle occurred less frequently. Reviewers of the show, for example, highlighted the seamlessness of scene-changes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Chapter V of *Survey* XLVI is devoted to Sadler's Wells theatre. It organises its account of the history of the evolution of the buildings on the site in sections, the first two of which, *The Origins of Sadler's Wells* and *Sadler's Music House* consider the years between 1684 and 1743 (*Survey* XLVII, 141-5). The opening sentences emphasise two difficulties confronting the researcher: "Despite Sadler's Wells' fame and long history, its origins and more particularly the identity of the eponymous founder, have long remained unclear. Lack of information has resulted in much speculation, not least with regard to Sadler's first name" (141). Variously referred to as Richard or Thomas, it transpires he was Edward.

A carefully-evidenced account of the origins of the theatre's physical surroundings is presented. The site was originally taken on a 35-year lease by Edward Sadler in 1671. The lease defines the site's boundaries - it was more than three times as long from east to west as it was deep and stretched from the New River Head to the Islington Road (renamed St. John Street Road in 1818). The west side of the acre "tapered" to align with a field path, the line of what was to become Arlington Street (*Survey* XLVII, 143). The site on which the building that was to become known as Sadler's Wells was originally erected was on part of the Clerkenwell land belonging to the Earl and Countess of Clarendon. Through a connection with Flower Bishop (Countess of Clarendon), the widow and heiress of Alderman Sir William Backhouse, the land came into the Lloyd family in a bequest to her godson, Chancellor William Lloyd. The Lloyd Baker estate played an important role in the topographical development of Clerkenwell.

Sadler enclosed his acre of land with a wall and built a "great brick messuage" within its bounds (141). Why would he, probably a vintner, invest in

such a lease? The answer is to be found in the topography of northern Clerkenwell. With the exception of its north-east corner, from its beginnings in the twelfth century, the *c.*350 acres of the parish of Clerkenwell developed two distinct identities. The lower-lying southern area near the City of London became the "nucleus of power, activity and population" (3). The higher ground in the north of the parish remained largely undeveloped until the end of the eighteenth century and the north-east corner is easily explained: despite its name, one side of Islington High Street fell within the parish of Clerkenwell and, as Islington was the first independent village north of London, it was a busy stopping point on the route linking Hertfordshire and the north with Smithfield market. A strip of inns and houses had been in existence there since the fifteenth century. Otherwise, northern Clerkenwell was, above all, "a playground" with "spas, wells and places of entertainment scattered about [its] northern slopes" (*Survey* XLVII, 2 &141). Culturally, that is, northern Clerkenwell was a resort around 1683, and certainly by 1684, a well had been discovered on Sadler's site. Thus, his great brick messuage, probably purpose-built as a music house, ended up as a feature of a spa, enabling him to advertise the beneficial medicinal effects of the chalybeate waters taken from the well with the addenda of various forms of entertainment. In procuring the lease of the one acre of land, Sadler may initially have intended to add to the pleasure gardens, spas, inns and taverns in and around northern Clerkenwell but the discovery of the well much improved his venture, apparently successfully, as the *Survey* refers to François Colsoni's *Le Guide de Londres Pour Les Étrangers* (1693) which endorsed the excellent waters to be enjoyed at Sadler's Wells in pretty surroundings. There is also an engaging description of the venue, apparently contributed by his brother, Arthur E. Wroth, in Warwick Wroth's *The London Pleasure Gardens of the Eighteenth Century*:

> [Sadler prepared] for the reception of the water-drinkers. He laid out his garden with flowers and shrubs, and constructed in the centre a marble basin to receive the medicinal water. Posturers, tumblers and rope-dancers, performing at first in the open air, were engaged. A Mrs. Pearson played on the dulcimer on summer evenings…and visitors danced to the strains of a band stationed on a rock of shell-work construction. (Wroth, 44)

However, entrance for the pleasure seekers cost only 3*d*: "[T]his modest entrance fee gives a flavour of the low ambitions of Sadler's Wells, as central London concert rooms at the time cost 2*s* 6*d*, and even suburban music houses charged a shilling " (*Survey* XLVII, 143), and, as I will argue, a reputation for "low ambitions" still hung around the frequenters of Sadler's Wells when Phelps and Mrs Warner assumed management of the theatre.

Before long, Sadler's Wells aficianados were being mercilessly mocked. The 3*d* entrance fee, for example, came into use as the alternative title for a satirical poem, *Islington Wells, or, The threepenny-academy,* written by Richard Ames. Dedicated to all "Pretty young girls…/Expos'd to an Auction as Matches for Men" (Epistle dedicatory), the verse is set out over 19 pages. The Wells' visitors Ames burlesques are a motley collection "Of either sex whole droves together/To see and to be seen flock thither/To drink (yet/and) not to drink the water/(But/And) here promiscuously (to/they) chatter" (3).

Pinks shows with an admixture of anecdote, excerpts from newspapers and journals and with a certain holier-than-thou relish that the Wells "continued to be a meeting place for low characters during many years" (Pinks, 414), perhaps a reflection of the fact that, topographically, the area was mixed in character. Among "an Elysium of grassy meadows above the city, dotted with bowling greens, spas and other places of refreshment" (*Survey* XLVII, 1) were rubbish dumps, brickworks and livestock pens. Something of southern Clerkenwell's increasingly dubious reputation hovered in and around the rubbish dumps and the livestock pens which catered for Smithfield

market and the area's reputation was hardly enhanced by Sadler's Wells notoriety, but still the theatre remained remote from the City of London's all-enveloping outward spread. There were to be no development opportunities in much of the "hundred acre bubble of land" surrounding the Wells until the installation of cast-iron water mains around the New River Company's reservoirs between 1810 and 1819 (1). These replaced the Company's wooden pipes which had taken the New River water to London but which ran on or near the surface of the grassy meadows of northern Clerkenwell, precluding any building. However, the cast iron pipes meant that the brickworks were put to use and building-over of the area took place in just two or three generations, with particular rapidity in the decade up to 1825.

How rapidly the grassy meadows disappeared is well illustrated in the second volume of Thomas Dibdin's *Reminiscences*:

> The house, in which I write this, is situated in a spacious square, the centre of which is ornamented by a superb specimen of architecture in the form of a handsome church. The site of the square and the church was, not five years since, an immense field, where people used to be stopped and robbed on their return in the evenings from Sadler's Wells…and the ground floor of the parlour where I sit was as nearly as possible the very spot where my wife and I fell over a recumbent cow on our way home, one night in a murky thunder storm, and only regained the solitary path we had strayed from in the dark, by the timely aid of a tremendous flash of lightning. (321-2)

Further contemporary comment emphasises the rapidity of the spread of building. In March 1841, *The Quarterly Review* (London) published the prospectus for a new work on London, to be edited by Charles Knight. It would advance an understanding of "modern" London by looking at the "Present through the Past and the Past through the Present" (117). Issued in weekly parts, its success was such that Knight edited the various parts into 6 volumes. The writer George Dodd (1808-1881) contributed the article on Clerkenwell in volume III:

> The parish of Clerkenwell was, two generations ago…separated very decidedly from the village of Islington, green fields and country paths forming

> the communication from one to the other. But now where are the fields or the paths? And where are the fields and gardens which, even fifteen or twenty years ago, lay at the north and west of the New River Head? (130)

Lying beyond the New River Company's wooden pipes was the estate of another major landowner in northern Clerkenwell. This was Henry Penton, one of whose estate boundaries stretched from the west side of Islington High Street to Maiden Lane. The land had a large frontage to that part of the New Road which ran from Paddington to the Angel, the principal inn in the strip mentioned above. The New Road was built in 1756 by Parliamentary decree, its official purpose to form a complete line of circumvallation along which troops could march into Essex to defend the coast from invasion, although, in fact, the road facilitated the filtering of traffic (particularly livestock driven by drovers from the West Country) through Clerkenwell to keep London's West End free of livestock.. The building of the road offered Penton an opportunity to develop the land. As the Parliamentary act required houses to be set well back from the road, the properties built along the boundary of the estate had fine views over the city and, with "fresh, breezy air," attracted the prosperous middle classes (*Survey* XLVII, 4). The first agreement to build on Penton's land was signed in 1764, but it was not until 1769 that the actual building began. Beginning as an anonymous offshoot of Islington, it did not become known as a distinct suburb, Pentonville, until the 1780s:

> By the 1790s Pentonville was a fully-fledged suburb with prosperous inhabitants…After 1815, as new streets filled the intervening ground south to old Clerkenwell…the name of Pentonville came to designate most of northern Clerkenwell. (4-5)

As a result, once the hundred acre bubble disappeared, there was little green space remaining in central Clerkenwell and very little further north. Some contemporary assessments of the district praised Clerkenwell's housing. In 1843, a report on the Borough of Finsbury was read on behalf of its Education Committee to

the Statistical Society of London. It noted : "[In] Clerkenwell... there are many miles of open well-ventilated streets containing exclusively small houses which look neat and comfortable; and a stranger is not struck by the appearance of extreme misery and wealth alternating with each other in close juxtaposition" (Report, 28-9). Such a benign assessment is explained by a correspondent to *The Builder*, ten years later. He writes that Clerkenwell "embraces in its higher portions…some of the most salubrious and pleasant squares and semi-suburban retreats that are to be found in the metropolis" (*The Builder*, 18 March 1853, 187). There was, however, to be a distinct difference in the type of development in Clerkenwell's topography. South of the breezy air of Pentonville, houses were built to accommodate local workers in the printing and brewing trades, and in watch and clock manufacture. Most were small, three-storey terrace-houses with basements, two rooms deep with side passage entrances. Many were in multi-occupation (*Survey* XLVI, 342). Between 1801 and 1830, the parish's population grew by almost 60% from 23,396 to 39,105 and by 1851 the total was 64,778. Speculators over-developed any available space in south Clerkenwell by building two-room houses in the gaps between streets (back-building). 846 houses were built in Clerkenwell in the first decade of the nineteenth century and a high proportion of them were back-built, leading to the over-crowded slums of the 1860s with the concomitant juxtapositioning if not of extreme misery and wealth, then certainly of respectability and deprivation.

Before turning to the demography of Phelps's catchment area, it is important to emphasise its topographical diversity. Although, as is argued convincingly in *Survey* XLVII (10), Pentonville was too far east to be "properly fashionable," it had solid middle-class beginnings with many professionals among the first inhabitants of its new houses. Alongside such residents, were the artisans living, and working, in

terraced houses noted. But as Pentonville, and the north-east corner of Clerkenwell, became indistinct from Islington, money began to move away from this part of the district and several of the solid middle-class houses became business premises.

PROMPTBOOKS, INTERLEAVES AND PLAYBILLS

PROMPTBOOKS

Promptbooks are tricky, secretive, stubborn informants.
(Charles H. Shattuck, 1964)

Among the most precious theatrical raw materials.
(Edward A. Langhans, 1981)

Since my research of Samuel Phelps's Shakespearean productions at Sadler's Wells began, in 2011, Adam Matthew Digital has launched its *Shakespeare in Performance* platform (http://www.shakespeareinperformance.amdigital.co.uk). Its principal asset is the Folger Shakespeare Library's collection of promptbooks, along with certain ephemera, correspondence, illustrations and drawings, photographs and music scores. It is an immensely helpful, easily searchable resource with documents indexed not only by play but also by date, country of performance, theatre and by associated names. Not the least of its useful functions the ability to explore two promptbooks side-by-side. There is a note attached to the details of each promptbook which points out that the some of its metadata have been drawn from the Folger Library's online catalogue and from Charles H. Shattuck's *The Shakespeare Promptbooks*: *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1965).

I have found Hamnet, the Folger Library's online catalogue, another helpful resource as there, there is fuller detail about the provenance of each promptbook. For example, the Folger call number for the promptbook for

Phelps's 1845 production of *Richard* III is Rich. III.24. The database "description" of the book reads: "Complete promptbook done under the direction of W.C. Williams, Samuel Phelps's prompter, includes cast list for 1845; the "Edition" entry" is given simply as "Works, Vol IX'. The *Hamnet* catalogue, on the other hand, records the promptbook is derived from the Manley Wood edition of the *Complete Works*, lists the pages used and where the interleaves appear. It is also more informative in its description: "Ms note on p.159: 'Marked under the direction of W.C. Williams T.R. Sadler's Wells for S. Phelps Esqre.'/Corrections and additions by Phelps and Williams/Manuscript cast list for Sadler's Wells, March 1845./Contains 10 ink-wash drawings of scenes./Half-title page .present./Bookplate of Harry Plowman.' Used in conjunction, *Hamnet* and the *Shakespeare n Performance* platform are a formidable resource.

There is a heading, "Cited in", in the *Hamnet* catalogue entry for Phelps's 1845 *Richard III* promptbook. The information recorded there is "Shattuck. RIII. 25". Although published nearly sixty years ago, Shattuck's *The Shakespeare Promptbooks*: *A Descriptive Catalogue* (1965) is still an indispensable resource. In the Introduction to the *Catalogue*, Shattuck emphasises (3) that he has interpreted the word "promptbook" loosely as he has described all those marked copies of Shakespeare used in English-language professional theatre productions held in public collections and in the production departments of the late Old Vic and the Festival Theatres at the three Stratfords. The plays are entered alphabetically with the documents for each play entered in chronological order. They are numbered, and indexed, serially and described in four "lines". Matters of provenance are identified in lines one and two: any one of the actor, director, prompter, stage manager, city, theatre with whom Shattuck has associated the

book in line one and the library or collection where the book is to be found in line two. The third line gives details of the physical makeup of the book, "generally a 'home-made' object" (7). The fourth line principally deals with the kind of book Shattuck is describing: for example whether it is a promptbook or a preparation copy. Whether cuts, alterations, restorations, calls, and stage business are marked in the book is also identified in this line.

It will bcome apparent that Shattuck's catalogue has been my starting point for each of the four productions considered in the next chapters not least because books other than those in the Folger associated with Phelps are identified. In the register of libraries and collections with promptbook holdings (24-29), for example, the entry for the library in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust reads: "The best collection of nineteenth-century promptbooks in England, many of them from the library of the actor William Creswick." Creswick's promptbooks for *Richard III* and *Timon of Athens* have been valuable additions to those to be found in the Folger.

INTERLEAVES

Interleaving was extremely common throughout the nineteenth century
(Charles H Shattuck, 1964)

Three of the four promptbooks considered in the following chapters, *Pericles* being the exception, are "home-made" in that they use sheets from a complete *Works* interleaved with sheets to provide space for prompter's markings. I am indebted to the late Betsy Walsh, erstwhile Head of Reader Services at the Folger, for a detailed explanation of interleaving in the prompt copy Phelps used for the 1845 production of *Richard III*: "It appears that pages 7 -

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159 were removed from the *Works*. Rather than being cut out, it looks as if the original volume was taken apart - since the conjugate leaves are still attached as they would have been at the time of printing. They were then interleaved and restitched into what are now very worn and faded yellow and green marble boards. The inserted leaves appear to be wrapped around the printed sheets" (e-mail, 21 May 2014). The method used for *Richard III* holds good for *Timon* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* The *Pericles* promptbook replaces interleaving by cutting out and pasting sections of printed text (edition unidentified) into 5 booklets of heavy brown paper, at the time, an innovative procedure.

PLAYBILLS

Devised/and play'd to take spectators
(*The Winter's Tale*, III.ii.36-37)

Theatres communicate continually with the theatregoing public,
by anticipating its aesthetic tastes, estimating its size and moods.
(Christopher B. Balme, 2010)

In an essay, "Playbills and the Theatrical Public Sphere," from which the epigraph above is taken, Christopher Balme distinguishes audiences, spectators and the public. In particular, his argument revolves around concepts that modulate the relationship between theatres and their publics:

> For almost the entire history of theatre from the invention of printing until the end of the nineteenth century the playbill constituted a central point of articulation between theatres and their public spheres. (39)

His discussion on playbills proceeds in a series of three interlocking steps. I follow these steps in my consideration of the Phelps/Warner prospectus for their management, a document designed to lure spectators, and then in an examination of a playbill for Phelps's production of R.H. Horne's adaptation of John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*. Balme's first step focuses on what is meant by the public: "an

entity located sometimes inside, sometimes outside the theatre". The second step is a discussion of what is meant by the theatrical public sphere; and the third is an analysis of a series of playbills in terms of how they communicate with the public sphere.

Before the beginning of the Phelps/Warner management, a handbill was distributed around the environs of the theatre to announce the new administration:

> Mrs. Warner and Mr. Phelps, of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, Covent Garden and the Haymarket, present their respectful compliments, and request attention to the following outlines of a plan which they trust will not be without interest for the respectable inhabitants of this neighbourhood.
> Mrs. Warner and Mr. Phelps embarked their exertions in the management and performances of Sadler's Wells Theatre, in the hope of constantly rendering it what a Theatre ought to be; a place for justly representing the works of our great dramatic poets. This undertaking is commenced at a time when the stages which have exclusively been called "Patent" are closed, or devoted from very different objects from that of presenting the real drama of England, and when the law has placed all theatres upon an equal footing of security and responsibility, leaving no difference, except in the objects and conduct of managements.
> These circumstances justify the notion that each separate division of an immense metropolis, with its 2,000,000 of inhabitants, may have its own well-conducted theatre within a reasonable distance of the homes of patrons.
> For the North of London, they offer an entertainment selected from the first stock of drama in the world, reinforced by such novelties as can be produced by diligence and liberality, intending that the quality of their novelties shall consistently improve as time will be gained to procure and prepare them; and a Company of acknowledged relent, playing such characters as they must be called upon to sustain at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, were these houses now devoted to the drama. These attractions are placed in a theatre where all can see and hear, and at a price within the habitual means of all.
> They commence under the disadvantage of very short preparation, and they are aware that some errors and deficiencies are quite inseparable from such a circumstance. They trust that their names are a sufficient guarantee for the honest endeavour to deserve public patronage, and they promise that the trust of the Public and its encouragement shall be met by constant zeal and liberality, increasing constantly with the means of shewing it. They will endeavour to confirm what may be found satisfactory, remove what may at first be deficient and above all exalt the entertainments, and with them the tastes of the audiences.
> They feel assured that such an endeavour is not unworthy of the kind encouragement of the more highly educated and influential classes. There may be differences of opinion as to the existence of Theatres altogether; there can be none as to the truth that if theatres are to exist, they should aim at the highest possible refinement, and produce the most intellectual class of enjoyment which their audiences can receive.

> They intend to continue their attempt as long as they can feel reasonable hope of making Sadler's Wells Theatre the resort of the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood, for the highest purpose of theatrical entertainment. Any Patron with whom this Circular is left, will on sending an address card to the Box Office, have an admission for One forwarded, as it is the wish of the management, and their motive for this departure from their otherwise strict system of giving no Orders, to afford to those who may take an interest in their plan an opportunity of judging for themselves, and to speak of the undertaking as they may think it deserves. (A copy of the handbill preserved in the Harvard Theatre Collection.)

As Balme observes, the public is a "potential audience to be realized rather than an actualized one" (41). The public addressed in the prospectus is limited, specifically, to the inhabitants of a single neighbourhood, then further restricted to the "respectable" inhabitants of the neighbourhood. As established above, the demographic profile presents a potential audience of skilled male artisans and female domestic servants but, the reputation of the Wells' audience when Phelps and Mrs Warner undertook the management of the theatre was that it was somewhere between unpredictable and disreputable. There is a tension in the prospectus between the ideal potential audience and a concomitant sense of unease about that as a reality. The communication is cautious and there is discernible uncertainty of success in the undertaking, emphasised in the repetition of its plea to the public later in the bill for "encouragement" in the plan presented to it.

Balme argues persuasively that focusing on the public, rather than, say, the spectator or the audience requires a shift in historiographical attention to the theatrical institution. He defines (39) an institution as a complex of norms regulating social action which invariably operates on the basis of law and which impacts collectivities as much as individuals. A perspective that focuses on the continuity (and occasional discontinuity) of the institution, in his view, remains crucial for understanding the relationship between the playbill and the theatrical public sphere. The prospectus anticipates this focus. The second and third paragraphs of the prospectus deal

specifically with the concept of what a theatre ought to be as an institution and how it may impact on the collectivity that is represented in each separate division of London. It departs from what Downer (7) labelled "Managerial English," and discusses the position of theatre *per se* within society, in effect Balme's conceptual entity. This informs each stage of the management's credo and, although lacking in specifics, within the rhetoric promoting the intended theatrical model, Phelps's conviction of the theatre as a force for good may be seen.

That the Phelps/Warner prospectus is a combination of intentions and agendas, literary, theatrical and commercial is clearly summarised in the penultimate paragraph of the document: the aspiration is to make the theatrical public sphere "the resort of the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood, for the highest purpose of theatrical entertainment," although, again, there is a discernible tension in the phrase, "well-conducted". There is also an acknowledgement of the contemporary discontinuity in the theatrical public sphere as all theatres within the sphere were now on an equal footing with the passing of the Theatres Act (1843).

Balme further argues that the theatrical public sphere must be understood as the interaction of three mutually dependent categories: first, in Habermas's concept of a particular space with its distiction between public and private spheres; second as a conceptual entity with a history and discrete semantic dimensions; a diachronic dimension traceable developmentally, and a synchronic dimension as the theatrical public sphere is subject to social differentiation. Third, it is important to understand the public sphere as a "*relational object*" (44) [original emphasis], something which may be influenced:

> The spatial concept of a realm of theatrical interaction that ultimately becomes so palpable that it functions as an extension of the institution.

On an operational level the theatrical public sphere has two distinct realms: institutional communication strategies, and debates surrounding particular productions. As will be discussed in the chapters which follow, in one part of Phelps's audience, it is the debate surrounding certain productions that dominates the Sadler's Wells public sphere during Phelps's management.

The Phelps/Warner bill, of course, belongs to the realm of institutional communication strategies. Its linguistic domain is advertising, and, in parts, its prose is typical of managerial announcements at the time, with promises of entertainment to be selected from the "first stock of drama in the world," reinforced by the additional prospect of new drama. All this is to be undertaken by a company of "acknowledged relent" playing such parts as they would have been expected to sustain at the erstwhile patent houses. As Mary Luckhurst observes (45), commercial success dominated nineteenth-century managerial strategies and the Phelps/Warner pitch for an audience shows acute awareness of the importance of full houses. Further communication strategies are employed. The admission charges are to be within the "habitual means" of all in the neighbourhood and the final paragraph offers free admission on the presentation of an address card.

When he moves to the third step of his discussion, "The Playbill and the Theatrical Public Sphere" (46), Balme identifies playbills as belonging to a special group of theatre-historical documents which are extensively used but under-researched as a discrete category of archival source material. He refers to Marvin Carlson's comments on the lack of methadological and historical perspective on playbills. He presents a brief chronology based on the archive and notes Tiffany Stern's seminal essay (2006) on the ubiquity of playbills in the Elizabethan period ("On each Wall / And Corner Poast': Playbills, Title-pages and Advertising in

Early Modern London") and, in a note, refers to David Gowan's unpublished D.Phil. thesis, (University of Oxford, 1998), "Studies in the history and function of the British theatre playbill and programme, 1564-1914," a copy of which I have. Research, Balme argues, may be divided into a hunter-gatherer approach or the attempt to theorise the medium itself. Here he refers to Jacky Bratton's *New Readings in Theatre History*, in particular her discussion on the reading of playbills. Bratton makes the point that playbills have usually been treated as a source of factual information but that the part they play in the dramatic experience has not been recognized: "My contention is that in the playbill we have not only evidence for what was performed by whom and when, but also for those most difficult and evanescent aspects of theatre history – the expectations and disposition of the audience" (39).

It is when Balme moves to a consideration of playbills' role in understanding the role of the theatre in the public sphere, that I find his argument compelling. In the nineteenth century, the bills are still part of the public space in any community and thus vie for attention with other documents. Although the Phelps/Warner bill discussed above started as a hand bill, it was eventually printed on the playbills well into the management's first season, certainly an indication of managerial expectation. Typically, it used what Balme (49) describes as formulaic pronouncements of authority. Thus, the identification of Phelps and Mrs Warner with the Theatres Royal for example, sounds quasi-official and appears to offer an authoritative credibility to the plan they are to present to the addressees. Phelps and Mrs Warner, in 1844 perhaps particularly the latter, who had flourished in Macready's companies, were established names in the theatre. This was a showcase enticement, a "sufficient guarantee...to deserve public patronage". At the time, the theatrical reputation of players may have been forged in the provinces but it was established in the West–end

Patent theatres, hence the reiteration of the management's connection to Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Beneath the ostensible flattery of addressing the respectable inhabitants of the neighbourhood, the repetition of the stem "respect" in "respectful" and "respectable" reinforces the standards of behaviour expected from the putative spectators.

Although the Shakespearean canon was to be Phelps's principal "stock-in-trade," he also offered his audiences other plays from the legitimate repertoire and I aim to concentrate on one of these, the playbill for *The Duchess of Malfi*, which had been neither performed, nor adapted, for the stage for almost 150 years. A bill for the play is held in the Sadler's Wells Performance File for 1850 in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre Collection. It is a good example not only of a paratextual source of information which provides an explicit body of information about the event, but also a resource in which there are elements to be read as signifiers of the concept underlying the production and, moreover, a good example of what happens when, in Balme's terminology, an institutional communication cites commentary for publicity purposes and, in so doing, enters the theatrical public sphere.

Formally, the bill is a fragile broadside, approximately 26 cm wide and 54 cm long. Typical of its kind at this time, it makes use of bold and striking print with *where* to see *what*, the name of the theatre, the title of the mainpiece and the title of the afterpiece, standing out in relief against the other elements on the bill. This information is, of course, part of the basic ingredients of any playbill, that "small core of essential information, specifying the performance venue, the date of the event, the title of the entertainment and the identity of its exponents [that] has prevailed on bills of the play throughout their printed history" (Gowan, 13). On this bill, issued for performances on 20, 21, 22 and 23 November, 1850, the dates are distinguished in

italicised fonts immediately below the management details. The time of the performance appears in a section at the foot of the bill beneath the emboldened, capitalised seat prices, always a component of a Phelps/Greenwood bill. The reduction in scale in the illustration of the bill emphasises the prominence of admission prices. The extra space between each category which is the result of justifying the text within the print margins means the respective price of each tier of seats stands out above the density of the closely printed practical information beneath. The fact that the time at which the doors will be opened ("half-past Six") and when the performance is to start ("Seven o'clock") is regularly printed rather than emboldened suggests these were the usual times for the First Price public. Second Price appears to be discouraged: "Half price to boxes only, at Nine o'clock" appears emboldened on a line of its own between the seat prices and the box office arrangements. In her discussion of an earlier Haymarket play bill (dated 12 July1830) Jacky Bratton, who argues (45) that the Haymarket theatre served the leisured classes, posits that the price of a ticket, which did not appear on their bills, was not important to the Haymarket public. The emphasis on the pricing structure on Sadler's Wells bills clearly conflates entertainment and remuneration. Leisure has a price, albeit a moderate price.

Thus far, then, the bill may be read simply as a source of extractable information. It belongs to the realm of institutional communication. The venue, the date, the title of the entertainment are presented conservatively with no recourse, for example, to the self-conscious sensation-hunger of the woodcut illustrations, pointing fingers and over-use of exclamation marks of the pre-Phelps era. The cast lists have some indication (in parenthesis), to be read pre-performance, of the relationship between the parts. In an article in *Tatler* in September 1830, attacking *The Theatrical*

Examiner and the *Theatrical Observer and Daily Bills of the Play*, Leigh Hunt made several observations, still relevant twenty years later, on the role of the playbill in the theatre. Hunt's trope personifies playbills as "companions" to the theatre. (*Tatler*, 17 September 1830, p.45). They are there to be read but also to assist in a reading of and as an orientation for the performance, particularly necessary in *Malfi*'s case as, as noted, the play had neither been performed nor adapted for the stage for over a century. To a patron unfamiliar with Webster's text, the parenthesized textual commentary on the *dramatis personae* would fill up what Carol Rutter has described as the "liminal space" between playgoers and play. However, to a playgoer who was familiar with Webster's text, the cast list draws attention to the straplines above and below the bill's title. This is not simply the "Tragedy, in Five Acts, by John Webster (1612)" [*sic*] but a reconstruction for "Stage Representation" by R. H. Horne."

Between the title of the play and the *Malfi* cast list, three quotations which occupy a significant proportion of the text on the bill are printed:

> "The Duchess of Malfi is distinguished by the same kind of beauties as the Author's *Vittoria Corombona and* clad in the same terrors. This is not the bandying of idle words and rhetorical common-places, but the writhing and conflict, and the sublime colloquy of man's nature with itself." *Hazlitt*
>
> "He (John Webster) had no pretensions to the inexhaustible wit of Shakespeare, but he had the power of approaching the terrible energy of his passion, and the profoundness of his pathos, in characters which he took out of the great muster-roll of humanity and placed in fearful situations." *Charles Knight*
>
> "To move a horror skilfully – to touch a soul to the quick – to lay upon fear as much as it can bear – to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then step in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit – this, only a Webster can do." *Charles Lamb*

What purpose did the quotations serve? Was it to provide the spectators with "anticipatory suggestions" to encourage what Kathleen McLuskie and Jennifer Uglow (24) in their introduction to the *Plays in Performance* edition of the play refer to as

"the way towards acceptance" of Webster's drama? Lamb, who included six scenes from *Malfi* in what Leah Marcus (97) describes as his "canon-making" *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, expressed strong enthusiasm for Webster's work. But even more important in "re-instating the dramatist in the public mind" (Moore, 13) were Hazlitt's "Lectures Chiefly on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth" (1820) delivered at the Surrey institution in which he specifically compares Webster with Shakespeare. Whatever the motive, at the operational level, the quotations on the playbill led to critical debate in contemporary newspaper and journalistic reviews.

Enough of Webster remained in Horne's adaptation to allow critics to join the debate but as McLuskie and Uglow observe the spectators "confounded" the pessimism of the critics, in effect instituting a debate between audiences, a debate which was to resurface at various times throughout Phelps's management.

The prospectus states, the "stages which have exclusively been called 'Patent' are closed, or devoted from very different objects from that of presenting the *real drama* of England". [my italics] That is, performers' reputations were validated by theatres whose reputations were in decline. As Joseph Donahue observes, "Although Drury Lane and Covent Garden had cultivated a cachet to which other theatres could not pretend, both had invested heavily in melodrama, now the lingua franca of dramatic fare." Sadler's Wells, of course, was associated with melodrama, a reputation the new management hoped to temper. They anticipate Sadler's Wells as the refuge of the "real drama"; law has demolished the exclusivity of the Patent theatres but the traditional Patent-company cultural status may devolve to Sadler's Wells. The theatre will protect the "real drama" of England now abandoned by the erstwhile Patent houses. And, as noted, this upmarket fare is to be offered at reasonable prices.

Phelps's advocacy of reasonable admission prices within reach of all was to be echoed by Effingham Wilson four years later in point 3 of his "Proposition for a National Theatre" (28): "That the said theatre should be opened at such reasonable charges as shall be within the reach of all." But Phelps goes further than this. Somewhat disingenuously, he makes a virtue of Sadler's Wells huge pit emphasising the management is offering an auditorium where "all can see and hear". This strengthens the message of the third paragraph of the prospectus that each district within the metropolis of London deserved a theatre with a distinct local identity: "each separate division...may have its own well-conducted theatre within a reasonable distance of the homes of its patrons". Theatre, that is, may occupy a central position in society. The prospectus returns to this concept again in the final paragraphs. That the management will be influenced by public taste is made clear. What is found to be satisfactory will be repeated and the unsatisfactory removed. However, the assurance is qualified: the management reveals a pedagogic purpose. It intends to "exalt" the taste of the audience by elevating the standard of what is on offer. The theatre is to occupy a central position in the social and intellectual advancement of society. "There may be differences of opinion about the existence of Theatres all together; there can be none as to the truth that if theatres are to exist, they should aim at the highest possible refinement, and produce the most intellectual class of enjoyment which their audiences can receive."

In *Church and Stage in Victorian England*, Richard Foulkes argues Phelps's advocacy of the principle of neighbourhood theatres was comparable to the programme of church-building undertaken by an opponent to the spread of theatres, Bishop Blomfield. However, Blomfield was succeeded by Archbishop Tait who did endorse theatre as a force for good. Foulkes quotes figures noted by Archbishop Tait

in his list of the new churches consecrated by Bloomfield in the London diocese. 10 of these churches were in Islington, 9 of them serving a combined population of 92,000 with a total "Largest average Adult congregation[s]" of 8,550 and 4,098 "Children in Day Schools":

> The capacity of Sadler's Wells at that time was 2,600…crowded houses were reported from the beginning of Phelps's management and could have amounted to over 15,000 at six performances a week…Sadler's Wells weekly attendances were in all probability almost double those of the of the 'Largest average Adult congregation[s]' listed by Tait. (qtd. in Foulkes, "Church", 86)

May Phelps and Forbes-Robertson give an account of a meeting between Phelps and the Archbishop during which "as a Prelate of the Church, [Dr Tait] took [the] opportunity of thanking [Phelps] for all the good he was doing, especially among the masses: more good, in his opinion…than all the clergymen in the North of London put together" (*The Life*, 14).

The question remains, was this "good" intentional or incidental?

OUR WORKING CLASSES

> It is appropriate that a social history should begin with demography. There is a rough logic in considering first the details of population, for in a fundamental sense they determine all else. (J. F. C. Harrison, 1988)

Among the Lord Chamberlain's papers held in the National Archives, there is a letter, dated 8 September 1843, from Thomas Greenwood, then the sole lessee of Sadler's Wells Theatre (Lord Chamberlain's Papers, LC7/5). After the passing of the Theatre Regulation Act (Act 6 and 7 Victoria, cap.68), the so-called "illegitimate" theatres were brought under the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction. Information on the statistics of the London metropolitan and suburban theatres was then compiled from requests sent from his office to the Managers of the Victoria, the City, the Queen's, the Royal Pavilion, the Garrick and Sadler's Wells. Greenwood's letter provides an incomplete description of the putative audience to be expected at the theatre. He

submitted that the Wells audience came from tradespeople in the neighbourhood: brickmakers, mechanics, watchmakers. Greenwood clearly identified his audience with trade although the watchmakers might not be sanguine about being lumped in with the brickmakers.

Clerkenwell was well-known in the nineteenth century for its watchmakers. The Report of the Education Committee of the Statistical Society of London referred to above also has the following comment:

> Clerkenwell is known as being the principal place in England for the manufacture of watches and jewellery. In looking over the census lists of this district, it would appear that every other male returns himself as jeweller or watchmaker, or as belonging to some of the numerous sub-divisions of the latter trade. (28)

Two years before Greenwood's submission, the first of the three decennial censuses pertinent to Phelps's management of Sadler's Wells took place. The theatre stood within the parish of St James, Clerkenwell, one of the Inner Parishes of the Finsbury Division of the Ossulstone Hundred. Finsbury was one of the metropolitan boroughs created under the 1832 Reform Act.

Although the theatre belonged administratively to Clerkenwell, it was often associated with Islington – partly perhaps because it was in the north of Clerkenwell, near the boundary with Islington and partly perhaps because Phelps lived in Islington.

If a census may be defined as "a survey conducted on [a] full set of observation objects belonging to a given population or universe,"[ii] then the 1841 Census may be considered the first modern UK Census. However, its observation objects were limited to household addresses and the names, ages (usually rounded down to the nearest 5 years in those over 15) sex, occupation and places of birth of each individual residing at the address at the time the census schedules were completed. Furthermore, there is a fundamental problem with the 1841 Census Abstracts: what is recorded in the

abstracts is not consistent. Whereas the Enumeration Abstract records the population figures for the various parishes and places within the Finsbury division, the Occupation Abstract does not follow suit. So it is possible, for example, to note that that in 1841 the Finsbury Division had a population of 185,174 of whom 56,756 lived in Clerkenwell and 55,720 lived in Islington but impossible to deduce how many of 181 men over the age of 20 returned as accountants in the Finsbury Division lived in Islington. The Abstract does present Clerkenwell discretely – for example, it tells us that there were 42 accountants over the age of 20 in Clerkenwell. To test Greenwood's assessment, therefore, I may only refer to the 1841 Occupation Abstract for Clerkenwell, noting, where appropriate, the figures for the Finsbury Division as a whole. The census Occupation Abstracts for 1851 and 1861 do, however, present figures for Islington.

The 1841 Census saw an attempt by the Census Commissioners to introduce a classificatory scheme – grouping all people (excluding the unoccupied, non-working wives and children) into twelve groups. However, the scheme was crude not least because of the arbitrary nature of some of the classifications. For example, it included a 'labouring class' which amalgamated miners, charwomen, coachmen and fisherwomen - and the classification was deemed not fit for use in the census reports and abstracts. The 1841 Enumeration Abstract data were arranged in columns under various heads: the area of the district under consideration; the number of houses both occupied, unoccupied and under construction; the number of persons enumerated; the ages of each sex above and below 20; the birthplace of each person recorded whether locally or elsewhere. As noted above, the Finsbury Division of the Ossulstone Hundred had a population of 185,174 people, the majority of whom (61%) lived in the Inner Parishes of Clerkenwell and Islington. 76,891 of the population were over

20, and 108,283 were under 20. Females (99,177) outnumber males (85,997), a fact to be of importance to Phelps. 65% of the population of Finsbury had been born in the county of Middlesex. Thus, for most of them the Sadler's Wells building would have been a familiar landmark.

The classification scheme, as Matthew Woolard notes in "The Classification of Occupations in the 1881 Census of England and Wales" (Historical Censuses and Social Surveys Group, Department of History, University of Essex), recorded occupational data from the census which were reported in tables of 877, the occupations listed alphabetically. The 1841 Census Occupation Abstract records there were 13,393 men over the age of 20 and 1,741 men under the age of 20 in employment in Clerkenwell at that time. The 1841 tables present groupings of the under-20s for its occupational titles but later censuses only present statistics for the over-20s. Therefore, for comparative purposes, the figures which follow are for males over 20. The Clerkenwell male population does not feature in each of 877 occupations listed and, in some occupations, numbers are limited. The legal and medical professions are poorly represented, for example, but tradesmen such as bakers (216) and butchers (283) are adequately well represented although eclipsed by the boot and shoe makers (508) and tailors and breeches makers (412). Other trades with notable numbers are the cabinet makers and upholsterers (311), and carpenters and joiners (483). Also numerically significant are the 312 in domestic service and the 246 porters, messengers and errand boys. The Abstract has no such category as "mechanic" and Greenwood's brickmakers number only 167. A large number of workers in Clerkenwell were employed in the clock and watchmaking trade, closely followed by the jewellers, goldsmiths and silversmiths with 743 and 611 men recorded respectively. However, the Abstract reveals two conspicuous absences from

Greenwood's submissions: the first is that he makes no mention of women. There are 11,209 women over 20 in a category simply designated Residue of Population and 1,082 women over 20 returned as of Independent Means – again women outnumber men as opposed to only 590 men in the same category. Of the 6,166 women in employment in Clerkenwell, 611 are Dressmakers and Milliners, 395 are Laundry-keepers, Washers and Manglers (1,981) but over half (3,922) are employed as Domestic Servants – of whom 1,941 are under 20. As mentioned above, women were a significant part of Phelps's audience. Greenwood's second omission is the 902 men recorded as clerks.

The demographic profile of Clerkenwell in 1841, then, proffers a somewhat wider mix of potential spectators than Greenwood's mechanics, brickmakers and watchmakers because it includes people in trade and service, with a preponderance of women and younger people. The Education Committee report draws attention to a "peculiarity" of Clerkenwell which distinguishes it from other parts of the metropolis:

> The cause of this peculiarity is to be found in the nature of the manufacture [of watches and jewellery], which requires no machinery or large buildings, but is carried out by the workmen at their own residences.

The Survey notes that, however employed, the more prosperous residents of Pentonville frequently worked from their homes. (It argues this may have been anticipated by the developers as the area has little of the domestic stabling that commuters would have needed.) I am interested in the argument that there was a "gradual northwards migration of Clerkenwell's specialist skills" as it goes some considerable way to explain Phelps's claim in the Mansion House speech that he had "fresh" audiences every five or six years:

> [A]rtists and engravers spread on to new streets in the nineteenth century…metal-based trades also expanded northwards …and domestic industry continued to be the norm…By the 1840s watchmaking was well established on Exmouth Market and Pentonville Road…and it was dominant

> around Northampton Square…Artificial flower making was widespread, and especially concentrated at Wilmington Square from the 1850s, largely in the hands of French and German immigrants. (*Survey* XLVII, 11)

What of the class and relative prosperity of the local audiences available to Phelps?

It is interesting to note that the attempt at a classificatory system mentioned above, intended to underpin the census, aimed simply to group occupations together. It did not, as was to be the purpose in the 1851 Census' Occupational Abstract, attempt a hierarchy of occupations with a clear acceptance of social and educational status expressed as 'class'. But the referent "persons" in the 1841 classification, for example, (i) Persons engaged in Commerce, Trade and Manufacture, (vi) Professional Persons and (xi) Persons returned as independent other educated persons," approach what David Cannadine in his study, *Class in Britain*, foregrounds (3) as one element of the double identity Marx discerned in class: class 'in itself'. Class 'in itself' is no more (and no less) than an objective social category which groups individuals together on the basis of their shared economic characteristics: the source of their income, the extent of their wealth and the nature of their occupation. To trace whether the profile changes significantly during Phelps's management, I intend an overview of both the Occupation Abstracts for 1851 and 1861. For ease of reference, at the end of this section, I insert a table showing three classes from the abstracts - clock and watchmakers, the clerks and those of independent means expressed as a percentage of the total workforce.

Cannadine addresses the question of how, historically, Britons saw and understood the "manifestly unequal" society in which they lived largely in terms of three basic and enduring models: the hierarchical view of society with society as a seamless web; the triadic view of society with upper, middle and lower collective groups; and the dichotomous adversarial view where society is separated between 'us'

and ‘them’ or, of course, ‘them’ and ‘us’. Phelps’s critic and supporter, Henry Morley, tended towards the triadic view with his patrician *de haut en bas* critique of “our working classes”. Yet, his lofty, arguably patronising, description of Phelps’s audience has also something of the hierarchical view because of the possessive adjective. In addition, Morley saw the audience as the working classes, a clear recognition that there was not one single working class. In his consideration of how social order was described, debated and discussed in the nineteenth century, Cannadine is at pains to emphasise that, whichever model was being used, most people who resorted to the language of class did so in the plural:

> ‘middle ranks’, ‘middling sorts’, ‘middle orders’ and ‘middle classes’ were regularly interchanged, as were ‘working classes’, ‘lower orders’, ‘productive classes’ and ‘industrious classes’. Even as they divided their society into…large collective groups, few Britons believed there was one single middle class or one single working class, and they were right to be thus incredulous. (60)

So, in 1841 would Sadler’s Wells’ spectators have been correctly identified as working-class based on the profile established from the census? Probably not. In a quest for an interpretation of working-class suited to his purpose, Andrew Murphy (“Working”, 9) quotes two definitions offered by Victorian writers, the first from Thomas Wright who proposed that working-class meant those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brows, while the second was that of J. M. Ludlow and Lloyd Jones who understood the term to mean those who chiefly undertake manual work for a wage which maintains them, as distinct from the poor who may work but do not earn enough for their own maintenance. Manual labour seems to be the determining factor: so no matter how skilled the artisanal watchmaker, he would be lumped in with the semi-skilled and the unskilled because he (and by far the greater number returned were men with only 24 women recorded as clock and watchmakers) worked with his hands. The clerks, however, belonged to the middle classes, no matter

whether they might earn less than the skilled artisans. So, Morley's working classes may well have been in the Sadler's Wells auditorium but so too may the middle classes, albeit some at the lower level of that classification. My argument is that to associate the spectators for the most part with the working classes both in the years before and during Phelps's management offers a skewed view of the audience and, just as contemporaries used the plural in their description of classes, a more nuanced and balanced view emerges if the theatre's spectators are considered in the plural number: Sadler's Wells' socially varied and variable audiences, not the Sadler's Wells audience. This, in turn, has implications in any consideration of the impact of Phelps's productions on the taste and behaviours of his spectators.

What of the other element resurrected by Cannadine, in the double identity Marx discerned in class? Class 'in itself' is inextricably linked with class 'for itself', class as a subjective social formation with a shared identity, collective history, group trajectory and common objectives. Class 'in itself' may be posited from census data but the class consciousness, arising from a shared process of self-realisation and self-discovery which, Marx believed, would inevitably lead to conflict between the classes is something that is more difficult to pin down. Stretching back to the fourteenth century, Clerkenwell had strong radical roots and Clerkenwell Green was often a site of political protest. A year before Greenwood's submission to the Lord Chamberlain, *The Times* reported a great Chartist meeting on Clerkenwell Green on 17 August (18 August 1842, p.6). Among the considerable crowd gathered were a number of women and children. Another, even bigger, meeting was scheduled for the next day but it was prevented by the police who blocked all entrances to the square – all the streets were crowded with much "sullen displeasure" expressed when the crowds realised they could not access the Green (*Times*, 20 August 1842, p.6). In the next year, four

months before the passing of the Theatres Act which enabled Phelps and Mrs Warner to embark on the stage management of the Wells, *The Morning Chronicle* trumpeted, "National anti-Corn Law League. Great Demonstration against the Corn-Laws at Sadler's Wells Theatre". At the "very overcrowded and enthusiastic meeting," the absence of one of the local MPs for the Finsbury Borough was met with a "storm of hisses and great disapprobation" (10 April 1843, p.2). The local MP in question was Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, the storm of hisses and great disapprobation probably the result of disappointment as Duncombe was spokesperson for Chartism in the Commons and had presented the second Chartist petition with its three million signatures to the Commons on 2 May 1842. On the next day's sitting, Duncombe made a speech addressing the petition's demands for political rights:

> So far from the communication of political rights to the working classes endangering your constitution, it would, in my opinion, strengthen its stability.

A reputation for radical protest and Duncombe's advocacy on their behalf gives some sense of a shared identity, collective history, group trajectory and common objectives within Clerkenwell in 1841, particularly in the over-crowded southern part of the parish where Clerkenwell Green was situated.

Phelps and Forbes-Robertson suggest (121) that Phelps's repertoire was well-established by the beginning of his eighth season at the theatre, that is by 1851, the year of the next decennial census. As noted above, a new scheme was devised for reporting occupational data in this census. The occupations of males and females over 20 were now grouped into sixteen classes with a seventeenth added for those such as "paupers in workhouses…prisoners in gaols…lunatics in asylums …patients in hospitals". The new classification which was to adhere to the principles of Linnaeus was in part necessitated by the fact that "costume is [no longer] in extensive use to distinguish one class of people from another…few people in trades are now easily

distinguishable by the colours or qualities of their clothing". The classification was devised and described by William Farr, the Compiler of Abstracts for the General Register Office. He explained in the Observation which preceded the Occupation Abstract, "On Nomenclature and the Classification of People by Occupations," that it was based around five main differences in people's work: skill, talent or intelligence; tools, instruments, machinery or structures; materials and processes and products. The greatest emphasis was given to the materials in which people worked. Those engaged in "definite" occupations are arranged into fourteen classes. Each class, in accordance with Linnaean taxonomy, is a nested hierarchy. The fifteenth class is for those labourers whose work is not clearly defined. Those of independent means and who have no definite occupation are recorded in class sixteen.

At the head of the first class is the Queen, followed by the Government, Civil Service, Local Government and the East India Service. The second class is the army and navy. The third class is made up of the "three learned professions," clergymen, lawyers and medical men. Although each of the first three classifications is represented in both Clerkenwell and Islington, with the exception of the law clerks in Class III, that representation is sparse as is the fourth class (the poet, the historian, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the architect, and the natural philosopher, as well as the professors and teachers of literature and science). The fifth class provides for those who "hitherto [have] been held to have no occupation" and who are not returned within any other classification - for example, husbands, widowers, sons, grandsons, nephews. (Wives, widows, daughters, granddaughters, nieces in the Occupations of Females abstracts.) By Class VI, those engaged in lodging, entertaining, attending or providing articles of dress, the Clerkenwell and Islington populations becomes better represented. Similarly, within Class VII (those who are seeking to sell, let or lend

property and those seeking to buy or borrow either personally or through agents), the figures grow higher. At this juncture, the Report observes that the first seven classes have to do chiefly with "*men* [the human species] under different aspects," legislators, officers of the Government, *men* in the services, *men* involved in religious duties or in the distribution of justice. Some appeal to the "higher sentiments of poetry and art," some discharge domestic duties within the family. "One class entertains and makes dresses; of another class members meet their fellow *men*…to bargain, to negociate, to buy and sell". It is to be noted that within Phelps's potential immediate local audience, these "men" are not significantly present.

Of the remaining categories, it is not until Class XI that there is a significant representation in the area around the theatre. Class VIII is engaged in the "conveyance of *men* from place to place". In Class IX (the proprietors of, and workers on the land), Clerkenwell, no longer a country village, is poorly represented although Islington has more significant returns in this category. The same is true of Class X, those employed "about *animals*". As was also the case in 1841, by far the greater part of the Clerkenwell employed appears in Class XI (the higher class of mechanical and chemical arts) specifically within sub-section 6 i (watchmakers and philosophical instrument makers and dealers). Also within this class are publishers, booksellers, bookbinders, printers and 'Others engaged about *Publications*'. Bookbinders and printers are well represented in both parishes. The figures in sub-section 15 (surveyors, builders, carpenters, joiners, bricklayers, masons, paviors, slaters, plasterers, painters, plumbers, glaziers), reflect the building boom outlined in the section on topography above. Class XII, which includes cow keepers, milk sellers and butchers again concerns Islington more than Clerkenwell. Class XIII involves those who supply a great proportion of the population's food and stimulants - bakers,

licensed victuallers and their wives, grocers, cabinet makers, upholsterers and drapers. To the watchmakers in Class XI may be added the goldsmith and silversmiths of class XIV, those who work with minerals and metals of various kinds.

There are relatively few (95) Gentlemen of Independent Means in the Parishes although there are also annuitants recorded, a far greater number of female than male. The fourteen Occupation Classes for Females match those of the males. Again, Clerkenwell and Islington are poorly represented in the first four classes but there is a significant number of wives of no specified occupation within Class V. Far the greatest number of women is employed within Class VI – domestic servants, charwomen, milliners, seamstresses, washerwomen, manglers, laundry keepers and shoemakers' wives.

In summary, as in 1841, the demographic profile in Clerkenwell is still significantly dominated by skilled artisans in male occupations and by domestic servants in the female occupations, although a large number of the female population falls within Class 5 as wives of no occupation, a group to be of importance to Phelps as potential audience members. What of the clerks, however? As noted above, some now appear in sub-section 5 of Class III as Law Clerks (244 in Clerkenwell and in Islington) but more are now described as commercial clerks. As the social historian Sally Mitchell points out, the growth of business, banking, insurance and the civil service led to a vast increase in clerical jobs – certainly borne out by the 492 such clerks in Clerkenwell and in Islington ("Daily", 68).

The final census administered during Phelps's management took place in 1861. By then, Farr had revised the classification of occupations again. Occupations were now arranged in six classes, sub-divided into eighteen orders, with the number of occupations listed reduced to 425 separate occupational categories for males and 275

for females aged 20 and over distinguished for each registration district. The tabulation is as follows:

1. Professional
2. Domestic
3. Commercial
4. Agricultural
5. Industrial
6. Indefinite and non-productive

In the Professional orders neither Clerkenwell nor Islington have significant numbers. The Domestic orders refer to the men in the army and navy serving at home and there are relatively few recorded in either parish. Law clerks feature in Class 3 with 680 in Islington but only 213 in Clerkenwell. Commercial clerks are not a discrete entry in the 1861 census. The watchmakers are included in Class 5 with 707 returned for Islington but a greater number returned in Clerkenwell (877). Gentlemen and Annuitants belong to Class 6 with the greater number (415) in Islington and only 68 in Clerkenwell.

Occupation	Clerkenwell Males over 20	Islington Males over 20	% working males over 20 Clerkenwell	% working males over 20 Islington	Census year
Watchmakers	713	n/a	5%		1841
Clerks	902	n/a	7%		1841
Independent	590		4%		
Watchmakers	843	362	5%	1%	1851
legal clerks	244	532	1%	2%	1851
commercial clerks	492	1,140	3%	5%	1851
Independent	206	353	1%	1%	1851
Watchmakers / Clockmakers	877	707	5%	2%	1861
law clerks	213	680	1%	0.5%	`861
commercial clerks					
Independent	68	415	0.4%	1%	

Audiences

> The constitution of Phelps's audience is a matter of some dispute…whether he changed the taste and behaviour of existing, hitherto unruly, theatre goers or attracted a new more respectable following is beyond resolution. (Richard Foulkes, 1997)

As demonstrated above, it is possible to offer a demographic profile of Phelps's potential local audience – albeit a fairly limited one. To fill, or at least to break even commercially, a house that accommodated over two thousand people, Phelps would have needed to rely on the local population, although Phelps himself seemed confused on this detail. On the one hand, there is the draft of a letter held in the Harvard Theatre Collection (MS Thr 444) from Phelps to Queen Victoria's Master of Revels in which he writes, "My theatre is (unfortunately for me) far removed from a central situation and surrounded by a non-theatrical population – the majority of my audience coming from a distance as a necessity." On the other hand, Phelps allegedly told Horne that he had "only local audiences for the most part" (qtd Allen, p.248). Phelps and Forbes-Robertson, probably on this occasion guilty of the "besetting sin of biographers" (*viii*), don rose-coloured glasses:

> As regards the quality of the frequenters of Sadler's Wells, they were, in the first place, all real playgoers, and came from the north and the south, from the east and from the west. It would consequently be very erroneous to talk of audiences being for the most part local. (13)

Who, or what, to believe? Is there evidence to substantiate the unruliness of earlier playgoers, and their subsequent reform under Phelps's management? Or is there evidence for the implicit counter-argument that Phelps was a magnet who attracted "real" playgoers to travel the necessary distance to obtain quality productions in his out-of-the-way theatre? I will argue, both views may be accommodated.

Sadler's Wells' audiences had a dubious reputation in certain quarters in the years before Phelps's management. Take, for example, an article which appeared in *Punch* in September 1841. The article decried the dissemination through the medium of

stage melodrama of the post-*Beggar's Opera* representation of the criminal underworld as potentially heroic or glamorous or, at the very least, as normal.[iii] The *Punch* piece was, specifically, a scathing indictment of *Jack Ketch*; *or A Leaf from Tyburn Tree* which was first performed at Sadler's Wells Theatre on 20 September of that year. Not only does the review dismiss the play as contemptible, "the veriest mess of incoherent rubbish that was ever laid upon the plains of common sense," but the audience is also the subject of searing invective. The spectators are portrayed as descendants of that "mob" ("idlers in hundreds, and thieves in thousands") whose "elegant amusements" included attending the hangings outside the Debtors' Door at Newgate. The review goes on: "Those whose moral sensibilities are refined to the choking point – who can relish stage strangulation in all its interesting varieties better than Shakspere, are now provided with a rich treat." That the theatre was crowded for the play is conveyed in the final clauses of the sentence: "Sadler's Wells people hang every night with great success; for unless one goes early, there is – as is the case wherever hanging takes place – no standing room for love nor money."

This article, I believe, provided the tropes for an article written by Charles Dickens and published in *Household Words* which has sullied the reputation of Phelps's audience for much of its history. Titled "Shakspeare and Newgate," it purported to be a retrospective view of Phelps's opening production. But the piece had an underlying didactic purpose, arguing that a socially deprived neighbourhood could be reclaimed and civilised through "sound rational amusement". A "well-conducted Theatre is a good place in which to learn good things". The Newgate in the title is a reference not only to the Newgate novels, several of which had been adapted as melodramas, but also to the *Punch* review. Dickens develops the *Punch* tropes and reinforces the concept of the Sadler's Wells' audience as a mob. Prior to Phelps's

tenure, he alleges, the theatre was a “bear garden”. The metaphor is heightened with the diction of strife and turmoil. He mocks the audience’s reception of *Macbeth*. They remain the “Jack Ketch party”; the key words of the bear-garden metaphor are repeated. The play was performed amidst the “usual hideous medley of fights, foul language, catcalls, shrieks, yells, oaths, blasphemy – a truly diabolical clamour”. But, by 1851, after only seven seasons of his management, Dickens boasts that his belief that “a good Theatre” reclaim one of the lowest of all possible audiences” has been realised at Sadler’s Wells through sound amusement in Phelps’s well-conducted theatre.

Significantly, Dickens does not claim to have been a member of the audience at that performance of Macbeth. Neither, with equal significance, is his narrative upheld by contemporary reviewers at the performance. Nevertheless, his piece with its cultural, political and social polemic laid the foundations of the “hitherto unruly” myth.

This process of myth-making is laid out in the final chapter of Thomas Postlewait’s *Cambridge Introduction to Theatre Historiography* (2009) which, in part, reworks an earlier paper, “Historiography and the Theatrical Event: A Primer with Twelve Cruxes” which first appeared in May, 1991 in *Theatre Journal* (157-178). Crux 8 in the paper, “the commentary that builds up, person by person, age by age, around the testimony, describing and circumscribing it” is pertinent to my argument. Once a theatrical event attains historical significance “through documentation and commentary,” successive historians are drawn to it. In this case, such documentation as there is gives the lie to Dickens but subsequent commentary reinforces his account. Dennis Arundell, for example, in his 1978 history of the theatre, *The Story of Sadler’s Wells*, perhaps enticed by Dickens’s flamboyant,

theatrical prose or by his prestige as a recorder of Victorian London, accepts the canard about Phelps's audience and concludes Phelps had to establish a "new kind of audience" (139). Such is Dickens's authority and prestige, that what is essentially caricature becomes the orthodoxy. When Arundell reaches Phelps's management in his chronicle, he not only repeats the Dickens canard but goes further: he endorses another of Dickens's assertions. Unable to check the "outrageous language" which, Dickens alleged, was a characteristic of the audience, he claimed Phelps had unearthed an old act of Parliament in which there was a clause which stated that, on proof of the offence, any use of bad language in public would be punishable by a fine. Phelps, Dickens stated, had the clause printed on "great placards" which he hung conspicuously in the theatre. In addition, he had it printed on handbills handed to each gallery ticket-holder with his pass ticket. Arundell goes on to repeat that such was Phelps's inflexibility on the matter of outrageous language that, on occasions, he went into the gallery with a cloak over his theatrical costume to "point out [an] offender who had escaped the vigilance of the police". In his inaugural address as president of the Perry Bar Institute in Birmingham, Henry Irving refers to the "early *tradition* of Mr. Phelps's lesseeship" [my emphasis] that he had actually to throw a cloak over his theatrical dress and rush up into the gallery to enable "something like decorum and quiet" (qtd. In *The Theatre*, 13 March 1878, p.112). All this is contested in *The Life* where the "rumour" is specifically denied by May Phelps: "[t]here is no truth whatsoever in this and [it] would not be noticed here had not wide publicity been given to the statement in Charles Dickens's *Household Words*" (17). Turner, in one of his articles to *The Theatre* ("Calls," June 1884, pp. 293-4) affirms that Phelps did appear on stage in a cloak from time to time, but only in response to persistent and noisy calls at the end of a performance: "[H]e would wrap round him a voluminous

cloak, step forward a foot or so, bow and retire" (294), However, in certain subsequent accounts, rumour was accepted as fact. For example, although the chapter on Sadler's Wells in *Survey* XLVII posits "new discoveries" in the evolution of the theatre's buildings, because it relies on Arundell's theatrical history, it, too, repeats the myth about the audience: "[t]he management took a stern line with the louche Sadler's Wells crowd, expelling 'friers of fish, vendors of oysters and other costermongers' from around the doors, and beersellers and squalling babies – even the foul-mouthed – from inside the theatre" (152). And as late as 2005, in her history of Islington, Mary Cosh takes Dickens as her authority for the state of the Sadler's Wells audience in 1844: "Phelps's transformation of the formerly deteriorating theatre was enough to create a new audience of devotees" (272).

Shirley Allen dismisses Dickens's "circumstantial account" of the taming of the audience but recognises the "dramatic appeal" which encouraged its repetition (96). Although in support of her rejection of the *Household Words* article she cites May Phelps's denial, the inclusion of a quotation from a *Punch* mitigates her rebuff somewhat: "The night charges of the various police-stations of the neighbourhood have sensibly diminished, and men – before considered irredeemable bacchanals – are now nightly known to bring their *wives* and little ones to listen to the solemn and sportive truths of Shakespeare" (*Punch*, 27 September 1845). Allen's subsequent discussion of Phelps's audience in many ways compounds Dickens's intention to show "what an intelligent and resolute man may do, to establish a good Theatre in a most unpromising soil" (Dickens, 25). Allen sketches Phelps's audience in general terms. She refers to but does not elaborate upon its social and cultural conditions except insofar as they may influence Phelps's management. Reviewers were surprised, she claims, that the kind of audience which patronised Sadler's Wells could

"understand and enjoy" serious drama: "[f]rom the very first night, when the house sat in admiring silence at *Macbeth*, Phelps's audience was noticeably different from the one which had patronised Sadler's Wells a few weeks earlier" (96). Allen makes a number of observations on the audience, *passim*, in her appraisal of Phelps's productions at the theatre. The final section of Chapter 5, "Phelps and Shakespeare Manager" opens: "The character of the audience at Sadler's Wells was a major factor in determining the principles of Phelps's management." She goes on to discuss the "nature" of the audience deduced from eighteen years of critical reviews. She argues that, despite some conflicting evidence, a "fairly clear" audience "picture" emerges: the patrons were Islingtonians, not wealthy but "connoisseurs" of serious drama (245). She refers readers to earlier chapters (in particular, Chapter 3) in her study. There, although she offers little evidence, she claims that there was "a special rapport…between actors and audience…There was no fickleness on the part of the audience nor cheap pretense on the stage" (95).

The methodology underlying Allen's historiographical narrative is empirical. She produces generalisations about Sadler's Wells audiences during Phelps's management which she then illustrates with anecdote and selective, usually favourable, quotation. Although perhaps more nuanced than Dickens, nonetheless she subscribes to what Swindells and Taylor label the "before/after" view of Phelps's audience (20). She presents but does not scrutinise cultural and social conditions. For example, she accepts without question Towse's view of Islington as full of small shops, taverns, cheap lodging-houses and slums from which, she posits, emerge "connoisseurs of serious drama" (247-8).

Allen's historiography is representative of an approach outlined in the introduction to the November 1998 issue of *Theatre Survey* which was devoted to

audience studies. The guest editors, Tracy C. Davis and Bruce McConachie, contend that, "Before 1985, researchers…tended to interpret evidence from playgoer testimony, social demographics, theatrical repertoires, architectural records, and similar ephemera in a relatively untheorized, empirical fashion. Most audiences stayed at general and normative levels, [with] few questions [asked]" (2). One of the essays offered was Jim Davis and Victor Emeljanow's "New Views of Cheap Theatres: Reconstructing the Nineteenth-Century Theatre Audience" which the editors consider combined empiricism and close reading in its methodology.

Three years later, Davis and Emeljanow's *Reflecting the Audience*: *London Theatregoing, 1840-1880* (hereafter *Reflecting the Audience*) was published. It aimed to provide the first full length study of nineteenth-century British theatre audiences via case studies of "representative theatres" from four areas of London with a specific focus on the years between 1840 and 1880. In the general introduction to their work, Davis and Emeljanow indicate their methodology is to be empiricist: they propose extracting data from an examination of "maps, census returns, transport data, playbills, government papers, dramatic texts, local and national newspapers, as well as memoirs, journals, diaries, and letters" (*xiv*). In the concluding chapter of the work, they affirm their methodology "in effect" followed Lawrence Stone's dictum that quantification "uses as ammunition apparently precise testable data, which have to be either confirmed or rejected on logical or scientific grounds instead of strings of selective quotations from favourable sources" (Stone, 18). One of the case studies in *Reflecting the Audience* is Sadler's Wells where Phelps's tenure neatly fits the time-scale brief. To gain evidence for the theatre's socio-economic context and, by implication, to support the "more respectable following" argument, Davis and Emeljanow depend in large part on statistics from the decennial censuses discussed

above. This, they posit, will advance understanding of audience behaviour and "patterns of attendance" (*ix* & *xiv*). It will also lead to a rebuttal of "subtexts running through our source materials and the attendant myths surrounding them" (181).

In the Introduction to Part 3, "Myth and Nineteenth-century Theatre Audiences," Davis and Emeljanow contend they are to "re-examine the mythopoeia that surrounded the apparently miraculous transformations of two Victorian theatres: Sadler's Wells and the Prince of Wales's":

> In the case of Sadler's Wells, the distinguished Shakespearian actor Samuel Phelps took over in 1844 an inaccessible neighbourhood theatre, remarkable only for its longevity and its identification with so-called "aquatic dramas." During his management, which terminated in 1862, he presented almost the entire Shakespearean canon, and miraculously transformed the misbehaving members of the working class into an attentive and discriminating literary audience. (100)

The Introduction starts with an overview of historiographical tradition. Davis and Emeljanow argue that both nineteenth and early twentieth-century narratives of Victorian theatre history, such as those of Nicoll and Rowell, have created an orthodox "yet mythologized" picture of teleological progress towards the "restoration of literary drama, improved standards of production, and greater social respectability both on and off the stage" (97). In addition, in their view, contemporary eye-witness narratives should be treated with caution. Witnesses such as Dickens and W. B. Donne (the Examiner of Plays) held an uncompromising belief in the reclamation of a golden age and the amelioration of society and the individual, both of which have implications for theatrical practices and the role theatre perform. With an awareness of such cultural agendas they examine the mythopoeia of Phelps's miraculous transformation of the Wells' audience. To test the hypothesis that it "may well have been the case" that the "Islington community" in which Phelps and Mrs Warner embarked on their enterprise contained a socially

and economically stable audience looking for a theatre whose repertoire would "affirm its own self-conscious respectability," they depend, to a considerable degree, on the 1841 Census. They aim to examine the socio-economic context in which Sadler's Wells operated in the years immediately before, during and immediately after Phelps's management.

Davis and Emeljanow repeat *The Life*'s insistence that there is no evidence to support the missionary zeal of Dickens's *Household Words* view that Phelps's management demonstrated lower-class responsiveness to enlightened cultural policy. Furthermore, they argue persuasively, consumers of Dickens's fictions read them as a factual system not as a semiological one. Therefore, in line with Postlewait's "crux', one of the central problems in theatre historiography is the breaking down of such embedded myths. Thus, for example, "[m]uted and qualified" though it may be, nonetheless Sadler's Wells as a site for "miraculous transformation" finds its way into Allen's account (104).

In the opening paragraph of Chapter 4, their case study of the Wells, Davis and Emeljanow state there are "only" two acceptable pieces of concrete evidence they will accept to establish the "veracity of [the] miraculous transformation" of the Wells: first, is Phelps's repertoire. In comparison with other theatres, Sadler's Wells, during Phelps's management, was the only London theatre to offer a legitimate repertoire. That the repertoire remained constant throughout Phelps's tenure may, they suggest, be evidence of constant demand. I will argue that it was part of Phelps's pragmatic approach to his audiences that illegitimate fare also featured on his bills. He had more than what would now be labelled the upwardly mobile to entertain. Furthermore, Davis and Emeljanow contend that the price structure remaining constant throughout Phelps's management may be evidence of the social and economic stability of those

who attended the theatre. On the other hand, as I argue, it may be another pragmatic move on Phelps's part, a recognition that raising his prices would lower the numbers in his auditorium particularly in the pit and the gallery. The second piece of evidence in support of the miraculous transformation of the theatre during Phelps's time at the Wells was the theatre's decline when Phelps left, a more difficult contention to counter but one that will be considered in the Conclusion to this study when I invoke Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field to underpin my argument.

As noted, to test their hypothesis, Davis and Emeljanow rely in part on the 1841 Census, a source whose observation objectives, as demonstrated above, enable little more than a survey of the occupational groups in which the working population was assembled and one which did not treat Islington discretely. Furthermore, I remain unconvinced that the 1841 Census provides evidence to advance understanding of audience behaviour and its "patterns of attendance" (*ix* & *xiv*). As I have argued in the section above it is a paratextual source such as *The Duchess of Malfi* playbill that, as Jacky Bratton suggests, provides evidence of audience expectation and disposition (39-40). Moreover, during Phelps's management, the bill through which he launched his tenure at the theatre, most certainly provides evidence of how he expected his audiences to behave.

In the chapters which follow, there are case studies of four of Phelps's Shakespearean productions. Chapter One considers the 1849 revival of *Richard III* which, I shall argue, has an historical importance which has been insufficiently appreciated. Phelps's 1851 production of *Timon of Athens* is the focus of Chapter Two. The two outstanding successes of Phelps's management, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Pericles* are discussed in Chapters Three and Four, respectively.

CHAPTER 1
Richard III

This, the only house in London representing Shakspere's plays,
announces *Richard the Third*, with a cast that cannot,
in the present dearth of theatrical talent, be equalled.
(*Era*, 8 April, 1849)

During his first season at Sadler's Wells (1844-5), Phelps played the roles through which he had established his reputation on the provincial circuits, culminating in a reprise of Richard III. However, whereas in the provinces, he had played Colley Cibber's Richard, at Sadler's Wells he was to play Shakespeare's Richard. The ability of his then partner, Mrs Warner, to take on the role of Margaret, gave him the opportunity to restore Shakespeare's text to the stage. The 1845 production was fairly well-received by the critics although most felt that the acting text was marred by Phelps's interpolations of lines from earlier plays; but still, the show drew audiences. Such was its success that Phelps and Mrs Warner gave it a run of 24 performances, only four fewer than that season's outstanding *Hamlet*. When Phelps revived the production in 1849 during his fifth season, however, the interpolations were removed as befitted both the management's burgeoning reputation for presenting unadulterated Shakespearean texts and Phelps's growing confidence both in his company and in the sophistication of his audiences' responses. I will argue that the historical importance of this production has been underappreciated, especially in recent editions of the play. Phelps's reaction to the critical objections to his first season's staging has been overlooked. With a characteristic mix of spectacular set scenes and carefully rehearsed ensemble playing, it is Phelps's 1849 revival, rather than Henry Irving's some thirty years later, which marked the first link in the chain which led to the end of Cibber's adaptation, to the end of adapting Cibber, and to the restoration of a Shakespearean text.

Whether Phelps had been influenced by notices in the press about his 1845 interpolations must remain a moot point. His attitude to the press seemed ambivalent. In an undated letter to his son at school in Worthing held in the Harvard Theatre Collection, for example, Phelps dismisses the "Opinion of the Press". Criticism of his production of *King John* is "BOSH", and this was an attitude which persisted long after he left Sadler's Wells. In 1867 after a performance as Bottom at Drury Lane, he wrote to his daughter from the Waterloo Hotel, "The papers are loud in their praises...but they are 'bosh''. However, he then adds, "I will get them and send them by tonight's post". The decision to proceed without the interpolations suggests something of a feigned indifference to the critics. He already knew that a Shakespearean *Richard III* text supplied with interpolations from other histories played well and although Mrs Warner had left the partnership, after two seasons, in 1846, Phelps now had Isabella Glyn in the company to take on the role of Margaret. Thus, by 1849, he had the ability to present the play as an independent unit, not one dependent for success on linkages interpolated from the *Henry VI* plays.

SPECTACLE AND TEXT

"Reputation, reputation, reputation"
(*Othello* II.iii.256)

Phelps and Mrs Warner played Shakespeare to enthusiastic houses and encouraging reviews, and by Phelps's fifth season at the Wells, his management was well on its way to establishing a reputation for restoring authentic Shakespearean texts to the stage in place of Restoration adaptations or partially-restored texts with appropriate but nonetheless spectacular *mise-en-scène*. A production of *King Lear* (1845), in the second season, with the Fool fully restored, for instance, was followed, that same season, by a hugely successful production of *The Winter's Tale*.

Of the four Phelps productions considered in this thesis, the details of the *mise-en-scène* are most clearly to be seen in the promptbooks for *Richard III*. There are five entries associated with Phelps's 1845 and 1849 productions of *Richard III* in Shattuck's catalogue, numbers twenty-four to twenty-seven inclusive (395-6), and number thirty-three (397-8). Shattuck numbers twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six and thirty-three are held in the Folger, respectively, T.a. 83-92, R.III 24, R.III 24. The entry for Rich.III 24 (396) reads:

> Fully developed promptbook done in a neat hand 'under the direction of W.C. Williams,' who was Phelps's prompter; corrections and additions made by Phelps and Williams. Cast for March, 1845, with later substitutions pencilled. Some cuts on full text, but some compressed scenes are given in longhand. Copious scenic indications, grooves, property manuscript lists, calls, stage business, cues for effects, timings. Fine ink wash drawings of 11 scenes. (396)

Although originally prepared for the 1845 show, the pencilled substitutions in the Shattuck entry refer to Phelps's 1849 revival and thus the book remains relevant to any study of that production. It is now too fragile to be removed from the vaults, and I have worked from a microfilm (S870) held in the Shakespeare Institute Library. Paul Jerald Bangham's Ph.D. dissertation, "Samuel Phelps's Production of Richard III: an annotated promptbook" (Ohio State University, 1965), presents a detailed commentary on the 1845 production. Bangham had to use a filmed facsimile of R.III 24 to prepare his thesis but, of course, it is now available to study via the Adam Matthew *Shakespeare in Performance* platform where there is the additional bonus of seeing clearly the sepia ink-wash drawings, in some cases cartoons for drops and flats, in other sketches for scenes with, often innovative, built-out scenery.

Rich.III 22 is a book made up to replace Phelps's 1845 book which, as Shattuck records (398), contains all the essential matter of the earlier book bar the eleven scene designs but it does have pencilled notes at the back on the final battle and the working of profile figures for the 1849 production. It too is available via the

Shakespeare in Performance platform and I have compared the two books closely. The 1845 interpolations in Rich.III 24 are crossed through; some lines marked for deletion have "in" or "all in" appended. The replacement suggests that Phelps's decision to remove the interpolations came after he had the book prepared, since both the 1845 interpolations and the lines marked for deletion are there in Rich.III 22 and again, with one odd exception to be discussed below, either crossed through or marked for inclusion respectively. There are very few changes either to the grooves for each scene or to the blocking maps. There is a transcription of this promptbook which does not include the deleted interpolations. It belonged to William Creswick and is held in The Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive (50.208 -1806). As it is unused, and thus free of any later, additional, prompt notes, it is particularly useful as a cross-reference tool.

Unusually for a nineteenth-century revival, Phelps's 1849 production was reviewed by a reasonably wide range of newspapers and periodicals. Playbills for the 1849 production, however, are scarce. There are none held in the Sadler's Wells Production files in the Victoria and Albert Museum Theatre Collection, for example, but there is a bill for the 1849 revival's opening night (21 March 1849), a Phelps benefit, held in the Sadler's Wells archive in the Islington Local History Centre. In marked contrast to the 1845 bills, this simply announces *Richard III*, "From the Text of Shakspere", although it has, of course, the ubiquitous lure of "New Scenery, Dresses and Decorations". The earlier bills also promised this, but at the same time they had foregrounded the additional selling-point which was that the script for this production represented the "Restoration" of the text of Shakespeare:

> In order to meet the spirit of the present age, so distinguished for illustrating and honouring the works of Shakespeare, and with at least an honest desire of testing his truthful excellence over all attempted improvements, this restoration is essayed, in lieu of the alteration, interpolation, and compilement

> of Colley Cibber, which has so long held possession of the stage. (Playbill in the Sadler's Wells Production Files in the V&A Theatre Collection).

An egregiously appreciative account of Phelps's production features in Scott Colley's 1992 monograph, *Richard's Himself Again*, which records the stage-history of the play. Many of Phelps's cuts and stage directions are recorded in Julie Hankey's edition of the play for the Shakespeare in Performance series.

CIBBER

The 1845 production was a brave experiment; the Cibber adaptation always played well with audiences and it had been popular in the past at the Wells. Arundell, for example, notes several productions there. As Paul Prescott observes ("Richard" 102), in discussing the stage history of *Richard III* for the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries, Colley Cibber's alteration, interpolation and compilement make it misleading to name the play Shakespeare's.

In an essay, "Television Shakespeare" Stanley Wells suggests that if adaptation has to occur:

> [I]t should be thorough. Then it has the chance of creating an independent, if related, work of art – like Verdi's opera *Falstaff*…or, in its own way, Colley Cibber's *Richard III*, for a couple of centuries probably the most popular play on the English stage. (Wells, "Television", 266)

Cibber's adaptation was nothing if not thorough: the 2,156 lines of the adaptation are divided almost equally between his own lines and Shakespeare, although around 20% of Shakespeare's lines are taken from other plays, *3 Henry VI*, *Richard II*, *Henry V* and *2 Henry VI.* He removed the parts of Queen Margaret and Clarence (and, thus, Clarence's murderers and Clarence's children), and also the Citizens, the Scrivener, Edward and Hastings, and he reduced Buckingham's role. As Colley (20) suggests, Cibber's revision was probably successful because it supplied "linkages, transitions

and motivations that Shakespeare seemed at times almost perversely unwilling to supply". From the Restoration until the early nineteenth century, the stage play, an adaptation, was Cibber's, not Shakespeare's although many people were unaware of the difference and would "quote Cibber for Shakespeare" (Hankey, 37). Whether or not Cibber's play was a work of art is beyond the bounds of this chapter, but it certainly was a great theatrical success.

It had its first performance at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane in December 1699 with Cibber himself in the title role. Albert E. Kalson (47) notes the adaptation failed initially, a failure which lay not so much because of the play nor even with Cibber's lamentable performance as Richard but at the diktat of the Master of the Revels. Using the end of *3 Henry VI*, Cibber had added a new first act to his adaptation. Praised by Cibber as "The best Act in the Whole", it foregrounded the murder of Henry VI and was intended to familiarise his audience with the action of the earlier Henry VI plays (Clark, 379). But Charles Killigrew, then Master of the Revels, refused to license the act as , according to Cibber's outraged and incredulous preface to the printed text, "*Henry* the Sixth being a Character Unfortunate and Pitied, wou'd put the audience in mind of the late King *James*" (379). Although Kalson (47) posits that despite the fact that this opening act, possibly the adaptation's strongest, had certainly been restored to Cibber's play by 1715, in its first forty years on stage, the play was not among the most popular in the repertory. Nonetheless, it had a presence there.

However, in 1741, the stage history of *The Tragical History of King Richard III* was to change irrevocably. On 19 October, David Garrick made his professional debut as Richard at Goodman's Fields. Colley (37) notes that Garrick's performance

was considered “revolutionary” by contemporary observers. He quotes (38) from the *Memoirs* of the actor Thomas Davies:

> Mr. Garrick shone forth like a theatrical Newton; he threw new light on elocution and action; he banished ranting, bombast, and grimace; and restored nature, ease, simplicity and genuine humour.

Over the next thirty-five years Garrick was to play Richard more than one hundred times and, as Colley argues persuasively, he also stimulated competitors to try the role, thus ensuring its status as a test piece for aspiring tragedians. During the time he managed Drury Lane (1747-76), the play was performed 100 times. Covent Garden put the play on for another 113 performances, seeking to emulate Garrick's success. In the twenty-five years after Garrick's debut as Richard, there were three times as many performances of Cibber's play as there had been in the previous forty-two years. The box-office receipts at Drury Lane increased significantly when Garrick played Richard: “It was Garrick, certainly, who finally won a secure place in the repertory for Cibber's play, making it a staple of popular theatrical fare” (39). After Garrick, Kemble, Cooke and Kean all burnished their reputations with Cibber’s Richard.

Its success was critical as well as theatrical. George Steevens (qtd, Siemon 87-8), for example, approved of Cibber’s treatment of Shakespeare’s text:

> What modern audience would patiently listen to the narrative of Clarence’s Dream, his subsequent expostulation with the murderers, the prattle of his children, the soliloquy of the Scrivener, the tedious dialogue of the citizens, the ravings of Margaret, the gross terms thrown out by the Duchess of York on Richard, the repeated progress to execution, the superfluous train of spectres, and other undramatick incumbrances?

Cibber’s Richard, therefore, might have seemed unassailable were it not that it lacked a place for an actress of Mrs Warner’s talent. However, Phelps and Mrs Warner were setting forth where William Charles Macready had earlier stumbled and where, to an extent, they were to stumble themselves with the same underlying cause, interpolation.

Aware that scholars and editors were intent on establishing true Shakespearean texts and anxious to be judged as scholarly, Macready, in 1821, tentatively, had tried to see how much of the original play could be restored to Cibber's text without bewildering the audience. Alan S. Downer (86) explains that although other radical (unnamed) performers had from time to time played with the notion of a return to Shakespeare it was not until an office clerk submitted to the theatre a purification of Cibber that Macready was minded to attempt a return to Shakespeare. The preface to his acting text reveals Macready's aims:

> The absolute necessity of introducing passages from Henry VI, illustrating part of Richard's character must, it is thought, be allowed as Richard III. is but the superstructure of which the foundation is laid in the two previous Plays. Wherever it has appeared expedient to blend or omit scenes…Shakspeare's language has been selected to supply the deficiencies; where that has not been available, *Cibber's lines have been retained*. [my italics] (Macready, iv)

The result was only staged twice, on 12 and 19 March 1821 respectively, after which Macready returned to Cibber, back to the "tradition of the virtuoso Richard" (Hankey, 1), which was "one of his great roles" (Downer, 88).

When, in volume IX of *Some Account of the English Stage, from the Restoration in 1680 to 1830* (1832), John Genest (1764-1839) reviewed the productions at Covent Garden between 1820 and1821, he cited an "account of a gentleman who was present" at Macready's production who alleged that the first two acts were accompanied by great applause and the audience was "evidently delighted" (107-8) at the idea of the revival but, unfortunately, the Bishop of Ely made his exit at the end of Act III in "so ludicrous a manner" (108) that it "threw a damp" on the rest of the play. Genest goes on to surmise why Macready might have withdrawn the play:

> One main cause of the cold reception of Shakspeare's play might be this…the revival was certainly managed in a bungling manner–it ought to have been preceded by some observations in the newspapers, in which the faults of Cibber's execrable alteration should have been pointed out – these observations might not have removed prejudices, but they could hardly have

> failed to shake them–instead of which, the Stage Manager was so *egregiously* absurd, as to tell us in the bill that Cibber's alteration was *ingenious*–if it had been really ingenious there would have been no strong reason for revising a Tragedy, which could not be acted as Shakspeare wrote it. (108)

Although Genest pinpoints inadequate publicity as the main reason for the play not taking with the audience, his "egregiously" and "ingenious" inadvertently foreground the real problem: Cibber's version was so well-established as the legitimate theatrical text of *Richard III*, that there was no strong reason for restoring Shakespeare. Six years after Phelps's well-received 1849 revival, Charles Kean, despite acknowledging the "general conviction" that Shakespeare's works should be represented as closely as possible "to conform with the ascertained text", chose to put on Cibber at the Princess's Theatre. His reasons for presenting the Cibber adaptation in 1854 are inscribed on the flyleaf of the prompt copy held in the Folger and reproduced in the second volume of John Cole's biography, *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean, F.S.A.* (1859). Kean argued that the play still went down well with contemporary audiences and was most "intimately associated" with the "traditionary admiration" (qtd in Cole 101) of the public. He had, therefore decided "on mature consideration" to continue with Cibber. Shakespeare's play, he contended, was "less fitted in its integrity for representation on the stage than almost any other generally acted" (10) and, in defending his decision, he placed himself firmly within the tradition of such "renowned and departed actors", as Garrick, Henderson, Kemble Cooke and his late father, Edmund Kean.

The *John Bull* critic was distinctly unimpressed:

> Shakspeare's - no, not Shakspeare's – Cibber's *Richard the Third* has been produced at the Princess's Theatre. That such a thing should be done…[by] Mr. Charles Kean, who makes such great pretensions to credit for maintaining the dignity and purity of the British drama, should have presented to the public a version…so barbarously mangled, so deformed with impudent and tasteless interpolations…does indeed raise our especial wonder. (25 February 1854, p.122)

A much longer, blistering attack on Kean's argument for putting on Cibber appeared in John Heraud's review of Kean's show in the same day's *Athenæum.*

> Mr. Kean ignores the fact that the pure text *has* been represented. The play was produced in its integrity at Sadler's Wells…There is an inherent harmony – a sequence – a proportion– in Shakspeare's arrangement of his scenes, which any stage alteration of them cannot fail to disturb. (25 February 1854, p.252)

There is a certain irony in Heraud's praise for Phelps. He dismissed the argument that Cibber's play should be considered a condensation rather than an alteration of Shakespeare since the interpolations were taken from other of his plays and went on to praise Phelps for producing the play "in its integrity" (252), conveniently forgetting that, in his review of the first of Phelps's productions, he had drawn attention to Phelps's interpolations as "an evil belonging to a state of transition" towards that "enlightened period" when only the "beautiful and terrible repose of the original" will satisfy "cultivated taste". (1 March, p.228)

PHELPS'S 1849 PRODUCTION

By the time of the 1849 show, however, Heraud noted that the interpolations had been "almost entirely withdrawn" (*Athenæum*, 24 March 1849, p.308); almost but not entirely, as Phelps interpolated three lines at III.iv.102 and ten lines before III.v.72. Nonetheless Heraud approved Phelps's decision to stage a restored text. An integral part of Heraud's vision was that, come the period of "enlightenment", the play would be put on unabridged. But, as Colley argues, it is generally agreed, "Bold cutting makes Theatrical sense" (3). In the 1845 production, Paul Bangham (66) estimates that of 3,992 lines, Phelps cut 1,842, that is 46%. Bangham based his line count on Louis B. Wright and Virginia A. Lamar's edition of the play. Neither the Manley Wood text (used for the1845 promptbook), the Steevens text (used for the

1849 promptbook) nor the Cumberland acting edition text (the Creswick transcription) have line numbers. To arrive at some approximate estimation of how Phelps's compressed text played in 1849, I have based a tentative count of his textual cuts on the Oxford Shakespeare *Complete Works* (1986) which, with the proviso that excision of half-lines and single words make any definitive assessment impossible, appears below:

Act & Scene	*Oxford Shakespeare*	Phelps's lines deleted approximately	Phelps's lines interpolated	Lines in altered text Approximately	Grooves where specified or conjectured from entrances
I.i	162	29		133	1
I.ii	266	78		188	1
I.iii	354	109		245	2
[A]I.iv	282	72		210	2
[B]II.i	141	49		92	2
[C]II.ii	154	110		44	1?
II.iii	47	47		*Cut*	
[D]II.iv	74	15		59	1
[E]III.i	200	72		128	SET?
[F]III.ii	121	35		86	1or 2?
III.iii	25	25		*Cut*	
III.iv	106	41	3	65	3
III.v	109	80	10	39	1 or 2?
III.vi	14	0		14	1
III.vii	246	99		147	SET
IV.i	103	48		55	1?
IV.ii	120	7		113	4
IV.iii	57	2		55	1
IV.iv	538	291		247	SET
IV.v	21	21		*Cut*	
V.i	29	29		*Cut*	
[G]V.ii	24	1		23	2 or 3?
[H]V.iii	351	131		230	SET
[I]V.iv	13	0		13	2?
[I]V.v	41	21		20	2 or 3?
	3,598	1412	13	2,219	

[A] Phelps's II.i.
[B] Phelps's II.ii.
[C] Phelps's II.ii.
[D] Phelps's III.i.
[E] Phelps's III.ii.
[F] Phelps's III.iii.
[G] Phelps's V.i.
[H] Phelps's V.ii.
[I] Phelps's V.iv.

The notes to the table mark any rearrangement of act and scene numbers. The table itself indicates that of the 3,598 lines listed there, Phelps cut approximately forty per cent. II.iii, III.iii, IV.v. and V.i. were cut in their entirety. Of Phelps's 1845 interpolations, ninety-four of the lines were transposed from other parts of the play: fifteen lines came from *2 Henry VI*, seventeen from *3 Henry VI* and ten of the lines were "non-Shakespearean" (Bangham, 69), that is written by Phelps. By 1849, all the 1845 interpolations are marked for excision in Rich.III 24; none of the interpolations appear in the Creswick transcription and, as noted above, a contemporary newspaper review suggest that most were excised in 1849.

The first of the two interpolations replaces Hastings's apostrophe:

> O bloody Richard! Miserable England,
> I prophesy the fearfull'st time to thee
> That ever wretched age hath looked upon. (III.iv.102-4)

with,

> Marg'ret! Marg'ret! Now thy heavy curse
> Is lighted upon poor Hastings' wretched head.

The second interpolation gave Richard a speech of ten lines, some of it decidedly unmetrical, in which he tells Buckingham to justify Hastings's execution to the Mayor and citizens of London:

> *Glos.* Now cousin, haste thee
> To Guildhall, there to the Mayor and Citizens
> Excuse the hasty act of telling them
> The subtle traitor tis day has plotted in
> The council, how to murder me:-
> That we had not against all form of law
> Proceded rashly in the villain's death
> But that the extreme peril of the case
> The peace of England, and our person's safety
> Enforced us to the execution.

This was necessary as a transition for the audience to move from Phelps's III.iv. to III.v. as he cut the first 71 lines of III.v, where Richard and

Buckingham appear in "*rotten armour, marvellous ill-favoured*" and where Lovell and Ratcliffe arrive on stage with Hastings's head. Perhaps Phelps considered the marvellous ill-favoured rotten armour smacked too much of the pantomime or perhaps he had an eye to the Gallery whose occupants might have over-reacted to the appearance of Hastings's head.

Hankey (153) notes that all nineteenth-century and most twentieth-century productions cut the first of the scenes which Phelps cut – that is II.iii, the scene with the citizens. The next scene marked for excision, is III.iii, where Rivers, Grey and Vaughan are being led to Pomfret to be executed. Left in, it would have emphasised Richard's ruthless cruelty but, as the bills attest, Phelps had dispensed with Vaughan's part and Rivers and Grey had had only 9 lines and 2 lines respectively in I.iii, so it was a logical cut to make, although the next, IV.v., Stanley's meeting with the Countess of Richmond's chaplain, deprived the audience of the information that Queen Elizabeth has consented to her daughter's marriage to Richmond. Again, in common with later nineteenth-century restorations (Hankey, 231), Phelps cuts the opening scene of Act V, the Sheriff leading Buckingham to his execution. Played, the scene would have added to the sense of impending doom for Richard. By now Margaret's curses have all been fulfilled, bar one.

To an extent, then, Phelps seems to have agreed with Steevens's list of the dispensable parts of the original: his modern audience is to be spared the tedious dialogue of the citizens and the repeated progresses to execution. He also appears to agree that many in the "train of spectres" were superfluous as the significant cuts in V.iii attest. He reduced the ghosts to Clarence, Anne, the young princes and Buckingham. Also from the Steevens list, Phelps cut the prattle of Clarence's children – not just the first 32 lines of II.ii but all subsequent references to the "brats of

Clarence" (at III.v.107, IV.ii.53-5 and at IV.iii.36-7). Finally, from the list and probably not unexpectedly in the tenor of the time, Phelps dealt pretty summarily with "the gross terms thrown out by the Duchess of York". In IV.iv, only eight of her thirty-four lines after Richard's entrance remained.

What did remain from Steevens's list? The narrative of Clarence's Dream, his subsequent expostulation with the murderers, the soliloquy of the Scrivener, the ravings of Margaret. Phelps cut very little from the narrative of Clarence's dream, and it was well-received by the critics:

> Mr. Dickinson's Clarence is a very fine performance…His description of his dream evinced considerable powers of both declamation and acting, and was loudly applauded. (25 March 1849, p.10)

Although Paul Prescott ("Richard" 42) posits that "[i]t is hard to avoid the fact that the two Executioners are intended to be funny, and, as Hankey (133) concurs, unusually unevidenced, that in nineteenth-century Shakespeare revivals, the murderers were played "exclusively for laughs". It is impossible to be certain how Messrs. Knight and Mellon played the scene. Wolfgang Clemen argues, for example, that the lengthy conversation between the murderers where they discuss the subject of conscience, and Phelps leaves it pretty much uncut, "plays an effective part in the inner action of the play," and, as Phelps did cut most of Clarence's expostulation with the murderers as they move offstage to the sleeping Clarence at I.iv.159 and do not return until I.iv.273, perhaps the scene in this production was not played for laughs. Their earlier conversation is recalled at the second murderer's line (left uncut), "I repent me that the duke is slain." (I.iv. 277) which underlines this contention.

Phelps's retention of the Scrivener scene – he was apparently alone in not cutting the scene in the nineteenth century (Hankey, 183) - also plays an important part in the inner action of the play. As he cut the citizens' scene, the Scrivener is *vox populi*, letting the

audience know that the people are not blind to Richard's corruption, in this instance the obviously fraudulent indictment of Hastings, but that they are powerless:

> Who is so gross
> That cannot see this palpable device?
> Yet, who so bold, but says – he sees it not?
> (III.vi.10-14)

Which leaves the ravings of Margaret. In the chapter in which he considers the challenges of playing Richard, Colley (4-5) writes of the "many set pieces and short, thematic episodes" (4) which punctuate the play, moments which are often thought to impede the "forward thrust of the action" (4) and "deflect attention from Richard's theatrically grand moments" (4) and which are, in this, frequently either curtailed or cut. He adds, "Voices of the past particularly have struck directors as intrusive (5):

> Queen Margaret…possesses the most insistent sense of history, and the most formal and rhetorical language for reminding others of backgrounds to the present moment. Having accused, lamented, and cursed for more than 100 lines in the first act…she returns late in the fourth to give a reprise in yet another 100 lines. (5)

What did Phelps do with the role? How did he treat the accusations, lamentations and curses, which Steevens had dismissed as "ravings"? In the first act, he cuts forty-two of Margaret's lines; in the fourth act only twenty-eight – perhaps a surprise if, as Colley contends, Margaret's appearance in the fourth act was a reprise of much of the first act. However, I would argue that Phelps's cuts in the first act were meant to anchor audience attention on Margaret's accusations and her curses. Thus, her fourth act appearance, the occasion of her lamentations, is not a reprise but actually where the reminder of the background to the present moment occurs. It is, then, not so much an impediment to the forward thrust of the action as a reminder at this stage in the play of historical context, intensified by the focus on the seated Margaret, Elisabeth and the Duchess of York – and evidence of very careful cutting on Phelps's part. When Margaret came on stage during I.iv, unnoticed by the wrangling Richard and

the Queen, her asides make clear that she considers Elizabeth's throne to be rightfully hers. She also reiterates that Richard killed Henry and her son at Tewkesbury." (I.iv.118-9). Phelps cut much of the dynastic accusations and counter-accusations raging in the down-stage quarrel (and consequently Margaret's asides). Thus, when she did emerge and swept downstage at (l. 156) to confront the "wrangling pirates", the cuts may have robbed the confrontation of some of its potential dramatic force, confined as Margaret's attention is to Richard and the Queen. The witness of Heraud in the *Athenaeum*, however, suggests otherwise:

> [Miss Glyn's] large style of art and the well-studied dignity of her deportment gave to the vituperation of [her] first scene a fearful significance. That "rag of honour, the [*sic*] detested Richard" quailed before her dilated and determined gaze. Mr. Phelps, it is true, became, suddenly imperfect in his text, and had to repeat one of his speeches. (*Athenæum*, 24 March 1849, p.308)

Paul Prescott (37) has written that Margaret's "mysterious. almost spectral presence" in these scenes may seem incongruous to those unfamiliar with the *Henry VI* plays. However, incongruous or not, it would seem that ignorance of the context of Margaret's denunciations did not take away from the dramatic momentum of the scene. Perhaps Phelps felt confident that the show's spectacular sets, processions, drum rolls and trumpet fanfares not to mention its elements of the supernatural would create enough momentum to carry the production.

Processions, so much a feature of Victorian life, are very much a feature of Phelps's productions. Often accompanied by music, precisely detailed in the promptbooks, they occur throughout the show. I.ii opens to the Dead March played by the trumpets and the tolling of a bell, during which a funeral procession is discovered. The stage directions for both Rich. III .24 and Rich. III 22 reveal its ordering with the rank of each person taking part: at its head were "2 gentlemen-at-arms with halberts" who were followed by 2 "Ditto", these four in their turn followed by "the king at arms

with a wand, 2 heralds with trumpets" and six nobles with red cloaks trimmed with ermine bearing King Henry's bier, each with a crepe-draped halbert. After the coffin party came two pursuivants with torches, followed by two priests with torches and finally another four nobles with halberts, one of whom was to take the role of 1st Gentleman. The procession is headed by Lady Anne with 2 Ladies and 2 pages to either side of her. This spectacular procession is the first of a number in the production. It must have added something of a sense of pageantry to the performance as the procession passed in front of the exterior of St Paul's. One of the ink-wash sketches shows the scene, an addendum to the scene directions as it is not called for in Shakespeare's text, with its depiction of the medieval pre-Wren St. Paul's, a striking and clear signifier of historical distance for the audience. At the end of the scene, the procession, discovered at the opening of the scene and therefore static and *in situ* throughout Richard's wooing of Anne, moves off stage in the precise order of its composition noted in the promptbooks.

In Act II, another procession accompanies King Edward as he is led in sick. This one comes on stage through folding doors opened by two pages, followed by two attendants carrying an armchair for the King who is supported by Hastings and Rivers on his right and Grey and Dorset on his left. The Queen is behind the King and behind her is the Archbishop of York with a bishop to either side of him. A blocking diagram shows the arrangement of the actors after they arrived on stage: the principal players were placed downstage in a semi-circle with others standing behind them. Appropriately in view of the King's weakness, the blocking anticipated limited movement, but the groups upstage of the semi-circle gave some variety to the view from the auditorium. At the end of the scene the procession moves off stage in reverse order.

The setting for the first of the two processions discussed is innovative as Phelps broke the monotony of the usual wing and shutter setting. A note in the upper left-hand corner of a sketch in the promptbook gives an idea of how this effect was to be achieved: "This ½ flat coming under Groves forms the 3rd opening 2 Ditto out." Bangham (80) unravels the note. The half-flat was one of a pair of shutters. That is, "2 Ditto out" means that the second half-flat was not used. The flat in use was placed in the third grooves, on the opposite prompt side, and then painted to represent the front of the cathedral. The rest of the building was probably painted on either a backscene, or on a pair of shutters, or on a drop and then placed behind the half-flat. The folding doors through which the pages led King Edward's procession were part of the stage right shutters. The pageantry of the procession and the attempt at a three-dimensional view of the architecture of the past are typical of Phelps's concern to ensure scenery and costumes were an appropriate and integral part of his productions.

It was in the third act that the audience was to see the first of the more spectacular scene settings by which Phelps supplemented the appeal of his re-Shakespeareanised script. . Scott Colley (95) writes:

> While most scenic effects in mid-nineteenth-century productions were achieved by flat, painted backgrounds, Phelps relied upon a number of three-dimensional pieces to suggest locations. His promptbooks called for staircases, bridges, and various archways.

Phelps used the half-flat technique again in his III.ii. (the Prince of Wales's entry into London). This was a set scene. A sketch of the envisaged setting appears in both promptbooks. The half-flat is placed downstage left probably in the first grooves to represent the city gates, although it is not entirely clear from the promptbook sketch whether or not the gates were functional. In addition, there is a second innovative feature in this scene. The sketch indicates that the stage right setting is to have standard wings set in grooves parallel to the front of the stage. But the stage left

scenery is made up of one continuous series of flats, set obliquely behind the city gates to add to the three-dimensional effect. It must also have given something of the effect of a box set. The depth of the set is unusual, particularly as the theatre as yet had no gas lighting. The sketch shows no backscene but it is clear that there were five sets of stage right shutters, so any backscene would have had to be placed beyond the fifth grooves.

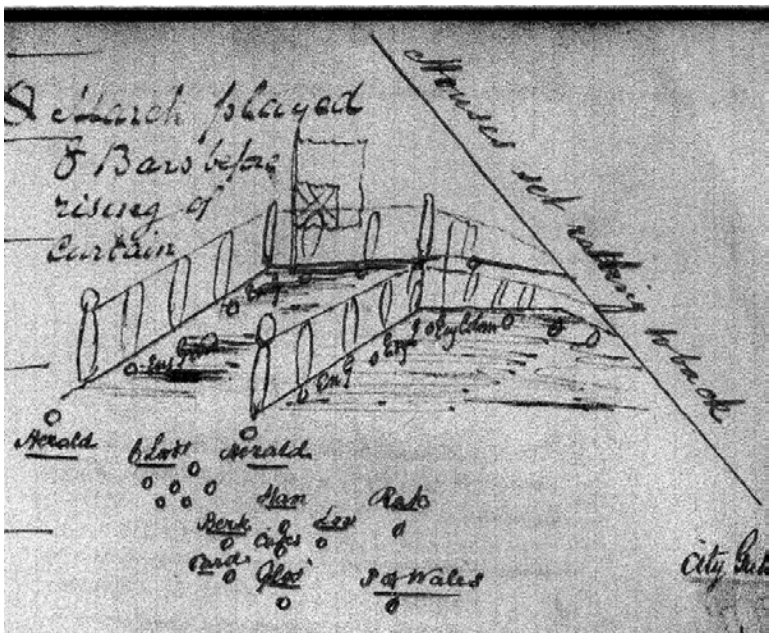


Figure 5
Promptbook ground plan for the 1845 setting
Folger Shakespeare Library

One of the rare alterations to promptbook setting occurs in this scene. The gates are omitted from the sketches in Rich.III 22. Instead the sketches here show Phelps using the second of the 1845 production's innovative features. The 1845 production sketch reproduced above indicates that the stage right setting was to have standard wings set in grooves parallel to the front of the stage. The stage left scenery was made up of one continuous series of flats, set obliquely behind the city gates "like one wall of a box set" (Bangham 121). In 1849, Phelps had replaced the stage right wings with another continuous series of flats. The 1849 books' sketches show "Old English House set raking to back", stage-left but also "Ditto – Ditto" stage-right.

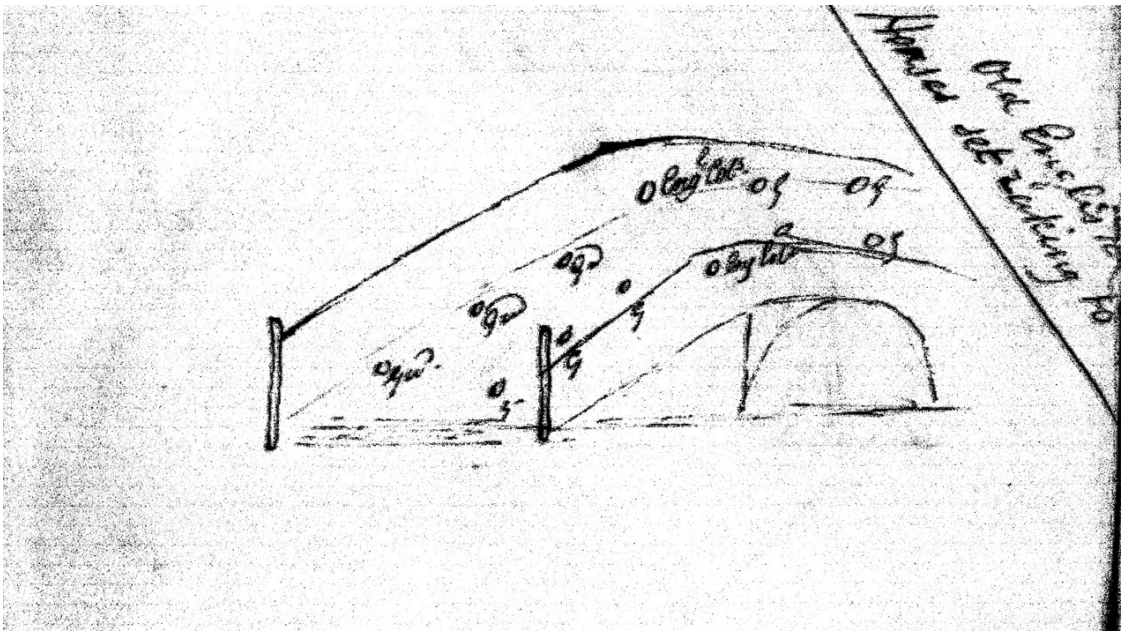


Figure 6
Promptbook ground plan for the 1849 setting
Folger Shakespeare Library

From the auditorium the illusion created by the trapezoid set was further enhanced by the bridge placed centre-stage. This was a three-dimensional unit, obviously substantial as groups of actors used it as a playing space - the Prince of Wales's procession crossed over it as they arrived on stage at the beginning of the scene. The bridge unit is presumably the reason why the promptbook adds *Set Scene* to the source text's *The Same. A Street.* The procession is accompanied: "*The trumpets sound. Enter the Prince of* Wales, Richard, Buckingham, *Cardinal* Bourchier *and Others*'. Phelps's procession has Stanley, Catesby, Lovel, Ratcliffe, Berkley, Trysel and six Lords who "advance from the Bridge as the Curtain rises". Once the procession was over the bridge, twelve English guards remained there with 2 English colours in the centre. Not content with one procession, Phelps added another for the Lord Mayor and his entourage. The promptbook reads: "Enter Mace & Sword Bearers on either side of the Gate the Lord Mayor follows with keys on cushion followed by 4

Aldermen & 6 Citizens 2 Citizens bearing City Flags". Within 12 lines of the curtain, there were 47 actors and supernumeraries on stage to add to the spectacle.

Processions were popular with Victorians, but so too were dioramas, and Phelps made use of them too in this show. For example, the lights are three-quarters down as the curtain rises on Phelps's II.i. to reveal the shadowy "Room in the Tower", an appropriately atmospheric context for Clarence's murder. The atmosphere is enhanced by a dioramic effect, a "Transparent Torch in Flat Archway". Bangham (100) conjectures reasonably that the flat would have been painted with opaque paint over its entire surface except where the torch and the torchlight were painted, where translucent paint would have been used. Thus, when a light was placed behind the arch, it would shine through the translucent paint and create the impression of torchlight on the wall between the two Gothic arches painted on the flat. I see no evidence in the promptbooks to support Bangham's theory (100) that the light in question was placed behind a shutter – the interleaf annotation suggests it was placed behind the flat. The ink-wash drawing inserted in the prompt copy at this point both shows the torchlight effect and that the stage right shutter in the second groove had two Norman arches. Clarence enters the stage through one of these. Brackenbury then enters and "seeing Clarences [*sic*] perturbed state goes to his assistance". Clarence points to a "wide seat" placed stage-right of the torchlight. The two men bring the seat to the front of the stage and, with the cuts discussed above, Clarence recounts his dream. For the audience the seated players, Brackenbury listening to Clarence, created an atmosphere of intimacy in the darkness, now not only the immediate on-stage darkness, but the metaphorical darkness of the dream.

Phelps also uses a dioramic effect in the final act of the play. In the original production, it was the final act which drew most plaudits from the critics and there are

no changes apparent in Phelps's 1849 staging of this act. *The News of the World* review of 20 February 1845 is quoted at length in *The Life*. As Hankey (57) observes the reviewer was particularly interested in the atmosphere Phelps, as director, had created on stage through lighting, sound, scenery and the "earnestness" of every actor involved. He is particularly enthralled by the final act, especially the tents scene where both tents were presented separated by a brook. As the review is the most detailed extant description of the scene, it is worth quoting in some detail:

> Instead of the continual changing of scene and running about of parties…which has hitherto been the practice according to the directions of Cibber…the action takes place as it has been described by Shakespeare. Richmond is observed marching onward with his army; and then we are carried to Bosworth Field, where the tent is literally set up in the presence of the audience. On the other side of the brook that divided the contending armies Richmond's tent is then raised, and the constant movement of leaders of the two forces, the variety of costumes and banners, and the earnestness of every actor employed, constitute a picture of remarkable perfection. Night having closed in with a kind of dioramic effect, two cressets are planted at the entrance of Richard's tent, which throw a faint light over the forepart of the scene; whilst in the background the ghosts of Clarence, Lady Anne, the Princes, and Buckingham are advanced between the two tents by some ingenious process. (qtd in *The Life* 74)

It is interesting to note the reviewer's appreciative response to Phelps's lighting of the scene. The promptbook reveals the lights had been lowered to three-quarters as the previous brief scene, the setting for Bosworth Field, opened (Phelps's V.ii.). Cibber's "running about of parties" is replaced by movement as first Richard's and then Richmond's tents were raised on stage. Dramatic tension was generated as the focus switched from one general and his entourage to the other, heightened by the gradually darkened stage: the promptbook instruction at V.iv.10 is "Lights gradually Down", followed by "Lower Lights gradually Till the Ghosts ascend". When the ghosts ascend the front of the stage was to be "very dark" with "strong light from above on the figures". The ingenious process mentioned in the *News of the World* was first devised by Phelps for his production of *Macbeth*. W.J. Lawrence explains:

> In the third scene of the first act… where the venom which is afterwards to rankle with fateful purpose in Macbeth's mind is first consulted, the observant spectator might have noticed what appeared to be a long narrow strip of sand lying before the three witches. This was in reality a carefully folded gauze curtain made in gradually increasing thickness and drawn slowly upwards towards the close of the scene by fine cords which were rendered invisible by the dimness of the light…soon the figures of the witches seemed to be melting into thin air. (94)

Similarily, the ghosts would have appeared to the audience to float mysteriously as they spoke their lines.

In Bangham's meticulous scrutiny of Rich.III 24, there is one surprising omission. He pays little attention to the music cues scattered throughout the promptbook. He does cite Godfrey Turner's ("Scenery", 129) contention that the introductory overture to each show at Sadler's Wells was Boildieu's "La Dame Blanche", and he posits, unevidenced and unspecified, entr'acte music but he ignores cues such as, "Trumpets play a Dead March; Large Bell Tolled" as Henry's procession is dispatched to Whitefriars. The Folger Shakespeare Library holds manuscript incidental music for *Richard III*. It is also available in the Folger Microform collection (call number Y.d 631 [1-6]). I have a transcription of this microform. The music is described in Richard Charteris's annotated catalogue (entry 160) as "Manuscript orchestral parts, some possibly in the hand of Samuel Phelps. Parts for 'flauto', 'clarinetti', 'trombone', 'cornetto 1mo', 'cornetto 2do,' and 'cornetto 3rd'. Parts include numbered and unnumbered pieces, including several marches ('Richard's march', 'Dead march', and 'Quick march') as well as trumpet calls. Additional manuscript music, added in a different hand, in the cornetti 3rd part".

Music, innovative sets, processions all illustrated a carefully cut text but what of the main event, Phelps's Richard? One reading of the evidence thus far might be that Phelps was cutting the Shakespearean text to seize opportunities to make way for spectacle and pageantry but I would counter that the spectacle and pageantry were

there to illustrate Phelps's idea of the play and to make that idea palatable for his relatively unsophisticated local audience. To this end, and, it seems reasonable to assume, to avoid any adverse reaction to his treatment of the text, he cut around thirty per cent of Richard's lines. In particular historical references such as those, for example, at 1.ii.153-164 describing the deaths of Rutland and Richard's father and those at I.iii. 127-139 where Richard reminds Queen Elizabeth of her route from Lady Grey to Elizabeth of York were excised. As Jowett (84) remarks of Cibber's adaptation, *Richard III* begins at the mid-point of Richard's rise to power and for those in Cibber's audience unfamiliar with preceding events the action could be puzzling. How much more so the case for a Victorian audience. Perhaps Phelps felt that without the interpolations, much of the historiographical back story might also be dispensed with. This allowed him to concentrate more fully on his portrayal of Richard

Sexual innuendo such as that concerning Jane Shore at I.ii.99-101 was also cut:

> I tell thee, fellow,
> He that doth naught with her, excepting one
> Were best to do it secretly, alone.

Perhaps again with an eye to the Gallery, Anne did not, as instructed in the Shakespearean text stage directions, spit at Richard, but paused in front of him on her way stage right and makes a "contemptuous gesture".

Phelps's most savage cuts, however, came in Act IV, scene iv. where just over half Richard's lines are marked for deletion. Announced by a drum roll and preceded by Lovel and Berkley carrying English colours, Tressel bearing an unspecified flag and twelve English guards, Richard parades into the scene (a set scene) through an archway accompanied by six lords. The spectacle of his dramatic arrival on stage

seems to provide a context, a show of power, for the confrontation with his mother and Queen Elizabeth to be read in the text and Phelps does leave the series of haranguing questions to which Richard's response is to drown them out with a very loud flourish of trumpets, an incident which elicited this response from the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* critic:

> His utterance of
>
> "A flourish of trumpets – sound alarums, drums!
> Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women
> Roll on the Lord's anointed! Strike, I say!
>
> came with a strength of voice, energy of mind, and boldness of manner singularly forceable.
> (*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 25March 1849, p. 10)

But thereafter, in part because any sexual connotation was deleted, Phelps mitigated the vehemence of the Duchess's reproaches to her son. Her impassioned apostrophe that she wishes she had strangled Richard in her "accursed womb" (IV.iv. 138) was cut, for example, as was Richard's response to her question, "Art thou my son?" (155) to which he replies, "Ay; I thank God, my father and yourself" (156). The remainder of her lines before her exit at 196 are savagely cut and so the audience does not hear her accusations of the "grievous burden" (168) Richard has been to her throughout his life. These cuts mitigate the dramatic force of her "most heavy" curse at l.188.

Queen Elizabeth is not spared Phelps's blue pencil either. Perhaps Phelps was of Clemen's point of view (190) that to have Richard plead with Elizabeth for the hand of her daughter was "unsatisfactory both from a psychological viewpoint and as dramatic art". The contemporary critics are silent on this point. Rather than a wooing scene, the audience appear to have been left with little more than a question and answer exchange, which deprives them of the steadfastness of the Queen's attack with its reiteration of Richard's crimes and her repudiation of his argument that even after depriving the throne of her grandson, he will retain the crown in the family by marrying

Elizabeth's daughter. But Phelps does retain what Clemen (191) calls Elizabeth's "astonishing final acquiescence" with its promise to put Richard's proposal to her daughter and to give him an answer, although of course, as noted above, the audience will not know the answer.

The adjective most often applied to Phelps's portrayal of Richard was careful:

> Mr. Phelps was the *Richard* which he played in his usual careful style; the character in the original text does not give to the actor those particular opportunities of displaying his actions with so much force as the version generally made use of, as altered by Colly [*sic*] Cibber. Richard does nothing with a bold hand till the last act, and those persons who have been in the habit of seeing Colly Cibber's version of the play will be somewhat disappointed in the original text, as regards the prominent character. (*The Theatrical Journal* 29 March 1849, p. 96)

Allen (14-15) quotes from the two reviews of Phelps's performance in the provinces: the first from the *Western Times* of 16 December, 1836 and the second from the *Plymouth Herald* of 6 May, 1837. The *Western Times* critic noted that in Phelps's performance there was no "following after old 'points'. The chief, and novel, beauty of the delineation consisted in its evenness. The *Plymouth Herald* reviewer went even further:

> Breaking, as [Phelps] does through all the commonplaces of precedent, - not with an idle aim at novelty, but with the simple impulse of an original and energetic mind - he throws himself at once upon the chance of finding an unprejudiced recipient in his critic, and being measured solely by the standard of the poet's meaning" (qtd in Allen, 14 -15).

Phelps was perhaps encouraged to restore Shakespeare's Richard as he knew from experience that an audience would appreciate the "evenness" of interpretation which was to be a hallmark of his subsequent performances.

The reviewer of *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* in his consideration of "points" makes the point that Cibber is just that: "points":

> Richard the Third, as written by Shakspere, is not a telling part – it is not one of those which "come out" most with a general audience. They have been accustomed to certain "points," such as "Down to hell, and say I sent thee

> thither;" "Off with his head -so much for Buckingham;" "Richard's himself again," &c; and by their omission, they are, as it were deprived of having anything to lay hold of.

This is splendidly highlighted in an article in *Punch* entitled, "Audacious Interference with Vested Rights". Written as a letter to Punch, in the persona of an "Old Richard", a veteran actor of "country celebrity" decries Phelps's restoration as a "death-blow" to his line in the profession: "His *Richard* may be SHAKSPEARE's *Richard*, but it isn't KEAN's; it isn't FRED. COOKE's; it isn't GARRICK's. Why, Sir, PHELPS'S *Richard* is a tame part" (*Punch*, 15 March 1848).

This implicit emphasis on Phelps's restraint in his interpretation of Richard is made explicit by the *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper reviewer:*

> The style in which [Phelps] portrayed the deep, plausible, and subtle hypocrisy of the tyrant who could control all hearts, and work all passions and weaknesses to his purpose, afforded proof of superior excellence. He has all that keen and cutting sarcasm which belongs to Richard, and a sufficiency of that rapidity of thought and execution which is essential to prevent the interest from flagging. His utterance of
> "A flourish of trumpets – sound alarums, drums!
> Let not the heavens hear these tell-tale women
> Roll on the Lord's anointed! Strike, I say!"
> Came with a strength of voice, energy of mind, and boldness of manner singularly forceable; and nothing could be better than the whole of his tent scene. There was a grandeur in his courage which not even "the hideous terrors of his guilt could shake."

That Phelps's keen and cutting sarcasm went down well with the gallery may be deduced from a review filed in *The Times* after a performance on Easter Monday 1849. As it offers a rare, albeit somewhat satirical, view of that part of the audience, it is interesting:

> [Phelps's]]character of Richard if not very powerful or passionate… is even and sustained, and leaves on your mind a perfectly definable sense of the villany of the wicked duke, as well as of his sarcastic humour, which indeed was made so prominent by Mr. Phelps as to raise his *role* into a high degree of favour with the galleries…Many of the gentlemen in the gallery took off their coats, and the ladies in the same elevated region divested themselves of their bonnets (which they hung in graceful festoons over the front row), to enjoy the spirit of the affair more fully, and entered into homely, curt, but expressive

> communications with their friends. It would have pleased a real Shakspearian to the heart's core to have seen them, and to have witnessed their hearty appreciation of every real point in the piece. (10 April 1849, p.8)

The evenness of Phelps's performance was not universally praised. John Heraud in his *Athenaeum* critique damned with faint praise:

> Desirous of presenting the poet's intellectual monster rather than the more carnal butcher of the stage Mr. Phelps has divested his impersonation of much of the bluster and brute force of previous assumptions. But as mere negation is not of itself fulness… Mr. Phelps's *Richard* is too much wanting in colour. It has, nevertheless, some highly estimable points. (*Athenæum*, 10 April 1849, p.308)

Faint praise then becomes overt criticism. In the last two acts, Richard as conventional tyrant reappears and "literally bawls at times".

Nonetheless, contemporary critics judged Phelps's 1845 *Richard III* a significant event, largely because of his return to the Shakespearean text, the first for 150 years. Even Heraud, despite his criticism abov,e looked back on the production with praise. To return to his critique of Kean:

> While, therefore, we do not refuse to register the fact that Mr. Kean produced the play of 'Richard the Third' as altered by Cibber, with spectacular appointments and accessories calculated to ensure its run for some nights, we cannot after its expulsion from the stage by critic and actor and…[its] successful substitution of the original at a London theatre, permit the work of the usurping playwright to be restored to the arena of the stage with the assumption of right and the *prestige* of a triumph. (*Athenæum*, 25 February 1854, p.25

Despite its contemporary status as a success, however, the production has not achieved comparable status in theatre historiography, particularly in stage histories in recent editions of the play where Heraud's "step in the right direction" verdict, rather than a significant step in the play's performance history persists. Take three recent editions of the play: James R. Siemon for The Arden Shakespeare Third Series (2009), Janis Lull for The New Cambridge Shakespeare (1999), John Jowett for The Oxford Shakespeare (2000). In their respective sections on the performance history of

the play, Siemon lumps together the performances of 1845 and 1849, although he does acknowledge that Macready was combining Cibber and Shakespeare, Jowett mentions only the 1845 production and Lull asserts Phelps repeated his staging of the 1845 "version" in 1849. There is, admittedly, an anomaly which dented Phelps's reputation as a restorer of Shakespeare's *Richard III*: he returned to Cibber during his last season at the Wells. It must be a matter for conjecture whether his nephew is correct in taking responsibility for Phelps's decision to put on Cibber. May Phelps (*The Life*, 202) felt Miss Atkinson, Sadler's Wells leading actress at the time, was not a suitable Margaret, so, it seems reasonable to assume that, with customary pragmatism, Phelps took the sensible theatrical option. He both knew he had no Margaret and recognised the commercial potential of Cibber. It seems unlikely, as Lull (26) surmises in her edition of the play, that Phelps's production was an attempt to rival Kean as he did not have the resources to mount a comparable spectacle and I can find no extant reference to magnificence in Phelps's staging of the play beyond the much-praised staging of the1845 revival.

As John Jowett remarks (91), however, it was to be Charles Kean's performances of Cibber which dominated the London stage in the mid-nineteenth century, Kean whose example of "turning the stage into a scene of operatic splendour that seemed to be literally inhabited by the persons in the play" is adjudged to provide an example for Irving, despite Irving's insistence that Phelps was his most significant theatrical influence: "Whatever is best in my work at the Lyceum – not only in the playing but also in production…is *all* Phelps" (qtd Chance Newton, 9-10). Odell's *dictum* (263) that "[Kean] gave to Irving and Tree a formula followed in all their later revivals" has become the orthodoxy. As Postlewait observes, "revisionist histories" seldom question the status of an "important occurrence" label, acquired through

documentation and commentary, awarded to a specific event. Charles Kean's *Richard* is a case in point. Conversely, documentation and commentary may fail to instigate any claim to an event's significance which is the case with Phelps. Despite the available documentation and commentary examined above, revisionist history continues to overlook Phelps's 1849 revival. Sandwiched between the 1845 production with its interpolations and his return to Cibber in 1861, the importance of Phelps's 1849 return to a Shakespearean text for *Richard III* has failed to attain status as an important occurrence and Phelps remains constantly judged by his 1845 production, where the interpolations belied his claim to restore the text of Shakespeare.

It was Godfrey Turner's contention ("First Nights", 254-5) that it took Phelps some time before he saw his way to "drastic measures of dramatic reform", in order to sweep the stage of "old conventional lumber": the early *Macbeth* of Sadler's Wells, for example, he argues, was the *Macbeth* of Drury Lane (that is, Macready's), "with a less imposing array of tartans and a reduced chorus of witches, but [otherwise] the mixture of Middleton and Shakespeare as before." The Cibber adaptation was, perhaps, still too popular with audiences to be a really promising prospect for drastic measures of dramatic reform but *Timon of Athens*, the production to be considered in the next chapter, seems tailor-made.

CHAPTER 2
Timon of Athens

Timon of Athens has been regarded as a seriously flawed drama, and hence a high-risk drama to put on stage.
(John Jowett, 2004)

My concern in this chapter is to explore the relevance of Phelps's production of *Timon of Athens* for his audiences. Phelps's production of *Timon*, the twenty-second of his Shakespearean revivals, was the first nineteenth-century production of the play since that of Kean in 1816. In this case study, I hope to show why, at the beginning of his eighth season at Sadler's Wells, Phelps decided to produce a play rarely performed, considered lacking in dramatic interest, and, by 1851, reputed to be of dubious authorship; I also hope to show why, against these odds, it enjoyed a good run. I will argue that the reasons for its ensuing success were complex. As I will show, its mise-en-scène fed the contemporary appetite for spectacle and curiosity about archaeological discoveries. But the production also contributed to a critical debate over whether certain of Shakespeare's plays were better suited to be studied privately rather than staged, and to the discourse about what should constitute the national drama: this, I shall show, was a much-seen show in part because it was a much-discussed one.

Of the seven promptbooks, numbers five to eleven, specifically associated with Phelps's production of *Timon* in Shattuck's Catalogue (462-4), four are held in the Folger, successively Tim.2 (Shattuck 5), Tim.4 (Shattuck 8), Tim.5 (Shattuck 9), and Tim.6 (Shattuck 11). This chapter is based on Tim.2 which has manuscript cast lists for both the 1851 production and for Phelps's 1856 revival. It appears to have been used for both productions. The text used for Tim.2 was a 1785 Bell edition and it has been marked by both Phelps and Williams. A microform (S 869) of Tim.2, provided by the Folger, is held in the Shakespeare Institute Library. The other three

Folger books, variously described by Shattuck as a version (Tim.6) made by John Moore, an approximate transcription of this book (Tim.5), also made by John Moore, and a version derived from Phelps's production (Tim.4). I have used these three books as cross-reference tools for Tim.2. Shattuck surmises that any augmentation in Tim.6 may have arisen from John Moore's personal observations on the production. Although the majority of Moore's life was spent as a stage manager and prompter in theatres in New York, Moore (1814-1893) was born in England and spent his early career in theatres in London, so it is a plausible supposition on Shattuck's part. There is also a transcription of Tim.2 (Shattuck 5). It is apparently unused, belonged to William Creswick, and is held in the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library and Archive, reference S.R. 72.932. I have been provided with a photocopy of this book.

THE PLAY'S PROVENANCE

As Jowett establishes (89) in the Introduction to his edition of *Timon of Athens*, whether or not the play was staged before the Restoration is not known, but around 1674-5, Thomas Shadwell's adaptation, *Timon of Athens; or The Man Hater*, achieved success and continued to be played on the London stage until the 1740s. Shadwell's play with its addition of a romantic plot featuring a mercenary fiancée and a selfless mistress, reflected the advent of actresses on the stage which, as Jowett argues (89), "led to modulations in the genres of plays" with tragedies becoming more romantically heroic. Shadwell's changes to *Timon* moved the play away from nihilistic disgust towards "a more affirmative sense of tragedy". However, subsequent adaptations did not meet with the success of Shadwell's version. Although there is one recorded revival of *Timon* based on a Shakespearean text in the eighteenth century, in 1761, at the Smock Alley Theatre in Dublin, later in the century, only adaptations were staged. One, by James Love (a pseudonym for James Dance), a

composite of Shakespeare and Shadwell, was performed at the Richmond Theatre in 1767 and Garrick put on an adaptation by Richard Cumberland in 1771 in which Cumberland gave Timon a daughter:

> The text adheres to the language of the Shakespearean original where the plots coincide, but the reduction of Apemantus…the removal of Sempronius, the cutting of some of Timon's misanthropic speeches, and the introduction of [the] daughter…ensured…a softer-edged play. (94)

A Bell's acting edition of 1773, Jowett posits (94), probably anticipated a London revival that was not realised on stage because, as he adds, by the end of the eighteenth century, the fashion for radical adaptation was dwindling; Thomas Hull's 1786 adaptation, for example, which was closer to Shadwell than Cumberland, was not well-received.

In an essay published in 1920, "Some Versions of *Timon of Athens* on Stage" (*Modern Philology*, vol.5 [September], pp.269-285), Stanley T. Williams provided a detailed, carefully-evidenced critical account of adaptations of the play from the Restoration to Kean's revival of Lamb's version in 1816. As Jowett (93) does, Williams emphasised the successful stage history of Shadwell's adaptation. He was dismissive of Cumberland, "leader of the school of Sentimental Drama" (272), and quoted Walpole's judgment, with its disdain for Shakespeare's play, that Cumberland had "caught the manners and diction of the original so exactly" that it was "full as bad a play as it was before he corrected it" (272). He also noted that Thomas Hull's adaptation of the play was the last version of *Timon of Athens* staged in London until that of Lamb. A review of a performance of this adaptation, in an edition of the *European Magazine* in May 1786, considered Hull's version of the play should be "consigned to oblivion" (272). *Timon*, at the end of the eighteenth century, was not popular.

A version of Shakespeare's text, that of George Lamb (1784-1834), was finally restored to the London stage in 1816 with Edmund Kean playing Timon. In John Genest's entry of 28 October 1816 for Drury Lane in which he recorded Kean's performance, he quoted from Lamb's Advertisement to the play: 'The play of Timon of Athens has at times, within the last fifty years, been presented to the public with considerable alterations. The present attempt has been to restore Shakspeare to the stage, with no other omissions than such as refinement of manners has rendered necessary.' Lamb's omissions necessitated not only the removal of Phyrnia and Timandra but also, Genest continued, much in the dialogue, "generally with propriety" (Genest, 384-5). As his advertisement claims, Lamb's adaptation is much less altered than previous versions. However, despite warm approbation for Kean's Timon from most reviewers, the production was not palatable to the audience. It had only a "modest seven performances over three weeks and was never revived thereafter" (Williams, "Versions", 164). The fault was deemed to lie in the play, not Kean's performance. The contemporary view that *Timon* was a play better suited to the study than to the stage is made clear in the *New Monthly Magazine*'s review of the Kean production:

> Whoever has read this piece with attention will coincide in the opinion attributed to the late Mr. Sheridan, that it is calculated for the closet only, and cannot produce a great effect in representation. (*New Monthly Magazine &Universal Register*, 1 December 1816, p. 448)

Leigh Hunt (1784-1859) agreed with Sheridan. His review of the Kean production found *Timon* lacking in dramatic interest, a play better read than acted:

> The parts of the tragedy which contain the dramatic interest are comparatively few...when Timon has once fallen from his fortunes, there is little to excite further...[T]he [spectator] is still delighted [after Timon's fall] but he would be still more so in his closet, where he could weigh every precious sentence at leisure. (*The Examiner*, 3 November, 1816, p. 699)

Some 24 years later that view still prevailed. Macready's diary reveals that although he had considered the role of Timon, he rejected it on the grounds that it would not play well. The entry for 23 June 1840, records that Macready had looked at the play but it is "only an incident with comments on it. It is not complete enough – not furnished, I ought to say – with the requisite varieties of passion for a play" (Toynbee vol.2, p.65). Furthermore, in March 1841, the Introductory Notice to part XVII of Charles Knight's *Pictorial Shakspere* (*Timon of Athens*), republished in 1849 as one of his *Studies of Shakspere*, had cast doubt on the authorship of the play:

> The differences of style, as well as the more important differences in the cast of thought, which prevail in the successive scenes of this drama, are so remarkable as to justify the conclusion that it is not wholly the work of Shakspere. (70)

A stage history which continued that of Stanley T. Williams' referred to above appeared as an Appendix to the Soellner monograph (1979) on the play: *Timon of Athens: Shakespeare's Pessimistic Tragedy.* Written by Gary J. Williams, the stage history covered major productions between 1816 and 1978. A self-confessed enthusiast for the play's dramatic values and theatrical possibilities, Williams began his account with an acknowledgment which could well act as an epigraph to contemporary critical opinion on Phelps's undertaking to produce the play:

> The director who chooses to stage *Timon of Athens* is apt to be regarded as unwisely brave, if not perverse…*Timon* has been one of the least produced plays in the canon…[W]hen it has been produced, critics have often expressed a constrained admiration for the attempt but ultimately doubted that the play has proved stageworthy. (161)

As will be discussed below, Phelps's choice of *Timon* may have been the result of necessity rather than either bravery or perversity but "constrained admiration" is a pretty accurate description of the critical reaction, although thirty-one performances throughout the season are testament to the stageworthiness of Phelps's production.

PHELPS'S PRODUCTION

It is not only Mr Phelps acting we go to see,
but his idea and illustration of the play
(Frederick Guest Tomlins, 1851)

With its disputed authorship, poor production record and its reputation as a closet drama, what attracted Phelps to *Timon*? Oxenford's response to Phelps's show summarised what he thought may have been the difficulties Phelps had had to overcome in preparing the play for the stage:

> It was well known that *Timon of Athens* contained some of the most forcible speeches ever written; but it was also known that it was wanting in variety of incident, that several successive scenes, though the different *nuances* of character are finely executed by the poet, were in point of action almost repetitions of each other, that the catastrophe was flat, and that it was utterly without female interest. (*Times*, 29 September 1851, p.6)

But, despite these disadvantages, despite the fact that "modern investigation" had led to a belief that the play might not be entirely the work of Shakespeare, it had held an unquestioned position in the canon for so long that it was "inseparably connected" with Shakespeare's name: "Few plays are more familiar in the closet than the one which records the fortunes of the Athenian misanthrope". (*Times*, 29 September 1851, p.6)

Added to its absence from the stage for 35 years, Oxenford saw the play's perceived disadvantages as an attraction for Phelps, "just the play for a manager who shines in the exhibition of dramatic curiosities". And Oxenford's is a compelling argument.

Phelps had already had success, for example, with such dramatic curiosities as the previous season's production of *The Duchess of Malfi*, discussed in the Introduction above, and in the season before that he had combined a Shakespearean text with spectacle to put on a much appreciated *Antony and Cleopatra*. Although his biographers present Phelps (*The Life*, 12) as a man of nervous disposition where financial risk was involved, runs of 22 performances for both these shows may have

inspired confidence in his choice of *Timon.* In addition, a commonplace in stage histories of *Timon* is the suggestion that Oxenford's final reservation, the lack of female interest, may also have been influential in Phelps's choice: he had just sacked his leading actress.

Cast as Gertrude for a production of *Hamlet* early in this eighth season, Isabella Glyn refused the part on the grounds that it was too slight, and was dismissed for breach of contract. Glyn had been part of Phelps's company since his fifth season at the theatre and had attracted increasingly favourable notices. For example, as noted in Chapter One, she was a powerful Margaret in Phelps's *Richard III.* Phelps's action, therefore, left him without a leading, and popular, actress. Something of a *cause célèbre* in the theatrical press at the time, the fact that here, unusually, was a Shakespeare play with no woman's voice until the fourth act, may well have influenced Phelps's choice of *Timon.* However, the promptbooks suggest that if his sacking of Glyn was the catalyst for putting on the play, once the decision was made, Phelps set about readying the play with his customary thoroughness.

Oxenford, in the *Times* piece referred to above, attributed Phelps's solution to the difficulties inherent in putting on the play to Macready's influence: Phelps's success with the play, he posited, had most to do with interpretation through illustration:

> [Phelps] solves the difficulty by carrying out to a great extent Mr. Macready's principle of appealing to the prevailing taste for decorative magnificence… The Greek *symposia* which occur in the piece are put on the stage with every detail of antique splendour… the less important scenes take place before interiors and exteriors, carefully painted after our knowledge of Athenian life.

I hope to show that although there is sufficient evidence in the promptbooks and from the contemporary reviews, that "decorative magnificence" featured significantly in

the show, Phelps's cutting and rearranging of the text played the more important part in his interpretation.

In an essay on the historiography of Shakespeare in performance in the Victorian era, Richard Schoch argues pictorialism was especially identified with Victorian Shakespeare revivals: "Pictorialism was not *what* actor-managers thought about when they staged their productions it was *how* they thought" (Schoch, "Victorian", 233). Phelps had to engage a diverse community with his production. As will be discussed below, as they offered their conflicting opinions on the show, the context for the critical reaction from the reviewers was *Timon*'s suitability for the stage. But, despite the fact that Shakespeare was well-established in the Sadler's Wells repertoire by this point in Phelps's management, for some in the audience the entry point to this show would not be that of the intellectual studying *Timon* in his closet. Not only did actor-managers think pictorially, pictorialism was an integral part of audience response. Reviewers were at least at one in their notices both of full houses, enthusiastic response and praise for the magnificence of the scenery. Tomlin's review, for example, enthuses about the "classic chambers and the picturesque scenes in which the numerous transactions are placed" which have had "ample justice" done to them: "They have been evidently compiled under the eye of an archaeological scholar, and painted with a tasteful eye for colour" (*Morning Advertiser*, 16 September 1851, p.6). Alas, there are no ink-wash drawings to consult for this show so there is no detail to be gleaned of the way in which Fenton depicted Athenian architecture. However, as Richard Jenkyns argues, "The first part of the [nineteenth] century is the great epoch of Grecian taste in literature, architecture, and even dress" (15) and it seems reasonable to assume Fenton would have visited the Parthenon sculptures in the British Museum, would have studied such works as James

'Athenian' Stuart's *The Antiquities of Athens* and 'Grecian' Williams' *Select Views in Greece.* It is reasonable to conjecture that he had been influenced by the work of artists such as William Gell and his fellow scenic artist, David Roberts, who in the 1830s and 1840s had "popularised an already popular genre, that of picturesque scenes of ruins and landscapes…[and] used his sketches as a basis for 247 large coloured lithographs...[which] set the scene for nineteenth-century images of the Near East" (Challis Harpy Tomb, 7-8). The promptbooks' scenic indications, many of which will be detailed below in the discussion of Phelps's interpretation of the text, groove placements, blocking maps and various calls, taken in conjunction with reviews, enable a cautious estimation of how the production may have been intended to look, and to sound, from the auditorium.

Jowett argues in his Introduction that *Timon of Athens* "is particularly resistant to… editors' act divisions" (11). His edition of the play has no act divisions. Instead, he presents seventeen scenes which fall, in five phases, into a "carefully patterned sequence of dramatic action". The Bell Edition used for Tim.2 presented the play in five acts, divided into nineteen scenes although coincidentally, Phelps's acting text had seventeen scenes which he devised as follows from the Bell text: he rearranged the first act into three scenes rather than two; he followed the Bell edition in keeping the two scenes in Act II; he reorganised III.v. and III.vi. into two scenes respectively and, thus, had eight scenes not six; he incorporated the end of Act IV into the opening scene of Act V, cut Vii. completely but added V.iii. to his V.i. and made V.iv. and V.vi. his V.ii., the final scene of the play. (He cut V.v.) For ease of reference, and because it is pertinent to my argument that Phelps's cutting and re-arranging of the text made a considerable contribution to its success, I have tabulated a comparison between Bell and Phelps's re-arranged text:

BELL	lines		TIM.2		Groove	Jowett
I.i.	299	Timon's *house*	I.i.		3	i (286)
I.ii.	257	Timon's *house*	1.ii.		1	ii (252)
			1.iii.		6	iii (35)
II.i.	34	*Public Place*	II.i		2	iv (227)
II.ii.	234	Timon's *Hall*	II.ii.		3	v (62)
III.i.	61	Lucullus' *House*	III.i.		2	vi (84)
III.ii.	90	*Public Street*	III.ii.		2	vii (40)
III.iii.	42	S'ronius's *House*	III.iii.		1	viii (970
III.iv.	112	Timon's *Hall*	III.iv.		2	ix (34)
III.v.	116	*Senate-House*	III.v.		6	x (115)
			III.vi.		1	xi (114)
III.vi.	115	Timon's *house*	III.vii.		1	xii (40
			III.viii.		3	xiii (
IV.i.	40	*Without walls*	IV.i.		2	
IV.ii.	51	Timon's *house*	IV.ii.		1	
IV.iii.	452	*The Woods*	IV.iii.		6	
V.i.	83	*The Woods* & Timon's *Cave*	V.i.		6	
V.ii.	125	*The same*	V.ii.		Diorama	
V.iii.	113	*The same*				
V.iv.	17	*Walls of Athens*				
V.v.	10	*Changes in the Woods*				
V.vi.	83	*Before the Walls*				

Phelps, of course, was steeped in contemporary *mores*. *Timon* was "Shakespeare" and "Shakespeare" meant five acts and under Macready's influence, five acts presented with appropriate pictorial *mise-en-scène* but, as may be seen in the table above, there is some concurrence between Jowett and Phelps which throws light on Phelps's interpretation of the dramatic action. The first of Jowett's five phases, his scenes 1 and 2, is "Timon in prosperity, centring on an ensemble scene of banqueting, masquing, and munificent gift-giving" (9). The promptbooks offer considerable detail of how Phelps's first phase, Act I, was to be staged. The setting for I.i in the Bell text is simply *Athens. A Hall in Timon's House.* There is no addendum to this in Tim.2 but Tim.4 has "of statues" appended in Moore's hand to the scenic indication and so becomes *A Hall of Statues in Timon's House*. It was set in the third grooves. The

onstage Athenian world, patrician and entirely male, appeared a busy and prosperous one, certainly concerned with munificent gift giving. It is clear that there were doors in the centre of the scene behind which, as I.i. opens, Flaminius, Servilius and Lucilius are discovered passing backwards and forwards whilst "in conversation". The Poet (with his "*MS*" business) and the Painter (carrying his "painting") came on stage through the centre doors moving downstage as they instigated the opening dialogue of the play. The Jeweller (with a "jewel") and the Merchant then came on at line 5, again through the central doors but remained upstage left for their discussion. At the same time, six Lords entered from L.1.E, once more "in conversation", and moved upstage right to form a second group opposite the Jeweller and the Merchant. Three senators entered through the same door as the lords but they then went off through the central door, " in conversation". They were followed by the conversing Lucilius and Lucius, who again went off stage through the central door where they were joined by the Jeweller and the Merchant and where they were all to be seen pacing to and fro behind the open door, "during the scene". Senators and Lords moved around the stage whilst the audience's attention shifted between the initial Poet and Painter conversation, then the Jeweller and Merchant exchange and back to the Poet and Painter. As a later stage direction refers to the lords wearing togas, it seems a reasonable assumption that the characters would have been appropriately dressed: a review in *John Bull* proffered:

> [Mr. Phelps] has bestowed the upmost care upon the accuracy as well as picturesque beauty of scenic representation. The edifices, halls, costumes, decorations – everything brings before our eyes Athens in the days of her splendour. (*John Bull*, 4 October 1851, p.64)

Timon's first entry into the play is heralded by trumpets. Tim.2 has a detailed note in Phelps's hand: "Music Playd by Green Room - Piano & increasing to Forte."

The banqueting and masquing of this first phase offered an opportunity for the kind of set scenes Phelps delivered so successfully. The banquet, a discovered scene, took place in a room of state in Timon's house, set in the 6th grooves. I.ii. in the Bell edition, the stage directions there are:

> *Another Apartment in* Timon's *House. Hautboys playing loud Musick. A great Banquet serv'd in; and then enter* Timon, Alcibiades, Lucius, Luculus, Sepronius, *and other Athenian Senators, with* Ventidius, *and Attendants. Then comes, dropping after all* Apemantus, *discontentedly, like himself.*

The stage directions for the scene are both amended and supplemented in the promptbooks' acting text. In Phelps's production the banquet is not "served in" but is *in situ* as the scene opens. The table, specified as a triclinium by Moore, is laid with fruit, ewers, goblets, jugs and dishes, the receptacles presumably "authentic". Phelps's amended stage direction reads:

> *Timon, Alcibiades, and 8 Lords enter L.U.E. Flaminius, Lucilius are standing across stage at back, bow to* [*Timon*] *and then exeunt L.U.E. All the characters bow to Timon as he enters. Flavius and Sempronius are discovered R H waiting on guests, also 6 super Servants. Sempronius is discovered R.2.E. 8 Dancing Lords and 10 other Lords, enwreathed, are discovered. All are standing, Ventidius speaking as he enters with Timon L.U.E. – Apemantus, discontentedly, like himself, follows last. Down LH*

There is a blocking map in Tim.2 for what is to be discovered as the scene opens but it is indistinct. The Creswick transcription offers a clearer indication:

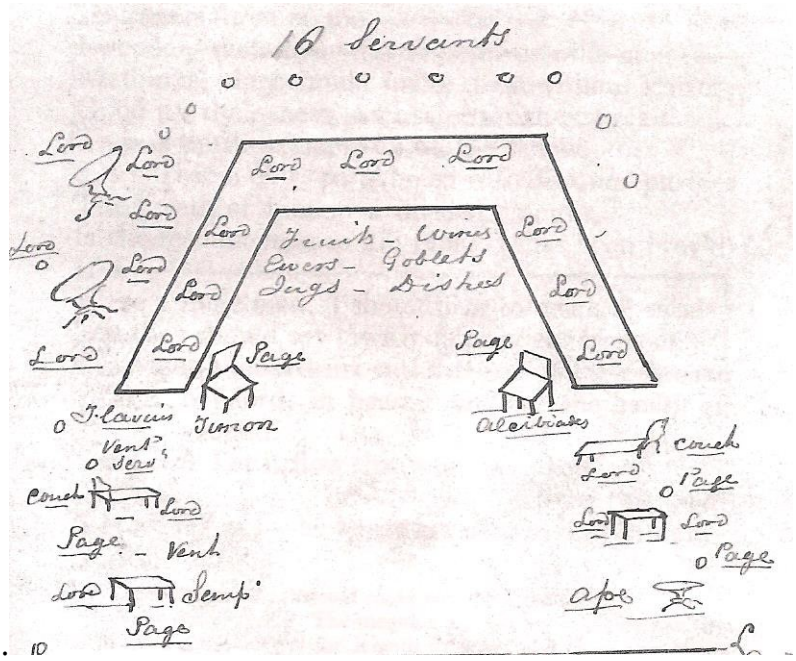


Figure 7
Sketch from Creswick promptbook
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust Library

Written under the Creswick blocking map, the direction for the lounges, couches and stools covered with velvet cushions, is that they are to be ornamented "as much as possible". When the various discovered servants and enwreathed lords, 27 *in toto*, were joined on stage by Timon, Alcibiades, Ventidius and the other lords, the audience was presented with a *tableau vivant* to initiate the banquet. As the map indicates, the picture was elaborately composed although the disposition of the ornamented couches is not entirely clear. If the table was a triclinium, then the couches would have been placed along its three edges, which may explain the somewhat cryptic "Couches" to the left of "Fruits" in the map above. The dancing Lords are, of course, there for the Masque. Called for (Call5 in the promptbooks) as Ballet Lords during I.i,. they are, as noted above, "discovered" at the opening of I.iii. As Jowett observes, the masque "offers an opportunity for a production to impose its style and adapt the play to the tastes of the day, no matter what they might be" (112). It is difficult to argue other than that Phelps seized on the masque as an opportunity

for more spectacle, very much the taste of the day. The note on the interleaf opposite the entry of the Amazons reads:

> Music. Forte. Apemantus turns his back on them. Enter Amazons. They dance using their bows and arrows. They form [a] picture. The dancing Lords rise, bow to Timon as if asking permission to Dance, he assents and they advance R & L. A general dance of 12. At the End the lords go back to their places, and off at their Entrance. The Amazons form a line L H.

Then, as Timon invites them to partake of the "idle banquet" waiting for them, another note reads: "Music repeated. The Amazons form & Exeunt L.I.E."

Jowett's phase 1 description, then, is apposite for Phelps's opening scenes. Phelps did present ensemble scenes of munificent gift-giving, banqueting and masquing, carefully choreographed and appropriately illustrated. However, his additional scene, whether or not it was added as a matter of theatrical expediency to close in I.i. in order to prepare for the banqueting scene, does offer a clue as to what, in Tomlins's phrase, Phelps's "idea of the play" was to be. Alcibiades's entry in the first act is attended by a great deal of noise: trumpets played him on stage and played again at his exit. In the 1851 show, Henry Marston took the part. Heraud gave a description: "Mr. Marston's *Alcibiades*…in character, bearing and costume, looked truly an historical portrait…[a] rough but gallant soldier" (*Athenæum*, 20 January 1851, 1004). Phelps was to develop this portrait of a rough but gallant soldier as the play proceeded. The new scene also focused audience attention on Apemantus's scorn for the sycophants, flatterers and spongers surrounding Timon; for some perhaps, allowing time to reflect on whether the Poet's moral exemplum foreshadowed what was to come.

Carpenters' scenes, such as Phelps's new I.Iii., throughout the production, are far from being Oxenford's less important scenes but help to interpret the action of the play. Jowett's phase two is "Timon in debt, represented most typically in short,

fragmented, and satirical scenes showing separate creditors" (9). Phelps played III.i., "A Room in a Lucullus's House", (Jowett's scene 5) in the second grooves, III.ii. "A Publick Place" (Jowett's scene 6) in the second grooves, III.iii "Sempronius' House" (Jowett's scene 7) in the first grooves and III.iv "Timon's Hall" (Jowett's scene 8) in the second grooves. These front scenes, the request scenes, where Timon's servants are rebuffed by the ungracious and ungrateful friends with the dramatic impetus of the frequent entrances and exits at the front of the stage would inevitably have foregrounded the sense of impending disaster for Timon, substantiated Timon's disillusion, and prepared the way for the turn from munificence to misanthropy.

Of the two scenes Phelps did not play as front scenes in this phase, Jowett's scenes 3 and 7, the former, Phelps's II.ii., was played in the third grooves. The latter the scene in which Flavius makes it clear to Timon that he is in desperate straits and Timon decides to call in his loans from his, so-called, friends) used the opening scene's set, perhaps simply because there were so many characters involved, although Phelps does cut Apemantus and the Fool.

Jowett's third phase, scenes 10-13, is the "turn from Athens", which, he argues, divides the play into two plots with the senators as authority figures in relation to Alcibiades but as "humiliated self-servers" in Timon's mock banquet. Phelps's treatment of III.v., Jowett's scene 10, develops his interpretation of Alcebiades's role. He ends the scene at Alcibiades' riposte to the senators, "Now the gods keep you old enough; that you may live / Only in bone, that none may look on you!" (III.v.102-3), after which Alcibiades left the stage. Then, after a pause for the change of scene, Alcibiades re-entered and the rest of the speech was given as a soliloquy in front of "Temple Flats", set in the first grooves:

> I'm worse than mad; I have kept back their foes,
> While they have told their money, and let out

> Their coin upon large interest; I myself,
> Rich only in large hurts. -All those, for this?
> Is this balsam, that the usuring senate
> Pours into captain's wounds? Ha! Banishment?
> It comes not I; I hate not to be banish'd;
> It is a cause worthy my spleen and fury,
> That I may strike at Athens. I'll cheer up
> My discontented troops, and lay for hearts.
> 'Tis honour, with most lands to be at odds;
> Soldiers as little should brook wrongs, as gods.

That is, what was, in effect, Phelps's expansion of the Alcibiades role into a sub-plot in the play, begun in the opening act, continued. Alcibiades's banishment from Athens was the responsibility of the ungrateful senators rather than a punishment for his obduracy and questionable moral stance in pleading for the life of his fellow soldier, and set up Alcibiades's march on Athens in Act V as the "coming of a righteous avenging conqueror" (Williams, "Appendix", 168). The senators were ungrateful and also humiliated. Phelps played the mock banquet as the final scene of Act III with the same scenery as the first banquet. There is no response from the critics to the throwing of the water and the dishes although it must have been a spectacular moment at the end of the act. Each of the promptbooks confirms the stage directions: *Throwing Water in their Faces and Throws the Dishes at them.*

The first of the scenes (scene 10), in Jowett's phase four, "the turn from Athens", was Phelps's IV.i. It was played in the second grooves, "Without the Walls of Athens". Although explicit sexual references were cut, most of the long speech cursing the walls of Athens was unaltered. "Matrons, turn incontinent" (IV.i.3) for example, remained although the imperative "To general filths / Convert o' the instant, green virginity! / Do't in you your parents' eyes" (IV.i.6-7) was cut, as was, "Maid to thy master's bed; / Thy mistress is o'the brothel" (IV.i.12-13) but this did little to interrupt the rhythm of the stream of "confounding contraries" (IV.i.20) which reached a crescendo in "Let confusion live!" (IV.i.19-20). The proliferation of

diseases and infections to be heaped on Athenians young and old, regardless of rank, is left uncut.

There are no maps in the promptbooks to indicate how the brief return to Timon's house was staged, when the servants reflect on Timon's treatment, Phelps's IV.ii., but as Flavius was to be presented sympathetically in Act V, it seems likely the sorrow the servants expressed was genuine in contrast to the hypocrisy of Timon's so-called friends. "Though Timon never realizes it, the servant community is not dominated by self-interest" (Dawson and Minton, 268).

It is Jowett's fourth phase which I find most interesting when juxtaposed with Phelps's interpretation of the text. Jowett presents phase four, his scene 14, as a "rigorously self-contained drama":

> Timon in the woods, an attenuated ensemble scene broken into separate encounters, with Timon static, the visitors coming to him and departing in turn…an unbroken stretch of action showing Timon's life in the woods from beginning to end…It splits into cleanly separated episodes, but the overall continuity of theatrical experience is remorselessly stretched. (10-11)

In contrast to the hustle and bustle of the front scenes, Phelps's IV.iii. was an "extreme" set. Set in the sixth grooves, Timon is to be "discovered" to the right of his "Cave". There is some description of the set: it is a "woody dell with a high raking platform" set between the two fifth entrances. Although, frustratingly, there is no map to give any indication of whether or not the cave was a built piece, the promptbook indicates the cave is set flush at the stage right fourth entrance. Timon is discovered on the bank of the dell in a "mean" dress ("brown shirt and fleshings"). Jowett's scene 14 encompasses the Bell text's IV.iii, V.i and V.ii.. As may be observed in the chart above, Phelps baulked at the length of IV.iii. and cut it at IV.iii.451 but he did play the encounters with Alcibiades and the whores, then Apemantus, then the thieves as one long scene with very little movement indicated for Timon as the visitors came

and went. Victorian morality necessitated certain modifications. Unlike Lamb, Phelps did not exclude the prostitutes, Phyrnia and Timandra, from his production, following the Bell text and announcing them as “mistresses to Alcibiades” on the bill, although his textual cuts did dilute the significance of their inclusion, because Timon’s attack on women’s venality loses much of its emotional savageness. For example, he moderates Timon’s ferocious injunction, “Be a whore still!”. The Bell text has,

> Be a whore still! They love thee not that use thee.
> Give them diseases, leaving with thee their lust.
> Make use of thy salt hours. Season the slaves
> For tubs and baths; bring down rose-cheeked youth
> To the tub-fast and the diet.

“Be a whore still!” becomes “Be wanton still!”, followed by, “Bring down rose-cheeked youth / To the tub-fast, and the diet.” The implication is there – Timandra’s wantonness will bring down “rose-cheeked youth” - but the vehemence of Timon’s explicit reference to venereal disease is lost.

And, later in the scene, where so many of Timon’s imprecations to Alcibiades to conquer Athens, sparing none from “white beard” (IV.iii.111) to “dimpled” (119) babe, are directed against women, the misogynistic fervour of the language is also lost. For example, the snarling invective of “Let not the virgin’s cheek/ Make soft thy trenchant sword; for those milk-paps, /That through the window-bars bore at man’s eyes, /Are not within the leaf of pity writ” (114-117) reduced to the, much tamer, command to be immune to the yells of “mothers, maids...babes...priests in holy vestments bleeding.” Victorian propriety, that is, had the effect of dissipating the misogyny in Timon’s misanthropy.

Nonetheless, with the exception of the long passage (326 – 344) elaborating animal savagery to intensify his abhorrence of mankind, Phelps did leave the episode with Apemantus largely uncut, excising some lines of amplification but retaining the

"bitter railing... [the] biting satire, and keen repartee" which so affected the *Reynolds's Newspaper* critic who maintained it was a strain of invective "which must be heard to be appreciated" (*Reynolds's Newspaper*, 21 September 1851, p.9). Phelps cut only the last 7 lines of the episode with the thieves but then brought the act to an end.

The curtain was rung down and Phelps's final act, began with Flavius's, "O you gods! /Is yon despis'd and ruinous man my lord?" (IV.iii.453-4), a speech which foregrounded the steward's view that Timon was "excessive but not evil" (Dawson & Minton, 66). The promptbook gives no indication as to whether or not Flavius accepts Timon's offer of gold. Notations suggest the following: after Flavius's "That you had power and wealth? To requite me, by making rich yourself", "A pause!" is directed. Then, Timon is to "take Flavius up, and points out, his store of gold'" but there are no further notes until after Timon's "And so farewell, and thrive". The promptbook direction is "goes to cave" with Flavius "following him" on "O let me stay / And comfort you, my master". A longer note opposite expands this: "Timon goes into cave. Flavius goes off L I E pause!!! Then re-enter Flavius showing 1st Senator and Sempronius LIE dialogue". By evading the issue of whether or not Flavius takes the gold, Phelps leaves him as a good and faithful servant and by moving to the dialogue which opens V.ii Phelps could cut the Poet and Painter encounter enabling him to proceed towards the denouement. The dialogue is further cut to emphasise that the Senator's mission is to "render" their sorrow to Timon in the hope of deliverance from Alcibiades. Timon's rebuttal is uncut – he is indifferent whether the "goodly aged men" or the "holy virgins" are overcome by the "contumelious, beastly mad-brain'd war". (V.ii.57-9)

In the final scene of Phelps's *Timon*, there are substantial changes to the source text where there is no apparent link between Timon and Alcibiades. Phelps's rearrangement established such a link and, thus, provided a stronger plot-line, adding substance to both the nobility his interpretation had established for Alcibiades, and to Timon's tragic pathos, in part by cutting V.iv. in the Bell text where the soldier discovered Timon's epitaph. The textual emendations were enforced by a diorama. When Timon had reviled the Senators and they had left the stage, there was "distant Music Kept up until the diorama". The diorama then started to unroll ("Music plays 8 bars") showing a distant view and gradually worked to the suburbs of Athens and eventually to the Walls. After trumpets sounded in the distance from behind the wall, Alcibiades and his army arrived with "Blasts of Trumpets". A promptbook map shows them positioned on the walls. Phelps re-wrote the news of Timon's death:

> Enter a soldier
>
> SOLDIER: My noble general, Timon I fear is dead
> Upon the very hem o the sea, and near his cave
> I found his gravestone insculptur'd which I cannot read
> But you who have in every figure skill
> An aged interpreter, tho' young in days
> May do so.
>
> ALCIBIADES . Dead is noble Timon,
> Conduct me to the spot, that we may be assured
> We'll then return into this City'
> And I will use the olive with my sword
> Make war breed peace, make peace stint war, make each
> Prescribe to other as each other's leech.
> Lead on!

The stage direction reads: "Music. Troops face about. Mark time. Diorama moved on, and closes them in, they descend and a woody opening in Diorama shows them on their march, again closed in, and Diorama worked entirely off R 2 E, showing Timon's Tomb, Sunlight Shore backing, with rolling waters." Alcibiades reads Timon's epigraph and the curtain descends: "Soldiers lower their arms in grief".

The critics' response to Phelps's show was ambivalent. In an essay on Phelps's production of *All's Well that Ends Well*, Kenneth Richards argues persuasively that Phelps was attracted to those of Shakespeare's plays which had fallen out of the repertory partly through "conscious policy" to perform plays of the early stage and partly because he also needed an "adventurous artistic policy" to attract attention to suburban Islington. Richards does acknowledge that resuscitating the actable drama of the past was a strategy to be handled with caution – there were many ready to disparage such practice (Richards & Thomson, 181). The *Morning Chronicle*'s review of Phelps's *Timon*, for example, far from praising Phelps for shining in the exhibition of dramatic curiosities, was fiercely dismissive of Sadler's Wells accruing reputation for "Shaksperianism" and roundly denounced the "stagnant or retrograde tendency" of restoring long-neglected plays: "We have never hesitated to avow our conviction that the incessant repetition of old plays is beneficial neither to the actors, authors, nor public of the day." In their stead, the reviewer insists, a "national drama" is required which will be what the old plays were in their time, in accord with and a reflection of the "spirit of the age". Specifically, the reviewer considered a central theatre sustained by the "absurdly termed" legitimate drama was unsustainable and should be replaced by a "concentrated drama" with few parts "worthily filled":

> And it must be remembered that English audiences have… been made familiar with the French stage…we [have] learned to appreciate the exquisite constructive power of the French dramatist, and to contrast his works with the bundles of incoherent and inconsequential scenes which form so many of our "standard" plays… *Timon of Athens* [is a] worthless, coarse, bald play…is not Shakspere's [and] about the worst play which is bound up with the Shaksperian work..(*Morning Chronicle* 20 September 1851, p.5)

With an equivalent ferocity, Tomlins in the *Morning Advertiser* opened his review of Phelps's *Timon* with a panegyric to the finer arts: "The exhibition of a

grand picture, the rehearsing of a noble poem, and the acting of a great drama ought to be national events." He went on:

> The truly great productions of the mind have a perpetual creative effect…[we] cannot think these remarks too abstract or far-fetched for the introduction of a notice of the elaborate and artistic production of one of Shakespeare's plays...[I]t is impossible to exalt too highly the value they have been to our literature…Whoever, therefore, devotes himself to their illustration…performs a public good, and is deserving of honour.. The production of Timon of Athens at [Sadler's Wells], is an event, therefore, worthy of special notice. (16 September 1851, p.6)

Like Oxenford, Tomlins presented his readers with a balanced account of the history of the play and a carefully argued consideration of authorship. The *Morning Chronicle* reviewer, on the other hand, disdainful of "dates and source texts" insisted that "one single fact" settles the question that *Timon* was not Shakespeare's play: "A woman's voice is not heard in the drama until the fourth act."

In their assessment of Phelps's 1851 performance in *The Life*, Phelps and Forbes-Robertson suggested, unevidenced by any specific reference, that contemporary critical opinion suggested Phelps outperformed Kean:

> [Phelps] made a tremendous effect on play-goers generally in the character of Timon. Old *habitués* and the critics who remembered Edmund Kean in this character all said Phelps surpassed him. (*The Life*, 121)

On the contrary, extant commentary suggests Phelps's interpretation of the role had a mixed critical reception. Some, for example the reviewer in *Reynolds's Newspaper*, considered Phelps's representation of Timon a "superb conception" with "nothing unnatural" in the sudden transition from open generosity to passionate misanthropy. And a later review in *John Bull* goes further:

> Mr. Phelps…saw that *Timon* might be rendered a very striking object on the stage; and he has completely succeeded in doing so by his own masterly reading of the part…[T]here are few readers of Shakspeare who will not now admit that Mr. Phelps has given them a clearer idea of Timon than they ever had before. (*John Bull*, 4 October 1851, p.64)

However, although with the proviso that any assessment by this reviewer must be considered within the context of his combative approach to legitimate drama, the *Morning Chronicle* reviewer already referred to above found Phelps's interpretation of Timon "exceedingly vigorous". By implication it was too much so in the early part of the play where "the actor was too evident". The later scenes of "indignation and madnesses" pleased him more although he objects to the "loathsome language" – particularly Timon's abuse of Alcibiades in Act IV. Although on the whole it may be "characterised as a striking and vigorous portraiture". Even Tomlins, so much an enthusiast for the production, was cautious in his assessment of Phelps's success in the part:

> His view of the character in the main agrees with our own. But we could like more comedy in the commencement, and more irony and sorrow after his fall. Rage and fury predominate, and, *perhaps*, the text justifies this. (*Morning Advertiser*, 16 September 1851, p.6) [my emphasis]

A nineteenth-century closet reader of *Timon* may well have been aware of Hazlitt's views on the play. Hazlitt insisted that "spleen" was the predominant "feeling" in Shakespeare's mind as he wrote the play. "It is as much a satire as a play: and contains some of the finest invective possible to be conceived, both in the snarling, captious answers of the cynic Apemantus, and in the impassioned and more terrible imprecations of Timon" (Hazlitt "Characters", 50). He emphasised the contrast between the "churlish *profession* of misanthropy in the former and the *profound feeling* of it in Timon". [my italics] "Timon does not utter an imprecation without betraying the extravagant workings of disappointed passion, of love turned to hate...All his vehement misanthropy is uphill work" (54-5). As noted in the Introduction, Phelps, in the previous season, had produced The *Duchess of Malfi*. Extant bills, which show quotations from Hazlitt, Knight and Lamb, suggest it is likely that Hazlitt's reading of the play was known to Phelps and that Hazlitt's

emphasis on the profound feeling to be discerned in Timon influenced Phelps's portrayal of the role. At one with *Morning* Chronicle's reviewer, the *Morning Post's* critique also drew attention to an uneven performance by Phelps which was of "great but unequal merit", occasionally marred by "excessive violence" both in tone and gesture (*Morning Post*, 1 October 1851, p. 5).

These disparate critiques of Phelps's performance which foregrounded its vigour and occasional lapses are reflected in the more analytical account to be found in Heraud's review for *The Athenæum*. It opened with a reference to Kean's interpretation of Timon which "we well remember". Kean, he asserted, "struck the key-note too early" because he was the cynic from first to last - an error because it made Timon simply a superior Apemantus, thus losing the principle foregrounded by Hazlitt and "always observed by Shakespeare", that of contrast of character. And this intensity is "scarcely to be fully interpreted by the over-loud declamation used as the substitution for passion" by Phelps which, wherever it occurred, was "a mistake", a criticism scarcely mitigated by the subsequent concessionary clause, "though on the whole the part was inoffensively acted". He found the first two acts of Phelps's performance in the role "tamely" acted with the "famous point" made by Kean in the second act ("Give me breath!") missed altogether. But he praised the "burst-in" on the creditors in the third act as "effective". The scene in the wood with Alcibiades, Apemantus and the thieves, albeit it lacked finish, was "forcible". The last act was simply noisy, "not emphatic" (*The Athenæum*, 20 September 1851, p.1004). Heraud was also reviewing for *The Illustrated London News* at the time and his review of the production in that journal, where he also commented on Phelps's interpretation of the role, is interesting not least because it echoed Stanley Williams's argument that any disappointment in Kean's interpretation of the role lay in the play not the performer:

> The principal, as we have said cannot be adequately represented by any living performer; but Mr. Phelps has thrown himself into it with considerable earnestness and sincerity. We think him occasionally too violent, but throughout we remark evidence of an elaborate reading and the result of careful and patient study. Where these are present, we easily compound for the absence of qualities, the want of which becomes noted for the difficulty of the part than any fault in the performer. (*The Illustrated London News*, 4 October 1851, p. 415)

So much for the ambivalent critics, what of the rest of the audience? With the exception of the *Morning Chronicle*'s critic whose disdain for the Sadler's Wells supporters was legion and to be discussed at some length in the Conclusion, most reviewers wrote of the audience's enthusiasm for the show. Oxenford seemed to suggest this was the result of a something for everyone approach: the scenery at Sadler's Wells "[did]not stop the ears of him who wishe[d] to listen to the text, very slightly altered, while he who love[d] show better than poetry likewise ha[d] a source of gratification" (*Times*, 29 September 1851, p.6). However, as noted above, in Act IV there is not a great deal of show and a great deal to listen to, particularly in the long third scene. It is worth returning to the *Illustrated London News* review at this point for an interesting assessment of Phelps's audiences from Heraud. He wrote:

> It merits here to be noted, that the revival of "Timon of Athens" has met with remarkable success – and this, we believe, notwithstanding some opinions to the contrary, as much from the power of its poetry as the costliness of its accessories. We have witnessed the performance a second time, and with increased pleasure; the audience also appeared to take a decided and even strong interest in the beauties of the dialogue, the force of the situations, and the development of the characters.

To this may be added a comment from Tomlin who in discussing Phelps's conception of Timon's character spoke of the "immense" audience's "unbounded applause" in ratification of Phelps's representation (*Morning Advertiser* 16 September 1851, p.6).

As Gary Jay Williams argues, and as a close study of the promptbooks and the reviews confirms, there was more than just the undoubted "picturesque spectacle" for the audience". Phelps aligned the play's two plots of Jowett's phase three so that both

Alcibiades and Timon were emphasised as tragic although this “romantically solemn...close is a far cry from the play’s insistence on an inconclusive peace in Athens when Timon is no more” (168). Phelps’s success with the play – it had at least 28 performances before Christmas 1851 – undoubtedly will have owed much to spectacle but his promptbook shows his inclination towards Hazlitt’s romantic view of the play. Misanthropy is the result of “feeling” and the invective which expresses that feeling. Not only through scenic display but also by emphasising a heroic pathos, Phelps made his production attractive to his audiences.

CHAPTER 3
A Midsummer Night's Dream

"[T]he most essentially unactable of all [Shakespeare's] plays"
(Henry Morley, 1853).

"[Phelps's] production was the culmination of much Romantic theorising."
(Jay Halio, 1995)

A Midsummer's Night Dream (1853) was the twenty-sixth Shakespearean production in the canonical repertoire that Phelps offered his Sadler's Wells' audiences. Two years earlier, as discussed in the previous chapter, *Timon of Athens* had fuelled the contemporary critical debate over the performability of certain of Shakespeare's plays and, according to many critics, Phelps's production was not deemed to have made a case for successful performance. Nonetheless, against the critical grain, it proved popular with audiences. Nineteenth-century critical orthodoxy was, if anything, even more insistent that *A Midsummer's Night Dream* was unactable. Perhaps Hazlitt's notorious dictum, "all that is fine in the play[is] lost in representation" (*Examiner*, 21 January 1816, p.44), was one reason why Phelps took his time to put it on. However, once again, audiences' reaction to a Phelps production of an apparently unactable play, apart from that of those critics reluctant to abandon the orthodoxy, was enthusiasm. Most critics adjudged Phelps's interpretation of the play a success and fifty-five performances during the tenth season were testament to its appeal to audiences. I will show in this chapter how Phelps, through illusionistic scenic effects and innovations, established a fantasy world as reality for his audiences. However, I also hope to show that although his dream-like interpretation of the text may be seen as the culmination of Romantic theorising that were the play to be successfully put on stage, it had to be presented ethereally, Phelps did not shy away from qualifying the romanticism of his illusionistic approach. He recognised that what

Schlegel had called “the most extraordinary combination of the most dissimilar ingredients” (qtd Knight, 212) might be yoked into an harmonious whole, adopting a method of production which Richard Foulkes lauded in his case study of the play, “Samuel Phelps’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Sadler’s Wells – October 8th 1853.” Foulkes, who based his work almost entirely on contemporary reviews, was emphatic that it was the coordination of the full range of theatre’s arts which ensured the revival was the finest achievement of Phelps’s management of Sadler’s Wells. Close study of evidence other than reviews associated with Phelps, should elaborate Foulkes’s account.

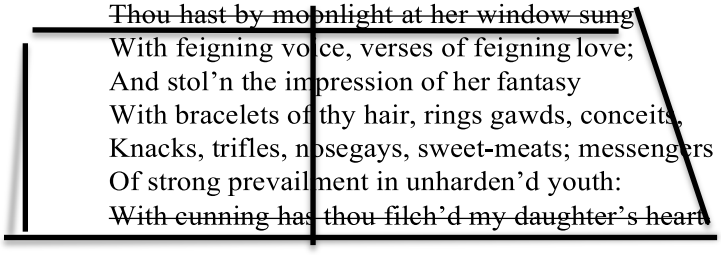
Writing in a special issue of *Theatre Journal* (Issue 3, 2012) on Theatre and Material Culture, Barbara Hodgdon discusses the evidence of past productions, the material remains, to be found in theatre archives: “Although performance itself exists only as a memory, dream, (mis)recollection, the archives are jam-packed full with its material remains” (373). Alas, the material remains for Phelps’s 1853 production of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* are so sparse that only extant playbills offer what Hodgdon calls primary “fragments of a larger narrative of performance process” (373-4). No promptbook has, thus far, been discovered for the 1853 production. In his catalogue for the play, Shattuck only associates Phelps with number 19 (MND, 13), a “beautifully written” promptbook with cuts on full text, scenic indications, grooves, calls, copious stage business, maps, sketches, cues for effects and timings. He posits that the book was “made” for Phelps’s 1861 revival. The interleaves are watermarked 1858 and there is “[an] [o]ccasional notice to ‘Go back to old book’” (Shattuck, 326). Held in the Folger, the marked up book was taken from volume II of the 1805 Alexander Chalmers edition of the *Complete Works.* In addition to the extant bills for the 1853 production there are reviews of the performance to be found in

contemporary newspapers and journals. Anecdotal evidence appears in John Moyr Smith's illustrated *A Midsommer Night's Dream* (1892), as the introduction contains recollections from Frederick Fenton, Phelps's scenic designer. The production is at least noted if not discussed in those editions of the play which contain stage histories; there is a chapter devoted to Phelps's show in a relatively recent performance history, Gary Jay Williams' *Our Moonlight Revels*: *A Midsummer Night's Dream in the Theatre* (1997) and there is the earlier dedicated Foulkes case study (1968/9) referred to above. I have also found Trevor R. Griffiths's meticulously prepared text for the Shakespeare in Production series helpful with regard to Phelps's cuts. Taken together, these allow for at least a conjectural reconstruction of the production.

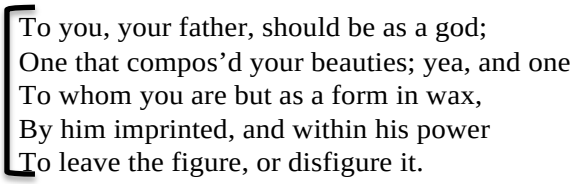
Phelps first produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Sadler's Wells in October 1853. He then revived the production during his twelfth season, in November 1855, and, again, in January 1856. It was then not revived again until his final season at Sadler's Wells in 1861. That is, the watermark date of 1858 in the interleaves in MND, 13 gives a probable indication that the promptbook was made for the last of Phelps's revivals. The instruction to return to the old book also indicates the existence of an earlier book from which the extant promptbook was made. Whether or not the earlier book was the promptbook for the original, 1853, production or whether it was a book prepared for the twelfth season revival in 1856 is impossible to ascertain. It seems plausible, and certainly in line with Phelps's modus operandi, that the extant promptbook was prepared from a book which had been used for the first production and then used again for the 1856 revivals. Any amendments for the later productions written in the old book would then appear in MND, 13.

Most of the 1861 book's cuts, scenic indications, grooves, calls, maps and sketches – the majority of which are in the "beautifully written" hand referred to by

Shattuck – follow the conventions of the promptbooks for the productions of *Richard III* and *Timon of Athens* considered above. But there are amendments in MND, 13 in a different hand and using different conventions. A good example occurs at I.i.47. Seventeen lines earlier, at l.30, the copyist had marked seven lines for deletion in a way typical of a Phelps's promptbook:



But then, 10 lines later, ll.47-51 are marked for excision by a single, pencilled bracket:



Although I agree with Gary Jay Williams that the 1861 promptbook's instructions tally repeatedly with the descriptions of the 1853 critiques of Phelps's show (Williams, "Moonlight", 295, note 3), I have attempted to differentiate between the two hands distinguishable in the promptbook and, thus, to distinguish what the 1861 book may reveal about the 1853 production as distinct from what it may reveal about adjustments for the 1861 revival. As my interest lies in the much-praised production of 1853, I intend to disregard the markings of the additional hand in the promptbook and confine my attention to the "beautifully written" theatrical copyist's work. It was the 1853 show which immediately captured the attention of the critics and enthused audiences. An unidentified clipping in the Victoria & Albert Sadler's Wells' production file reads: "So firmly established [is the play]…that little novelty has been required for two seasons. [It has] had a most extraordinary run".

[A] desire to discover some viable method for presenting a play
that must have seemed to have little to recommend it to the stage.
(Trevor R Griffiths, 1979)

Between the Restoration and 1840, the prevailing approach to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was characterised by "disintegration…into its components and…an emphasis on the spectacular and the operatic" (Griffiths, "Neglected", 387). Presented unaltered, the play was not successful; in its place there were adaptations, partial reconstructions, and borrowings of parts of the play for use elsewhere. With only "some good dancing and some handsome women" for his "pleasure", for example, in 1662, Pepys found a performance of the play which he had never seen before "nor shall ever again" both "insipid" and "ridiculous" (https://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/1662/09/29/). For the next 30 years the play was not performed. 1692 saw the production of *The Fairy Queen, an Opera* at the Queen's Theatre, Dorset Garden. With music composed by Purcell, this was a semi-opera with the, adapted, Shakespearean text mainly spoken but "four lavish, masque-like spectacles of song, ballet, and elaborate scenic displays" inserted at the end of Acts II through V (Williams, "Moonlight", 41). Richard Leveridge then adapted the mechanicals' plot. *Pyramus and Thisbe, A Comic Masque* was performed as an afterpiece at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1716. This was a spoof, designed to ridicule the then current vogue for Italian opera. In 1745 Levridge's spoof was expanded by John Frederick Lampe to become *Pyramus and Thisbe: A Mock Opera.* Nor was the play's supernatural element neglected: *The Fairies* was produced as an afterpiece at Drury Lane in 1755. It was an operatic version – the music, recitative and songs, were written by John Christopher Smith with possible help from Garrick. In 1763 there was a George Colman adaptation, also connected with Garrick, which preserved more of

the original play although as Peter Holland observes in the Introduction to his edition of the play (13) the passage where Lysander wants to sleep close to Hermia was substantially rewritten. It played for only one night.

The first major production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the nineteenth century had been by Frederick Reynolds in 1816 at Covent Garden. William Hazlitt's review of this adaptation, referred to in the opening paragraph above, appeared in the next edition of *The Examiner*. What was to become the early nineteenth-century orthodoxy about *A Midsummer Night's Dream* being an unactable play resounded throughout the review: the "regions of fancy and the boards of Covent-Garden are not the same thing"; the "closet and the stage" were "far asunder"; it is only in reading the play that "all the noise we have heard and the sights we have seen" may be forgotten (*The Examiner*, 21 January 1816, p.44). As Williams summarises it, Hazlitt "mourned the loss of…text…and …rejected the theatre's new visual vocabulary for the play" (Williams, "Moonlight", 77). Again audiences disagreed. For two decades it was Reynolds's version or variations on it which were presented under the title "*A Midsummer Night's Dream"*. Reynolds's treatment of the play was operatic. The text, to quote George C. D. Odell, was "but a framework for spectacle and dance and song" (234). Reynolds's adaptation had only three acts and he altered the structure of the play which now ended with a pageant, *The Triumphs of Theseus.* But, despite Hazlitt's strictures, the play's music and spectacle attracted reasonable audiences – Genest reported eighteen performances, Reynolds claimed twenty (Williams, "Moonlight", 288, note 11). As Reginald A. Foakes notes (13) in his introduction to the New Cambridge edition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Reynolds's operatic version formed the basis of other adaptations before 1840 - although Foakes cites only

one, Alfred Bunn's 1833 Drury Lane production, and that Foakes regards as notable only as the earliest record of the use of Mendelssohn's 1826 overture.

It was not to be until 1840 that a revival of the play with most of its text restored would be produced, although even then it was restored with much recourse to visual spectacle. This was Madame Vestris's Covent Garden production: "the opportunity of restoring a Shakespearean text would have been attractive to Vestris given Macready's precedents at Covent Garden" (Williams, "Moonlight", 9). James Robinson Planché was Vestris's advisor. When she had managed the Olympic, she had staged a number of Planché's fairy extravaganzas, useful experience for the 1840 production. Also, as the former wife of Auguste Amand Vestris, a scion of a famous Florentine family of dancers, she saw a potential for ballet in her production. As dancing *en pointe* gave an impression of weightlessness, for example, ballet in the supernatural scenes made sense. As Griffiths argues convincingly in his Introduction to the play in the *Shakespeare in Performance* series, "The Romantic stress on dreams and the supernatural…with a delight in wild landscapes expressed in poetry and painting, were significant in creating an intellectual climate which helped to make a successful production of [the play] …likely" (22). Certainly, the Vestris production was a success, both critically and commercially, against which Phelps would be judged. John Abraham Heraud, for example, began his review of Phelps's production thus:

> On Saturday this management produced its new revival – the Midsummer Night's Dream. With a vivid recollection of the manner in which Madame Vestris mounted this charming poem during her management at Covent Garden, we carried to the suburban theatre a high standard by which to test the new spectacular illustrations. (*Athenæum*, 15 October 1853, p.1232)

Although she reordered certain scenes, Vestris did not add to the text, and offered more of Shakespeare's words than had been performed in earlier adaptations

although she still cut around 400 lines, particularly from the lovers' scenes. Scenically Vestris – and Planché – used three main locations: the Athenian Court, Quince's cottage and the Wood, with a diorama to move from one part of the Wood to another. Vestris took the part of Oberon, "adroitly capitalizing on both her musical talent and, dressed in a revealing costume, her sexual appeal" and setting a fashion for casting a woman to play Oberon which prevailed until the twentieth century (Williams , "Moonlight", 93); Katherine Hickson took the part in Phelps's 1853 production. Vestris's music director at Covent Garden was Thomas Simpson Cooke who had collaborated with Bishop during Reynolds's operatic *Dream*. The production's thirteen songs set only Shakespearean text. Several of the settings came from the Reynolds-Bishop opera, which, as noted below, Phelps did not use.

Text cuts

Like Madame Vestris, Phelps aimed to restore most of Shakespeare's text while adapting it to the conventions of nineteenth-century spectacular staging. MND, 13 makes it plain that Phelps presented the Chalmers text cut by some 300 lines but that, in this play, he did not rearrange or, with one exception, transpose lines. He had no scene break between II.i. and II.ii. – that is, his Act II, in common, as it happens, with most modern editions, had only two scenes. He also began Act V with what is IV.ii. in the Chalmers text. These changes attracted no contemporary attention, unlike those in his *Richard III*.

In a paper published in 1977 in *The American Journal of Theatre History*, Gary Jay Williams commented on the Planché-Vestris cutting for the 1840 Covent Garden production: "[It] became the Victorian pattern: shorten and soften the lovers' wrangles in the forest, remove arcane references, shorten lyrical elaborations that do not move the plot, omit any shadow of the suggestive and any shadow of the

unpleasant" (Williams,"Web", 6). Did Phelps conform to this pattern? Certainly, Phelps's most extensive cuts began when the lovers entered the forest at II.i.188. To test Williams's argument that Victorian cuts not only shortened but also softened the lovers wrangles in the forest, I have looked at the effects of Phelps's cuts in the lovers' forest scenes, noting *en passant*, other cuts which contributed to Williams's pattern. For example, Demetrius entered at, "I love thee not, therefore pursue me not." (II.i.188) and 2 lines later, Phelps cuts, "The one I'll slay, the other slayeth me", perhaps on the grounds of unnecessary vehemence, removing a shadow of the unpleasant. He also cut the arcane pun, "wood within this wood" two lines later. The lines of Helena's retaliation to Demetrius's charge that she has abandoned herself to one who "loves [her] not" (II.i.216) and, thus, jeopardised the "rich worth of her virginity" (l.219) were marked for excision, as were her lines at ll.230-234 where she drew parallels to her plight from classical mythology. Obviously, the acting text was shorter than the Chalmers text but the vehement nature of the exchange remains, with its hint of sexuality implicit in a young woman in pursuit of a young man in the wood affording plenty of comic potential.

However, in the following scene, when Lysander and Hermia enter at II.ii.39, the 31 lines of their dialogue is effectively halved and not so much softened as bowdlerised. Griffiths quotes the eighteenth-century editor, Francis Gentleman's, disapproval of the lines in which Lysander and Hermia debate where they are to rest: "[these lines] should be omitted, for though founded in delicacy, they may raise warm ideas" (qtd in Griffiths, "Dream", 137). Apparently with the same priorities as Gentleman, Phelps omitted l.48 – "One heart, one bed, two bosoms, and one troth" – and then cut from ll.49–62:

HERMIA
[For] my sake, my dear,
Lie further off yet; do not lie so near
LYSANDER
O take the sense, sweet, of my innocence!
Love takes the meaning in loves' conference;
I mean that my heart unto yours is knit,
So that but one heart we can make of it:
Two bosoms interchained with an oath,
So ten two bosoms and a single troth.
Then by your side no bed-room me deny,
For lying so I do not lie.
HERMIA
Lysander riddles very prettily,
Now much beshrew my manners and my pride
If Hermia meant to say Lysander lied.
But, gentle friend, for love and courtesy
Lie further off.

Phelps's intention was presumably to present the audience with the epitome of gentle, romantic modesty in contrast to the wrangling Demetrius and Helena with their undercurrent of impropriety. Phelps's cuts here have simplified the lovers' debate in order to move more quickly to Lysander's awakening, as did his excision of the 6 lines of Helena's lament (ll.96-101) before Lysander, now anointed with Puck's charm, saw her and concluded "Not Hermia but Helena I love" (l.119). Griffiths notes that the "the reversal and strength of language" from ll.131-50 were often toned down in nineteenth-century productions (Griffiths, "Dream", 140). Thus, Phelps cuts ll.143-7 where, realising that Helena had not seen the sleeping Hermia, a suddenly disgusted Lysander exhorted the latter to stay asleep and reviled Helena:

> For, as a surfeit of the sweetest things
> The deepest loathing to the stomach brings;
> Or as the heresies that men do leave
> Are hated most of those they did deceive
> So thou, my surfeit and my heresy. (II.ii.143-7)

From the entry of Demetrius and Hermia at III.ii.41., Phelps cut more radically. The excision of descriptive amplification, Demetrius's hyperbole when he

woke up, what Griffiths calls Hermia's "contextualising and generalising" ("Dream", 160) and references to Hermia's height (which account for around 25% of the cuts) made little impact, but the removal of threats obviously diminished the aggression although not the dramatic tension in the remaining dialogue.

These changes did attract criticism, however. For Henry Morley, it was Helena, not Hermia, who was the epitome of Victorian maidenly virtue and in his review of the production for the *Examiner* he was critical of Phelps's treatment of the lovers. Phelps's simplifying and smoothing had not gone far enough:

> The arguing and quarrelling and blundering that should have been playful, dream-like and poetical, was much too loud and real…[Helena] is an exquisite abstraction, a pitiful and moving picture of a gentle maid forlorn, playfully developed as became the fantastic texture of the poem, but not at all meant to *excite mirth*; and there was a very great mistake made when the dream was..worked out into *hard literalness*. (Morley 59) [my emphases]

Heraud, on the other hand, thought that Phelps's simplifying and smoothing was successful. Miss Cooper's Helena was very good, "more than once rising into a pathetic utterance that, amidst the wildness of the general accessories, moved the heart with a touch of reality, lending a delightful natural interest to fantastic adventure, and redeeming the improbability of the situation" (*Athenæum*, 15 October 1853, p.1232).

Griffiths refers to Morley's dislike of Phelps's treatment of the lovers as a "representative nineteenth-century view" (Griffiths,"Dream", 27). This may have been true of Morley, but the promptbook suggests it was not true of Phelps, who saw the comic potential, the possibility to excite mirth, in the lovers' self-absorption. There is a note on an interleaf opposite III.ii.305 - *Puck and Oberon up stage at back during*

all this – Puck exhibiting mischievous pleasure at what he sees, surely a deliberate encouragement to audience mirth as they witnessed the 400 lines of wrangling between the two pairs of lovers.

Phelps also quietly bowdlerised the fairy lovers. II.i. in Phelps was played uncut. As noted above, he had no break at the end of this scene. Puck and the Fairies left the stage and Oberon and Titania and their respective trains entered through upstage left and right entrances respectively. From their entrances until the end of the act, Phelps cut lines in accordance with what Williams calls the Victorian pattern. Thus, Titania's accusation of infidelity was cut. The suggestive was removed:

> But I know
> When thou hast stol'n away from fairy land
> And in the shape of Corin sat all day
> Playing on pipes of corn, and versing love
> To amorous Phyllida. (II.i.64-8)

The sexually explicit lines in Oberon's response were also marked for excision:

> Didst thou not lead [Theseus] through the glimmering night
> From Perigenia, whom he ravished,
> And make him with fair Aegles break his faith,
> With Ariadne and Antiopa? (II.i.77-80)

Only the opening 7 lines of the 37 lines of Titania's "forgeries of jealousy speech" remained:

> These are the forgeries of jealousy:
> And never, since the middle summer's spring,
> Met we on hill, in dale, forest or mead,
> By paved fountain, or by rushy brook,
> Or on the beached margent of the sea,
> To dance our ringlets to the whistling wind,
> But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport (II.i.81-7)

The passage of natural disasters she went on to rehearse, both arcane and elaborate, with its allusion to times of hardships, was excised, unpleasantness smoothed away to retain the presentation of the romantic illusion of the fairy world. Next to be cut was the passage in which Titania reminisced about the pregnancy of the Changeling Boy's mother, her account of the Indian woman's pregnancy had eight lines marked for excision, "conceive", "big-bellied", "womb" adjudged unsuitable for the ears of a Victorian audience.

Although I would argue that Phelps's cuts do leave an undercurrent of the suggestive, he did seem to conform to the main elements of Williams's Victorian pattern. He did indeed shorten and soften the lovers' wrangles in the forest. He also, as is evident in his treatment of the dialogue between Oberon and Titania, marked sexually explicit passages for excision. For example, at I.i.68, what Griffiths (Griffiths, "Dream", 91) describes as "problematic lines in the nineteenth century on pious and/or anachronistic grounds" are excised:

> Know of your youth, examine well your blood,
> Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
> You can endure the livery of a nun;
> For aye to live in shady cloister mewed.

And in I.ii., Bottom's musings at I.ii.83 on which of a variety of false beards he might use to play Pyramus were cut in the second scene of the first act, more perhaps for reasons of obscurity than to avoid the reference, which the nineteenth-century audience may well not have recognised, to syphilis.

SCENERY

> Since the wood existed only as a structure of the imagination…it will remain… as a green decorative margin to the eternity the poet promised for himself…*the* English wood… Such is the English wood in which we see the familiar fairies, the blundering fiancés, the rude mechanicals. This is the true Shakespearean wood – but it is not the wood of Shakespeare's time…[but]… that of nineteenth-century nostalgia (Angela Carter, "Overture & Incidental Music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream"*, 1985)

Having refined Shakespeare's text, Phelps, perhaps, then felt the need to create a suitably dreamy setting à la Vestris. And, it was the show's scenery which elicited much of the positive critical opinion. Phelps's audience had no need to exercise their imaginative powers: scenic illusion was the order of the day. To assist him with his stagecraft, Phelps had Frederick Fenton (1820-1898). When the artist and designer John Moyr Smith published his illustrated edition of *A Midsommer Night's Dreame* in 1898, he based much of his commentary on Phelps's production

on what he had learned from Fenton whom he had known in the scenic department at the Crystal Palace. Moyr Smith provided a detailed account of the artistic way in which the show was mounted and credited Fenton with "fine scenic pictures… [and the]ingenious devices he used to vary the Woodland scenes; and… the excellent appliances designed to produce effects of moonlight, passing clouds, and descending mists" (xii).

An interleaved direction in the promptbook towards the end of IV.i. shows how detailed the setting was: "Clear away transparent bower/Draw of [*sic*] illuminated Flowers at each Entrance." Another interleaved direction opposite the opening of Act II explained the means through which Phelps and Fenton were to achieve the descending – and ascending - mists : "Gauze down in front during this act and the 3rd and 4th Acts." Fenton told Moyr Smith:

> [T]o give a kind of mist, I sent to Glasgow expressly for a piece of blue net, the same size as the act drop, without a seam. This after the first act, was kept down for the whole of the performance of the Dream, light being on stage sufficient to illuminate the actors acting behind it. The gauze ascended when Oberon and Titania made their exeunt in the fourth act. (xii).

The idea was not original, and critics suggested the gauze was green not blue, but it was certainly effective. W.J. Lawrence described Phelps's use of green gauzes in his inaugural production of *Macbeth* at the Wells in 1844:

> [I]n the third scene of the first act… [w]here the venom which is afterwards to rankle with fateful purpose in Macbeth's mind is first consulted, the observant spectator might have noticed what appeared to be a long narrow strip of sand lying before the three witches. This was in reality a carefully folded gauze curtain made in gradually increasing thickness and drawn slowly upwards towards the close of the scene by fine cords which were rendered invisible by the dimness of the light…soon the figures of the witches seemed to be melting into thin air. (*Gentleman's Magazine*, no 265, p.94)

Henry Morley endorsed Fenton's evidence:

> Over all the fairy portion of the play there is a haze thrown by a curtain of green gauze placed between the actors and the audience, and maintained there during the whole of the second, third, and fourth acts. This gauze curtain is so

> well spread that there are very few parts of the house from which its presence can be detected. (Morley, 57).

Albeit somewhat patronisingly, Moyr Smith also praised Fenton's knowledge of architecture in his Introduction:

> Obviously he was eminently fitted for the delineation of the architectural framework which is necessary to several notable scenes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*…In those days, however, strict historical inquiry into the dates of the beginning of the Greek orders of architecture was not insisted upon, and probably the architecture represented was more closely allied to the age of Pericles, than to that of the more primitive Theseus. But it is not to be denied that as stage pictures the scenes gained in richness and beauty by dealing with the fully-developed, violet-crowned city rather than with the meagre outlines of the archaic Athens over which Theseus ruled...The architectural scenes were, of course, those of Acts I. and V. (xii)

The promptbook confirms most of Fenton's recollections. Phelps opened his production with visual spectacle, both in scene, in stage furniture and with sheer numbers (thirteen) of presumably richly-dressed aristocracy grouped on stage. I.i. is a discovery scene set in the 6th grooves. There is a blocking map, below which there are notes on the scenic effects:

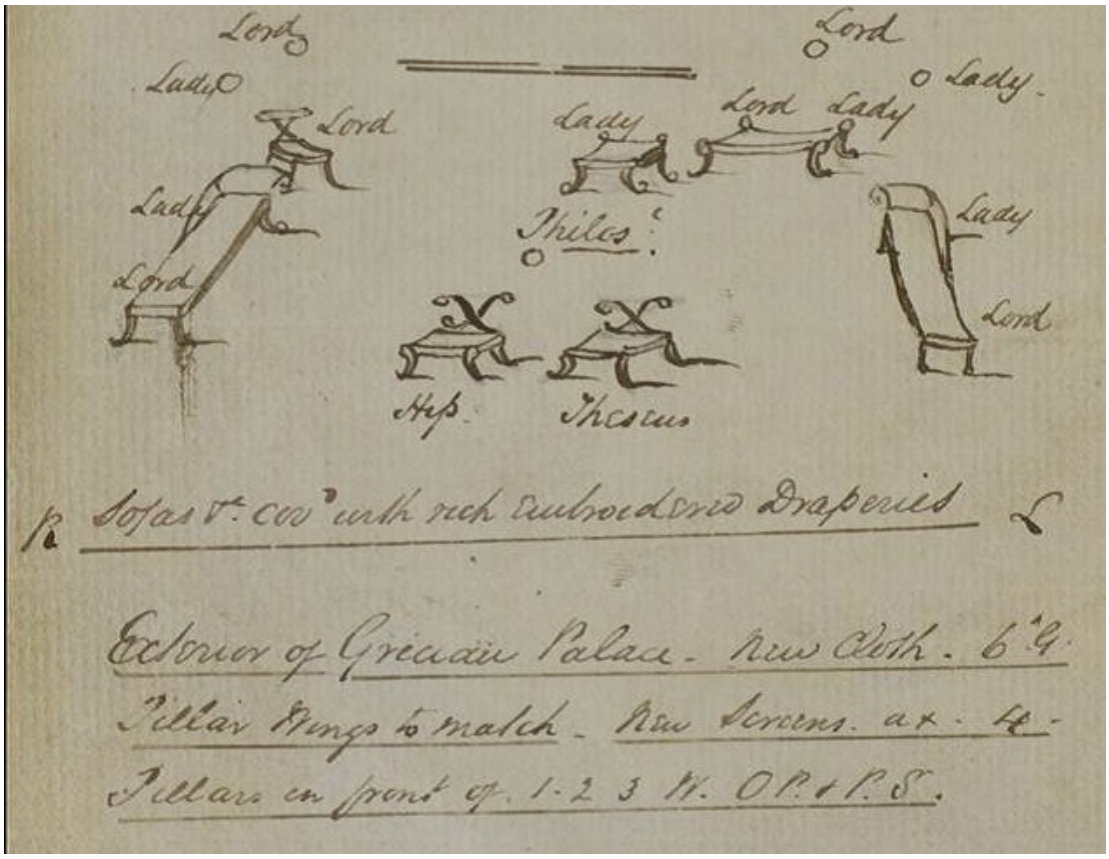


Figure 8
MND, 13, I.i. Opening Blocking Map

Although the sofas "cov[ered] with rich embroidered tapestries" sound remarkably similar to the ornamented couches in *Timon* I.ii., there is the new backcloth and new screens at the fourth grooves to fulfil the bills' claim of new scenery. The pillar wings in front of the first, second and third entrances on either side of the stage which match the Grecian palace depicted on the "new cloth" in the sixth groove are testament to Fenton's ability to present an architecturally coherent scene - whether or not, as Moyr Smith observed, historically appropriate to Theseus. The cryptic "discovered" added to the stage directions in the promptbook does not make it entirely clear if the audience gazed at the Periclean tableau (Heraud's review notes "highly picturesque" grouping) with lords and ladies seated on the sofas and various other standing behind or seated on stools before Theseus, Hippolyta, Philostrate and attendants entered or whether they were onstage as the curtain rose (*Athenæum*, 15 October 1853, p.1232).

The blocking map suggests the latter but were that so, there is then no indication of how long it was before Theseus delivered his opening lines.

There is relatively little movement during the scene but that movement is carefully choreographed on maps on the interleaves. For example, when Egeus, Hermia, Demetrius and Lysander come on stage at I.i.20 they stand, in that order, in a diagonal line, stage left of Theseus' throne. Demetrius is to advance a step at I.i.23 – "Stand forth, Demetrius" – and remain there until I.i.26 when Lysander steps forward at "Stand forth, Lysander". Then simultaneously, Demetrius steps back, changes in position which clarified who was who. But then for around 80 lines there was no movement to distract the audience from the detail of Egeus' complaint, Hermia's defiance and Theseus' judgment. After Theseus, Hippolyta *et al.* exit the stage at I.i.126, leaving only Lysander and Hermia on stage, there was to be "A Pause" while Hermia moved to a central seat where she is joined by Lysander and the audience are apprised of Lysander's plan of escape. When Helena enters at I.i.179 she, too, appears to have moved centre stage and remained still while she announces her despair over Demetrius and becomes apprised of Lysander and Hermia's plan. There is no stage direction on the relevant interleaf for where or how Helena delivered her soliloquy.

An extant bill for 8 October 1853 held in the V & A's Sadler's Wells Performance Files announced the imminent performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* "for the First Time at this Theatre". It designated the scene as "ATHENS, and A WOOD NEAR". Once the opening, discovery scene with its new backcloth had come to a close, the second scene remained in Athens (*The same*), although the location indicated in the Chalmers text, "A Room in a Cottage", is amended to *A Room in Quince's Cottage* (in the first grooves). It's short, some 88 lines, and Phelps cut only eight of them. Moyr Smith places the action in a workshop, "divided by a

pier and heavy beam; through the opening in the left hand compartment a glimpse was caught of the open sky and the trees of a suburban garden" (xiii), a wonderfully Victorian detail. Again, it seems reasonable to assume that Moyr Smith referred to Fenton's recollections of his designs for the show although he does not directly attribute them to Fenton.

As the action moves to the Wood near Athens, the scene moved from one part of the Wood to another using a panorama, one of the "ingenious devices…used to vary the Woodland scenes" (Moyr Smith, xiii) and to provide Phelps's romantic treatment of nature with its "perfect material embodiment of a creditable fairy forest…artifice as nature" (Williams G, "Moonlight", 113). Moyr Smith explains that the diorama had two sets of scenes, moving simultaneously as they were unfurled across the stage. (The canvasses ran between two drums which acted as spools.) These had cuts and shapings to represent, in the front set, openings of the woods, spaces between the stumps of trees, and the light parts between the foliage. The back set of the diorama was similarly treated to produce various cloud effects. Richard Schoch explains that the "pleasure of scenic fluidity" was achieved through the "optical trick" of the moving diorama, the exact opposite of its technical execution: "[t]hat is, although the scenery moved in front of the audience, the *effect* of the diorama was that the audience, along with the characters moved through the scenery (Schoch, "Pictorial", 65). Both Morley and Jerrold succumbed to the effect: "One scene is made to glide insensibly into another. We follow the lovers and the fairies through the wood from glade to glade" (Morley, 57), and "There are not more than three or four scenes in the whole play, and yet so artistically are the different changes of moonlight, fog, and sunrise produced, that you imagine you have been wandering

through an entire forest" (*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 23 October 1853, p.8). These were significant responses from experienced and sophisticated critics.

After the first part of Act IV, at the exeunt of Oberon and Titania from the Wood Moyr Smith describes the effect for the audience: "[The] gauzes vanished…Then day dawned, and showed a ravine between pine-clad hills: horns were sounded, and Theseus, Hippolyta, and their train entered from below, as if coming up the ravine" (xiii) Again, it is possible to turn to Morley for corroboration of the effect of the scene changing: "The change of [the] midsummer night into morning when Theseus and Hippolyta come to the Wood with horn and hound, was exquisitely presented" (58). Moyr Smith then dispensed summarily with the opening of Act 5 and the mechanicals' show to concentrate on Fenton's final scenes:

> The fifth act showed first a columned hall, with a background of closed curtains, the stage being lighted by Greek candelabra. When the clowns finished their play, and Theseus and his train retired, servants came in and put out the lights, and simultaneously the curtains opened. The fluted columns of the hall were partly "made out" and covered by waxed linen: inside the columns were lengths of gas jets, kept down till the curtains opened and the moonlight streamed into the hall; then the gas within the columns was turned up, and the columns appeared as if illuminated by moonlight. The opening of the curtains disclosed a terraced garden overlooking Athens. Down the steps and along the terraces trouped Oberon and Titania with their fairy train, all carrying "glimmering lights." The fairy song and dance were given, and the curtain fell on the moonlighted palace of Theseus with the slumbering city behind, on the picturesque groups of the fairies arranged on the terraces behind, and on the graceful figures of Oberon, Titania, and Puck in front. (xiii)

The gas jets were a new device in the Wells. Until this show, there was no gas in the theatre. In particular, the effect of the, apparently, moon-lit, fluted columns from the auditorium as the curtains opened, was yet another of the illusionistic effects of the production. To return to Fenton:

> In those days lighting was a serious difficulty..[so]… when the… management was assured, I obtained permission for the gas to be supplied as a permanent lighting for the theatre, and it was used for the first time in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. (xiii)

It a chapter in *Architecture, Actor and Audience*, headed "The Innovation of Scenic Illusion", Iain Mackintosh argues persuasively that gas was a technical innovation which altered the character of theatres and theatre going: "the auditorium could now be dimmed and the audience's attention directed mechanically to this actor or that scene" (Mackintosh, 35).

Did Phelps dim the auditorium lights for his show – if so, an innovation at that time? Certainly, as Williams argues (Williams, "Moonlight", 113), Jerrold's description gives rise to the idea that, if not for the whole show, then certainly for the forest scenes and for the last fairy scene described above, he may have been in a darkened auditorium:

> It is dreamland with its curious population of fairies and elvish sprites, whose fantastic outlines the eye can scarcely make out, presented most dreamily before the spectator…You would suppose from the silence that closes you in like a dark room , that you were all alone…You feel quite disconcerted when you rub your eyes, and discover that there is a chandelier instead of the stars shining above you. (*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper* 23 October, p.8)

It is a tempting argument that seems to be confirmed by Oxenford: "the lustre in the chandeliers in the *salle* is subdued or extinguished" (*Times*, 10 October 1853, p.10). Whichever, as Williams remarks, even for "an experienced playwright, producer, and culture-watcher" like Jerrold, Phelps's innovative scenic illusion was remarkable.

Moyr Smith may have eschewed any description of the clowns' play but the promptbook is particularly instructive about Phelps's treatment of *Pyramus and Thisbe* where the action of the mechanicals' play is mapped out in greater detail than any other scene. This indicates that Phelps's interest lay not only in the potential for enchantment and romance in the play but also in its potential for comedy. Interleaved notes effectively provide a narrative account of the on-stage action, and as they so clearly present what the audience was intended both to see and to hear, I here transcribe them at some length. First the mechanicals' costumes and effects are

detailed: *Pyramus – Helmet Roman sword and faded dress*; *Wall – a board hung before him painted like a wall*; *Moonshine – Wooden dog on wheels, long pole with bunch of thorn and lanthorn lighted*; *Lion – Mask and skin – mouth and tail to work*; *Thisbe – Womans* [*sic*] *dress Circlet Long Hair*.

Then the onstage actions are carefully directed: *Lion enters on all fours*; the mechanicals *make obeisance* to Theseus before they *exeunt* after the Prologue has introduced them. *Bottom is abstracted – Quince nudges him. He starts and walks off – followed by Quince*. When Wall re-enters it is *very sheepishly – gets slowly down R.C. looks to Theseus and others -Then speaks in a sing song manner his words* and *holds up his right hand fingers separated*. The comic potential of the mechanicals' naïve belief in the concept of theatrical illusion is made very clear. Pyramus *pushes Wall more to R.* and then *turns to the King* [*sic*] *L* and speaks *IN HIS OWN VOICE*. When he tries to cross the stage and finds his progress blocked by Wall he *Pushes him more to C.* And when he and Thisbe *take hands and are going off but are impeded by Wall they let go – pass Wall – rejoin their hands and go off in mock heroics. Wall being alone – looks round him and finding they are gone picks up his wall and speaks.* Then *Lion enters on all fours – Moonshine stands at back with dog Lanthorn &c Lion then stands upright and takes off his Lions* (*sic*) *head and bows R and L – His Tail curling and wagging Replaces his head and gets on all fours again.* When *Thisbe drops her mantle and exits R U E, Lion then crawls to Mantle and getting on his knees proceeds to rend it – roaring all the while*. *Lion now gets on his legs – takes off his head – bows complacently all round then taking up his tail – Exits R.U.E.*

On her discovery of Pyramus' body, Thisbe *takes up sword and stands in front of body – first crawling over Pyramus to get it.* She *Falls across his feet. Pause – Pyramus then raises his head looks at Thisbe and tries to shake him off after one or*

two efforts does so; Thisbe turning heels over head backward – Pyramus then gets up – picks up his sword and seeing Thisbe at his feet kicks him once or twice – Thisbe then looking up – rises and they go off bowing – Pyramus giving him a push as they get up. Certainly, the stage directions indicate that the audience is meant to appreciate the pit-falls of stage-direction for a stage-manager, a confident joke between Phelps and his audience.

However, not everything can be reconstructed as confidently as the movement in the scene above.

Cues for Effects

Apart from the cuts discussed, the promptbook has many more music cues than are to be seen in the books for *Richard III* and *Timon of Athens.* A playbill for 8 October, 1853 merely announces, "The Music Arranged by Mr. W. Montgomery" with no specific reference to whose music he was arranging. However, in the final paragraph of *The Times* review of the opening performance, Oxenford notes that Phelps "allows his band to play Mendelssohn's overture and occasional music" (*Times*, 10 October 1853, p.10). Although I have found confirmation that Phelps used Mendelssohn's music in only one other critique of the opening performance, (see below), that is little reason to disbelieve Oxenford, whose reviews are meticulously detailed.

Mendelssohn's name became inextricably linked with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* during the nineteenth century. He composed the overture (opus 21) to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1826, but it was not until 1843 when Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia commissioned Mendelssohn to compose music for a production of the entire play at Potsdam, that the incidental music (opus 61) was written. The incorporated overture was followed by thirteen new compositions: four

entr'acte pieces, six melodramas (in its sense of passages of text spoken over music) – two of which had marches appended, a song accompanied by a choir, a dance and the Finale. Parts of the new work were first heard in London at a concert in the Hanover Square Rooms on 27 May 1844 – as it happened, the day of Phelps's and Mrs Warner's inaugural *Macbeth*. (Both performances are reviewed in *The Standard* on 28 May, 1844 on pages 1 and 4 respectively.) The work was first published, posthumously, in 1848 which makes it possible that W. H. Montgomery, Phelps's Director of Music, would have had access to a score but the orchestration of the work is for 2 flutes, 2 oboes, 2 clarinets, 2 bassoons, 2 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, an ophicleide, timpani, cymbals, triangle and strings. This is a collection of instruments unlikely to be found in the Sadler's Wells orchestra pit despite the *Theatrical Journal*'s comments at the beginning of the season that Montgomery had added "several new well-known musicians" to the band who had, it suggested, proved "very effective adjuncts" (31 August 1853, p.271). It seems reasonable to suppose that if the production incorporated Mendelssohn, Montgomery arranged the work for the Sadler's Wells band, although it is frustrating to note, for example, that while Montgomery's arrangement of Locke's incidental music for *Macbeth* is held in the British Library, there is no sign of an arrangement of Mendelssohn's *Dream* score.

An overture precedes Act I, an act which the promptbook confirms was played, as Mendelssohn intended, without music. As mentioned above, Godfrey Turner recollected that as a "pittite" at Sadler's Wells, he was "tediously accustomed" to hearing Boildieu's overture to *La Dame Blanche* "invariably played as an introduction by the strictly economic orchestra" before curtain up ("Scenery, Dresses, and Decoration", *The Theatre*, N.S. Vol.III (March, 1884, p.129). Any switch to Mendelssohn from the ubiquitous Boildieu perhaps explains why Oxenford brought it

to his readers' attention. It is possible, then, that Phelps's production was preceded by Mendelssohn's Overture although it is not specified in the promptbook.

What of promptbook evidence for the entr'acte pieces? The Scherzo is Mendelssohn's first entr'acte music, but whether its complexities, howsoever sympathetically arranged, would have been within the capabilities of the strictly economic band must be questionable and there is no promptbook cue to suggest the Scherzo was played. There is a prompter's music cue (R.M.B.) towards the end of I.ii. and a call to ring the bell as Bottom exits at the end of the scene. But these may be cues for the Fairy about to enter at II.i.2. Mendelssohn's second entr'acte piece is the Intermezzo between Acts II and III. There is a prompter's note on the leaf opposite the break between Acts II and III. Highlighted between a pair of double circles bifurcated with a diagonal line it reads, "*Ø16 Bars played before Ringing up Act Ø*". After 72 bars marked *Allegro appassionato*, the tempo of the Intermezzo changes to *Allegro Molto Comodo*, "when the music turns to Bottom and the other tradesmen…[t]hey are introduced with a simple peasant-like march, rustic drones and raucous horns" (http://www.laphil.com/philpedia/music/midsummer-nights-dream-overture-and-incidental-music-felix-mendelssohn).

Perhaps, the promptbook's *16 Bars* played before the ringing up of Act III were either taken from, or were an arrangement of, the 23 bars of the *Allegro Molto Comodo*, the march heralding the Mechanicals' rehearsal. The third of the entr'acte pieces is the Nocturne. Once again, the promptbook instructs *#16 Bars before Ringing up #* and, once again, it is impossible to be specific about what was played. As noted above, however, it is, however, possible to find contemporary evidence that Phelps used the fourth of Mendelssohn's entr'acte pieces, the Hochzeitsmarsch. The evidence, adding weight to Oxenford's assertion mentioned above that Phelps used

Mendelssohn in his show, is to be found in the *Morning Chronicle* review of the opening performance. In typically combative form where Phelps was concerned, the reviewer concludes:

> [T]he orchestra [was] abominable. If we had not known, indeed that it was the Wedding March which they were sawing through – Mendelssohn's Wedding March!...we should have thought we heard a funeral dirge… It was played in the time of a dead march, without one shade of colour, without one developed idea of its meaning. The drone of a bagpipe, and the operation of two grindstones, would have made the performance complete. Really Mr. PHELPS ought to engage a musician for a conductor, and not a metronome set too slow. (*Morning Chronicle* 10 October 1853, p.5)

It is thus possible that Phelps introduced his production with Mendelssohn's Overture and played the Wedding March between Acts IV and V. It is also possible to conjecture from the promptbook that there was entr'acte music between Acts II and III and between Acts III and IV and to posit that this may have been derived from Mendelssohn. However, based solely on the evidence of the lone *R.M.B.*, there may be only a tentative possibility that there was entr'acte music between Acts I and II.

What, then, of the other pieces in Mendelssohn's Opus 61? MND, 13 has music cues scattered liberally throughout from Act II onwards but it is important to note that many are not in the beautifully written hand, which causes something of a dilemma. To be consistent with my approach to the 1853 cuts, I ignore cues which may have been added for the 1861 show where it is clear that Phelps did use Mendelssohn's music. For Opus 61, 13 new compositions were added: 4 entr'acte pieces, 6 melodramas – one of which had a march appended, a song accompanied by a choir, a dance and the Finale. The table of contents (der Inhalt) at the head of the score reads, "Ouverture/ N^{o} 1. Scherzo/ N^{o} 2. Melodram und Elfenmarsch/ N^{o} 3. Lied mit Chor/ N^{o} 4. Melodram/ N^{o} 5. Intermezzo/ N^{o} 6. Melodram/ N^{o} 7. Notturno/ N^{o} 8. Melodram/ N^{o} 9. Hochzeitsmarsch / N^{o} 10. Melodram/ N^{o} 11. Ein Tanz von Rüpelm/ N^{o} 12. Melodram/N^{o} 13 Finale". As noted, there are 6 melodramas (orchestral music

to accompany the action of the play) in the score. I have compared and contrasted the "scoring" of the written passages in the melodramas with the promptbook music cues and present my findings in an appendix. I believe it is possible to argue for a certain level of correlation between Mendelssohn's melodramas and Phelps's promptbook, although it is plain that were it the case that Phelps was using the Mendelssohn score, it was not in its entirety. One piece he does omit, for example, is the Tanz von Rüpelm as the promptbook reveals he cuts the clowns' dance at V.i.340. However, he does appear to have delivered the fairy song. To return once more to Oxenford: "[Phelps] retains Shakspeare's choruses, but all introduced songs he sedulously thrusts out, like a conscientious 'legitimist' as he is" (*Times*, 10 October 1853, p.4). The music during Titania's opening speech in II.ii. is carefully marked:

> Come, now a roundel and a fairy song,
> Then for the third part of a minute, hence – Ø
> Some, to kill cankers in the musk-rose buds,
> Some war with reremice for their leathern wings
> To make my small elves coats,*x*and some keep back
> The clamorous owl that nightly hoots and wonders
> At our quaint spirits.*x*Sing me now asleep;
> Then to your offices, and let me rest.
> (ll.1 -8)

On the interleaf there is *Music for action of Fairies* at Ø II.ii.2, xII.ii.5 and xII.ii.7 – at II.iii.7 – "Sing me now asleep/and let me rest ", *Titania goes up to R3E and lies on bank upon which descend leaves/to hide her at cue to be given by Oberon.* Whilst the first Fairy is singing Titania to sleep with *Chorus at sides*, the *Fairies are dancing to the Chorus Music* ("Philomel with melody &c"). Once asleep, the fairies exeunt through various entrances. Oberon then re-enters, *Squeezes the flower on* TITANIA*'s eye-lids* and, as noted above, the last three lines of his speech, "In thy eye that shall appear / When thou waks't, it is thy dear; / Wake, when some vile thing is near

(II.ii.38-40) are accompanied by music and provide the cue for the *Leaves and boughs* [to] *work down on Titania.*

The promptbook thus reveals that both music and dance were to be an integral part of the production. The playbill credits Mr Frampton as the "invent[or]" of the dances in the play although *what* they were dancing and, as discussed, which music they were dancing to, remains conjectural. The bill also named each and every fairy. There were twenty seven female fairies "attending their King and Queen" and seven male fairies, designated "Masters", a title which suggests the male fairies at least were children. Morley commends "certain contrivances of dress, especially in the case of the fairies"(Morley, 57). Douglas Jerrold expands this:

> There is a misty transparency about [the fairies]…they dance and whirl, and are puffed about … they glide in and out of the trees and foliage, [and] give you a notion that they have actually stepped out of them, as though the trunks and flowers were their natural abiding places, and by long residence, they had been imbued with the colour of them. (*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper*, 23 October, p.8)

He goes on to say that the production's fairies were "none of your winged, white muslin fairies with spangles and butterfly wands". A picture emerges of a precursor to the romantic illustrations of Cicely Mary Barker. And the fairies are about to dance again; *Enter from R.U.E. Titania and small Fairies – and other Fairies from R AND L Entrances dancing to Music – as Titania appears*.

STAGE BUSINESS

Where there is uncertainty in the music and dance elements in the production, the promptbooks offer more certainty about the stage business, much of which indicate Phelps's interest in the comic elements of the play. At II.ii.148 – "My gentle Puck, come hither" – *Puck advances and sits at* [Oberon's] *feet LC, Looking up at Oberon attentively.* Heraud says the "frolic Puck" was "cleverly represented by young

Mr Artis…elaborately drilled for the occasion, - [who] gave an amount of grotesque action which, though exuberant, was not unpleasing" (1232). Morley concurs: "[the] remarkably quick-witted" little boy, Master F. Artis who plays Puck and who, although he plays it with "faithfulness and spirit", is playing the part as conceived by Phelps. His acts and gestures are "too perfect and mature" to be his own imaginings although he does secure for the character "something of the same prominence that it has in the mind of the closet reader" (Morley, 59). The acts and gestures are closely noted in the promptbook. For example, at II.ii.154 – "To hear the sea-maid's music # *Puck pauses – scratches his ear andappears to think*. Next, at II.ii.169 – "Fetch me that flower", *Puck jumps up in obedience*. Then, at II.i.175 – "I'll put a girdle round the earth" - *Puck runs up bank R.C. at back and speaks his lines disappearing behind tree -at the same time Figure of Puck flies off L.U.E.* Was Puck flown? Or did a Puck-size puppet "fly off"? I can find no evidence that there was flying rig at Sadler's Wells at that time.

The amended scenic indication at the head of the Act III reads, *SCENE I. The same as last act. The Queen of Fairies lying asleep behind boughs.* The scene opens with the Mechanicals' rehearsal – conveniently close to Titania's bower. There is a blocking map. Immediately below the blocking map on the interleaf, double-underlined and in large characters is *#Asses Head ready off E.O.P #*

With the rehearsal underway, the Ass's head makes its first appearance. When Quince corrects "odious" to "odours" (III.i.65), *Bottom stops – then slowly refers to his part – scratches his head on finding his mistake – goes on with his part*. At Puck's aside, II "A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here!" (l.71), there is again a call for //music//. Bottom's exit into the brake is delayed and he and Puck exit together after Puck's aside. Bottom is thus firmly linked with Oberon's machinations. And, at their

re-entry 14 lines later at l.85, “If I were fair, Thisby, I were only thine”, the direction on the interleaf opposite reads *Music / Re-enter Bottom speaking the line with head on.* Below this is a prompt direction *Attend to working up of Boughs to discover Titania* – which is to happen at the end of the first verse of Bottom’s song at l.105 – *Boughs work up discovering Titania – who awakes*.

There are a number of prompter’s notes opposite the Chalmers text from “So is mine eye enthralled to thy shape” to “The honey bags steal from bumble-bees”. (III.i.116-146). The first, which appears with no accompanying symbol, reads *Bottom works his ears.* At Titania’s, “thou art as wise as thou are beautiful” (III.I.123) *Bottom bows most profoundly, his ears working* and at III.i.130, “And I do love thee; therefore, go with me” at the semi-colon, they *Embrace. Bottom rubbing his asses head against her face – she patting his head*.

There is an *Illustrated London News* engraving of this scene:

Figure 9
12 November 1853
(Illustrated London News)

There is also an interesting letter in the Harvard Theatre Collection, dated 21 April, 1867, from Phelps to his wife in which the importance of the ass’s head becomes clear: “I am very glad I have brought the Donkeys [*sic*] head, for though they have a

new one it is not good – it is a most impudent looking ass instead of the stupid sleek thing it should be for Bottom…I should be dreadfully annoyed if I had to wear it."

Heraud thought that the "distinguishing feature" of the production was Phelps as Bottom, an assessment which may well have anticipated an appreciation of Bottom as actor-manager in the mechanicals' play: "The ass's head which he is doomed to wear turned out to be a machine well contrived for expression – the ears and jaw being capable of appropriate gesture." Morley further explains the moving ears: "The hands are fixed on the breast. They are busy with unperceived business of managing the movements of the ass's head". There was unanimous approbation for Phelps's playing in the contemporary critiques. The *Morning Chronicle* reviewer, for example, so critical of the Sadler's Wells' band's rendition of Mendelssohn, was warm in his praise of Phelps in the part:

> [Phelps] gave a new reading [to the part]… [He] dropped the stupid solidity conventionally attributed to [it], and in far greater accordance with the text… endows the weaver with a bungling shrewdness – the latter is natural, the former arising from want of education… His make-up is far from ludicrous, he endows *Bottom* with an odd characteristic gait, and a habit of moving both his arms at the same time and in the same manner. From the first of the mechanic scenes to the last, *Bottom* – with the exception of his night's 'translation' – is *Pyramus*, but whenever he has the stage to himself he is 'Ercles'.

The critic adds that perhaps the most admirable part of Phelps's portrayal was his "long-continued bewilderment", after his "disenchantment" in which he is evidently in doubt whether he is a man or a donkey, keeping continually scratching his head feeling his cheeks and his chin, and muttering about their not being hairy, and surreptitiously, and as if he were ashamed of himself, looking round for his tail. More serious, but not less artistic, was his last speech of instructions to the actors when he suddenly re-appears amongst them:

> [T]he final line of this passage must have given Mr. Phelps the clue to what Shakespeare probably intended. When *Bottom* first awakes, his sensations are pleasant, and he develops them with a comic gusto. He has had a dream, 'past

> the wit of man to say what dream it was.' He would have a ballad written on the dream, and it should be called *Bottom's* Dream, 'because it had no bottom;' but after he had time to consider, instead of a man waking from a dream, Mr. Phelps, as it appeared to us, puts on the semblance of a man rising from the delirium of a fever. His air is agitated, and his movements have the involuntary jerking of intense nervousness – his hands continually fly to his head, first to scratch and then to press it – he stops frequently in his speech as if his thoughts wandered, and at last fairly breaks down with the impatient exclamation, 'No more words, away, go away' (*Morning Chronicle* 10 October 1853, p.5).

CRAFTING AN ILLUSION

" Not a bad acting play after all"
(*The Daily News* 10 October 1853).

The scenic indications cross-referenced with contemporary critical commentary enable some understanding of how carefully Phelps crafted illusion for his Sadler's Wells' audiences and how seamlessly he wished the illusion to proceed. There is some indication *passim* above of the contemporary critical verdict on the success of Phelps's illusion-making. Jerrold's rhapsodic descriptions of Phelps's remarkable success in this, for example, echoes Ludvig Tieck's assertion that Shakespeare's purpose in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was to "lull his audience into perceiving things as if in a dream" (63). "It is dreamland" Jerrold concluded, "[and] [t]he best way to enjoy it is…to resign yourself to the influence of the scene" (*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 October 1853, p. 8).

Jerrold's piece for *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* was one of four critiques reproduced in their entirety in *The Life:* both his piece for the newspaper and his contribution to *Punch*, John Heraud's piece for *The Athenæum* and Henry Morley's for *The Examiner*. In their preamble to the republished critical opinion, May Phelps and Forbes-Robertson refer to the play – à la Hazlitt - as Shakespeare's "poem of A Midsummer Night's Dream" (*The Life*, 128), a generic description inspired by Hazlitt which, as discussed below, was of particular importance to Morley although, as noted,

Heraud too had embarked on his discussion of Phelps's production as a critique of the illustration of "a charming poem". However, by the time Heraud came to focus on Phelps's portrayal of Bottom - the "distinguishing feature" of the show – he had effectively abandoned the play-as-poem trope and instead referenced the combination of dissimilar ingredients:

> [W]e had reason… to be pleased with the amount of excellence displayed. The fairy glitter, the elfish sportiveness, the classical sterness, the comic eccentricity, and the amorous perplexity, were all well provided for. (*Athenæum*, 15 October 1853, p1232)

Heraud's enthusiasm for the latest of Phelps's "eccentric creations", was matched in Jerrold's piece for *Punch* on the same day in which he urged Queen Victoria to make the journey to Sadler's Wells to see one of the *"very, very* few precious things of the stage" "an ass's head as worn by the manager of Merrie Islington" (*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 October 1853, p.8).

Morley's piece, on the other hand, read carefully, I argue, offered only cautious approval of Phelps's show. The opening paragraphs of his review may be read as warm rather than enthusiastic:

> Every reader of Shakespeare is disposed to regard The Midsummer Night's Dream as the most essentially unactable of all his plays. It is a dramatic poem of the utmost grace and delicacy…The words [the characters] speak are so completely spiritual that they are best felt when they are not spoken…[The play] was, therefore, properly avoided by managers as lying beside and above their art…*In some measure* there is reason for a different opinion on these matters in [the play] as produced at Sadler's Wells…[I]t is proved that there remains in the power of the manager who goes with pure taste and right feeling to his work, enough for the establishment of this play as a most charming entertainment of the stage. (Morley, 135) [my emphasis]

Morley insisted such success as Phelps achieved came from understanding that it was incumbent upon him to present "merely shadows" – the "main idea" governing the whole

play - and, in its turn, Morley's response to each aspect of the show is governed by whether or not it has been successfully "subdued" by and in harmony with the main idea. This enabled him to praise the scenery's freedom from the current vogue for "meretricious glitter", to praise the scenery of the midsummer night and Theseus' Hall at the end of the play, to praise Phelps's conception of Bottom as a "man in a dream", to praise the "mock play" as "nowhere farcical" – "[i]t was the dream (Morley, 57-8). All in all, it was a "stage spectacle more refined and intellectual, and far more absolutely satisfactory than…I can remember to have seen since Mr. Macready was a manager" (Morley, 58). But then the rub:

> That the flesh-and-blood presentments of the dream-figures which constitute the persons of the play should always be in harmony with [the] true [poetical] feeling was scarcely to be expected. A great deal of the poetry is injured in the speaking. Unless each actor were a man who combined with elocutionary power a very high degree of sensibility and genius, it could hardly be otherwise. (Morley, 58)

There is more than an echo here of Hazlitt, who of course claimed that the "poetry [of the play] and the stage do not agree well together" (Hazlitt 75). Phelps has improved on Madame Vestris' "spectacle that altogether wanted the Shakespearean spirit" (Morley, 56), his spectacle more refined and intellectual but, despite probably the nic[est] interpretation of its meaning since first put upon the stage", for Morley, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is no longer a great poem of utmost grace and delicacy but an "entertainment" (Morley, 61).

How did the Wells audience respond to the entertainment? Ever an apologist for the respectful response to Shakespeare occasioned by Phelps's productions, Morley wrote of his pleasure of the "silent and reverent" throng drawn to Sadler's Wells (61) with, by implication, at this stage in Phelps's management, enough experience to know and to appreciate the text:

> The [play] abounds in the most delicate passages of Shakespeare's verse. The Sadler's Wells pit has a keen enjoyment for them…among whom many a subdued hush arose, not during but just before, the delivery of the most charming passages. (Morley, 58)

Jerrald, too, comments on the "deep stillness" which distinguished the audience reception. He projects his own susceptibility to Phelps's illusion-making onto his fellow spectators, and insists the audience responded as he did:

> It is our firm belief, from the hushed stillness that reigns at times throughout the house, that one-half the spectators are dreaming without knowing it, and that they wake up when the curtain drops, and are surprised to find they have a play bill in their hand. This belief is strengthened by the fact of the unusual sparingness of the applause…Occasionally a loud laugh bursts out, but it is quickly succeeded by a deep stillness. (*Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, 23 October 1853, p.8).

Scattered throughout contemporary criticisms noticed above, there is more than an occasional laugh mentioned - if only recorded by way in Morley's disapprobation of Phelps's portrayal of the "hard literalness" of the lovers: there was "constant laughter" during the scenes in which Helena, bewildered by the change of mood among the lovers, shrinks and complains "Wherefore was I to this keen mockery born?" (Morley, 59). Looking beyond, Jerrold, Heraud and Morley, the *Morning Post* critic (emphatically disapproving of the verse-speaking) wrote that the mechanicals' play "took the house by force and kept it in continuous roar" (*Morning Post* 10 October 1853, p. 5).

In theatre historiography Morley and Jerrold have been the most influential of the original critics. Richard Foulkes's 1968 case study, for example, is very largely dependent on Jerrold and Morley in its attempt to demonstrate that the 1853 production was "perhaps the finest achievement of Phelps's eighteen years management at Sadler's Wells" (55). Largely on the basis of their reviews, though admittedly with some recourse to Moyr Smith and Westland Marston but without reference to any promptbook, Foulkes produced what Williams has called the first full

reconstruction of Phelps's production (Williams, "Moonlight", 296) – one for which Foulkes made great claim: "certainly not before, and probably not since has [the play] received such a fine and appropriate staging…but its even greater importance lies elsewhere, in that it was the product of a certain method of production, in which all the theatre's arts are harmonised into a whole" (Foulkes, 60). And it is the harmony of the production – ironically unharmoniously accompanied – which is what emerges from the promptbook, the successful yoking of the disparate elements into a whole to overturn the orthodoxy and satisfy the spectators.

CHAPTER 4
Pericles
The anomalous hit production of the…era
(David Skeele, 1998)

In this chapter I will argue that in embarking on a production of a play as controversial as *Pericles*, Phelps was taking decided risks, both critical and financial. The text would have to be adapted with interpolation as well as cuts, the latter necessary to conform to contemporary *mores*, the former to ensure at least a minimum of dramatic unity for the audience. As observed in Chapter One, Phelps had faced critical bias against the interpolations in his first production of *Richard III* and the majority of those had been culled from earlier Shakespeare plays, an unlikely route here. The play would inevitably be expensive to mount if the production were to maintain the management's reputation for appropriate staging. However, the play would further his ambition to produce all of Shakespeare's plays. Hard on the heels of his success with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* the previous season this was, moreover, another play with the potential to feed the current appetite for theatrical spectacle. Before examining how Phelps mounted the century's sole revival of this play, I will discuss contemporary assessments of the play's place in the canon, a burden in the critical reception. Because it framed the argument on the play's merit, I will examine the impact that the debate over *Pericles* as an early play may have had on Phelps's rearrangement of the text and demonstrate how Phelps arrived at a version of *Pericles* which achieved theatrical, and commercial, success despite the literary-critical opprobrium the published text attracted.

In order to fulfil his ambition to present the entire canon, inevitably Phelps had to turn his attention to plays less often or rarely staged, some of them of uncertain standing. As discussed in Chapter Two, he had had considerable success three years

earlier with *Timon of Athens*, a play for which a case for co-authorship had recently been proposed. In *Pericles*, however, he was proposing a considerable financial investment to embark upon the production of a play clearly identifiable as of doubtful authorship, a play not only absent from the stage for two centuries but also one which had dropped out of the main lines of the editorial tradition until 1780 (Wells & Taylor 559). Furthermore, with the overt sexuality of the incest between Antiochus and his daughter and the brothel scenes, it was a play so lacking in delicacy that it was bound to offend propriety. John Oxenford (*Times*, 2 September 1852, p.6) had dubbed Sadler's Wells "a sort of museum for the exhibition of dramatic curiosities" but with *Pericles* Phelps had a "greater curiosity than any that [had] preceded [it]" (*Times,* 16 October, 1854, p.4). Once again, that is, a Sadler's Wells production had the potential to become a must-see show because it would be a much discussed one, with who wrote *Pericles* and when of particular importance to the reviewers. The problems Phelps had to surmount began with the debated status of the text.

AUTHORSHIP

The authorship of *Pericles* both is and isn't in question.
(Cynthia Zarin, 8 March 2016, *New Yorker*)

It is Lucy Munro's well-argued contention that by the early nineteenth century, the debate over the authorship of *Pericles*, discussed below, appeared to have established a relatively secure position for the play, albeit on the margins of the Shakespearean canon. It was characterised, she argues, as early, immature, and, often, as either a revision or a collaboration (3). Mid-century, the authorship question was prominent once more. Phelps used volume IX of Charles Knight's Cabinet edition of the works (1845) in preparing his acting text. Knight's text is preceded (299) by a series of Introductory Remarks in which Knight entered the debate. It seems plausible

that Phelps would be at least familiar with these. Knight summarily dismissed (300-1) Nathan Drake's argument in *Shakespeare and His Times* (1817) that although there is some evidence of Shakespeare's hand in the first two acts of the play it is the remainder which clearly bore testimony to Shakespeare's 'genius and execution' (qtd 301). Drake, Knight countered, merely looked at the play as a series of passages and ignored the most important part of every drama, its action and its characterisation. Henry Hallam, in Knight's view, in the third volume of Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe* (1839), offered a more nuanced view of the doubtful authorship issue because, although he found it badly managed, he did consider the action of the play and he did consider the characterisation. Overall, however, Hallam had concluded that although much of the writing was in Shakespeare's manner, he did not believe the structure of the play was Shakespeare's. Knight replied that if John Dryden's opinion that it was an early play were accepted, then the difficulty vanished since the play could then be viewed as crude apprentice work. Therefore, he concluded, although the play was first published in quarto in 1609, it was, in fact, a revival of a play written by Shakespeare some twenty years earlier (302). Any inconsistency in the writing was explained if his conclusion was accepted that this very early work had been improved by Shakespeare to satisfy audience demand for its return to the stage.

The debate to which Lucy Munro refers had its origins in the eighteenth century throughout which the play was viewed as an early work. This was largely attributable to Dryden whose assertion in the Prologue to Charles Davenant's *Circe* (1677) that "Shakespeare's own muse his *Pericles* first bore" (l.16) became the linchpin for the argument that the play was "an eccentric product of Shakespeare's youth" (Skeele, "Pericles", 2). There was, however, an alternative view, that of

Nicholas Rowe, who excluded *Pericles* from his 1709 edition of the *Works*, on the grounds that much of the play was not Shakespeare's: Shakespeare had simply added to the play. Once Alexander Pope had added his weight to Rowe's divided authorship theory, the battle lines were set. Edmond Malone had published *Pericles* in 1780 in volume II of a two-volume "*Supplement* to the edition of Shakspeare's Plays published in 1778 by Samuel Johnson and George Steevens". He had supplied an early version of "An Attempt to Ascertain the Order in which the Plays Attributed to Shakspeare Were Written" to the 1778 edition. In this, Malone hedges his bets on authorship, partly on the evidence of the uncharacteristic dumb-shows. But "whoever was the writer", he assigns the play to 1592. However, by the time of the Advertisement to the *Supplement*, he had admitted the play and was writing of his conviction that "the whole piece appears to me to furnish abundant proofs of the hand of Shakspeare". This was the opening salvo in the "vigorous debate" between Malone and Steevens, conducted through the medium of the Advertisement, over the degree of Shakespeare's involvement in the play (Vickers, 291). "Mr. Steevens and I set forward...to dispute the opposite hypothesis, till one of us should acquiesce in the opinion of his opponent" (160). Steevens admitted that Shakespeare's work may be seen in several places in the play but adjudged Shakespeare "the mender of a play already written". Steevens closed his defence for dual authorship with a plea for moderation: "Mr. Malone is desirous that his favourite poet should be regarded as the sole author [of *Pericles*] ...I... [argue] that the *purpurei panni* are Shakspeare's, and the rest the production of some inglorious and forgotten playwright"(178). Presumably influenced by Steevens's trenchant observations, Malone recanted: "I am now convinced that the theory of Mr. Steevens was right." But although *Pericles* has been remodelled by Shakespeare, it is "unquestionably entitled to that place among

his works which it has now obtained" (Boswell, 1). In the critical commentary accompanying the play in Knight's *Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakspere* (1839), he agrees with Malone's conclusion.

TEXTUAL AND THEATRICAL ISSUES

The first question facing a director of *Pericles*
Is what to use for a text. (Roger Warren, 1995)

(Throughout this chapter any act, scene or line references given are from Suzanne Gossett's edition of the text for the Arden Three Series.)

Shattuck's Catalogue (380) records three promptbooks for Phelps's Pericles. The first of these, Per, 1, is in the Folger Shakespeare Library (Folger call number Per.1). It is, Shattuck posits, Phelps's original promptbook, heavily marked, probably by him, with prompter's pencilings added. The "book" in fact, as discussed in the Introduction, was the result of cutting lines from a printed text, rearranging and pasting the cuttings into five booklets, one for each act. These were then bound together. The booklets give scenic indications, grooves, calls, stage business, maps and sketches and cues for effects – which include a diorama in the final act. The second of Shattuck's entries, Per, 2, also held in the Folger (call number Per.2), is a transcription and expansion of the preceding book. To construct this "book", this time a single workbook, Phelps used the same method as Per.1, that is he cut and pasted text. The scenery and the stage business are given more fully and the cues for effects are given more regularly than in Per.1. This was also made available to me at the Folger. A microform (S 677) reproduction of this book is held in the Shakespeare Institute Library. The third promptbook Shattuck ascribes to Phelps, Per, 3, is a Creswick transcript held in the Shakespeare Centre Library and Archive. I have a copy of this book. There is a third book ascribed to Phelps in the Folger Shakespeare

Library which is not recorded in Shattuck. Somewhat confusingly the Folger call number is Per.3. Held in Deck C of the Folger vault, it appears to be the preparation copy for Per.1. It is too fragile to be pulled for inspection but it is viewable via the *Shakespeare in Performance* platform. The book is a single edition of the play priced at 6d (volume IX of Knight's eleven-volume Cabinet edition of the plays) and pages 305 to 384 are liberally marked and annotated in Phelps's distinctive hand.

There is an extant copy of a playbill, which more closely resembles a pantomime playbill than one of Phelps's "legitimate" bills, held in the Sadler's Wells performance files in the Victoria and Albert Theatre Collection and one is reproduced (278-9) in *The Life*. It is a densely populated broadside which identifies the scenes in each act with the characters appearing therein, at times with some narrative explanation of role. So, for example, the second scene identified in Act II on the bill is, "Corridor in the Palace of Simonides" in which appear "Simonides (King of Pentapolis)", the First Lord, the First Knight and "Thaisa (Daughter to Simonides)". The bill reveals that as with the previous season's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Fenton was responsible for the scenery, Miss Bailey for the costumes, Frampton for the dances and Harvey for the properties. For this production, though, the music was composed not arranged by Montgomery.

The text, the bill announces, was "Adapted and Arranged for Representation by Mr. Phelps". In the first part of the play, Phelps took the danger posed to Pericles by Thaliard as the crucial point for his arrangement of the text (Skeele, 43). He sets this up by bringing his opening scene to an end at I.i.143. Phelps's second scene, (I.i. 143 – 1710), takes place in front of the first grooves. The playbill makes no mention of this scene and so it seems a reasonable assumption that the dialogue between Antiochus and Thaliard is played before, appropriately painted, front flats in order to

close in Phelps's first scene which allowed the carpenters to build the next scene, if required. The break emphasised for the audience Antiochus's instruction to Thaliard to kill Pericles. Whether the next scene, billed as "Tyre – Interior of the Palace" used the same set as the first scene is impossible to deduce from the promptbooks. The Per.2 stage direction read "Pericles on a couch" - the Creswick transcription specifying "Centre". The transcription also has a sketch missing from Per.2. In the sketch, the 1st Lord and the 2nd Lord stood at an angle stage left of the couch with two parallel rows of five lords further left. As much of Pericles's opening speech was cut, the scene is, again, a short one, but it is interesting to note, Phelps did not cut 1.ii.73 – 77, the five lines in which Pericles tells Helicanus that Antiochus's daughter was "as black as incest / Which by my knowledge found". Pericles's flight is from the "sinful father". The retention of these lines gives the lie to any contention that incest is not mentioned in the production. And, of course, it implied the solution to the riddle.

As well as dividing the opening scene of the text into two, Phelps also divided I.iii.. Where the text has "*Enter* Thaliard" at line 122, Phelps brought the scene to a close. Phelps's 1.4, another carpenters' scene at the 1st Grooves, thus foregrounded Thaliard's pursuit of Pericles, "Here must I kill king Pericles" (I.i.1-2). The various moves through which Thaliard learns that Pericles has left Antioch were carefully choregraphed with entrances and exits stage right and left and a number of *Asides*. The scene ended with Helicanus alone on stage preparing – in lines interpolated by Phelps – to warn Pericles against staying too long in Tharsus.:

> And lest his destination should be found
> I'll send a messenger at once to Pericles
> To urge him onward to a farther port
> Before he rest in lull'd security

The location of the next scene, I.v. in the Phelps adaptation, is billed simply as "Tharsus". Richard Foulkes in his paper, "Samuel Phelps' *Pericles* and Layard's

Discoveries at Nineveh" calls Phelps's change in this scene as the most interesting scene (I.iv in the text). Phelps's 1.v. was the first 82 lines of I.iv. The entry of Pericles at I.iv.83 then becomes the opening of Phelps's 1.vi.. Foulkes (86) assumes 1.v. is "A Room in the Governor's House" and was another carpenters' scene to allow space for the preparation of the set scene behind, one more discovery scene in which Pericles and his party have just left the ship. The scene is the Harbour at Tharsus with Pericles's fleet at anchor. Twelve of the famished inhabitants ("*made up as having suffered from famine*", according to the promptbooks) are discovered looking off "imploringly" at the Right Upper Entrance where there is a raked platform leading down to the stage. The first Lord of Tharsus came down the platform from the Right Upper Entrance and indicated that someone was approaching from the shore at which the citizens murmured. Then a sailor, followed by Pericles and nine lords, entered down right of the platform and divided right and left – yet another instance of a procession and the "grouping" mentioned approvingly in reviews. After Cleon's entry to a trumpet fanfare ("Count Six [after Pericles' entrance] and then give Music Cue"), when Pericles has established his intention to deliver corn from his ships, Phelps introduced new lines. Instead of staying to feast in Tharsus, Pericles invited Cleon aboard his ship. The scene ends noisily. The promptbooks read: "As Pericles goes up platform, followed by the Lords, Cleon & Dionysa, the Inhabitants follow after with upraised hands and expressing their thanks trumpets &c." Then the Act Drop descends, rung down on the "Groupe". Foulkes (86-7) plausibly maintains that this scene, for which there is no hint in the text, reinforced Morley's suggestion (83) that Phelps was using the scenery here to emphasise the play's theme of the instability of fortune.

Act 2's first scene began at dawn on the sea shore of Pentapolis with Pericles discovered just thrown ashore. To create the effect of sunrise, the front lights were down, the red mediums on and the front gauze drop down. "Thunder is to begin in the distance - wind". The rainbox and bass drum were to be used for the ebb and flow of the sea. The *Leader* specifically mentioned the "wild, lurid, sea-shore scene" of the second act as a "marvel of fine colouring, fine lighting and perfect illusion" (*Leader* 21 October 1854, p.1004). Morley commends the Sadler's Wells scene-painter and machinist "the rolling of the billows and the whistling of the winds" as Pericles lay "a wrecked man" on the shore (83). Heraud confirmed Morley's impression: "The opening of the second act, with...the angry ocean rolling and roaring under the red canopy of a stormy sky, was strikingly grand." Perhaps with the pragmatic need to close a discovery scene, Phelps moved the raillery and repartee of the fishermen to the front of the stage. Skeele calls it a "comic front scene" but there is no evidence in the promptbooks that the flats were used; indeed the gauze is not raised until the end of the scene but the stage directions make it clear that the fishermen entered and exited *via* the 1st and 2nd entrances and the gauze was not raised nor the lights put up until the end of the scene.

The next scene, however, was a front scene: "A Corridor of the Palace of Simonides", a scene which took place on a platform stretching across the stage between the second and third grooves. Phelps omitted the entrance of the knights for the joust and started the scene after the tournament with the clear implication that Pericles had been the victor. The knights progress not to the tournament but to the banquet. The procession, to be "prolonged to give time for the setting of the next scene", involved a parade marshal, six lords, six balladeers, two trumpeters and six ballet dancers. When the downstage drop rose, it was to discover a Hall of State in

Simonides' palace with "everybody " discovered in a group in the centre and Thaisa placing a wreath of victory on Pericles' head – "trumpets &,". The *Theatrical Journal* referred to the gorgeous "Hall of State" with its "magnificent Assyrian architecture" (*Theatrical Journal* 18 October 1854, p.329) and Morley recorded a dance there which is a "marvel of glitter, combinations of colour, and quaint picturesque effect" (84). The Creswick transcription shows a sketch of the scene. A number of tables ("lights on tables") are arranged around Simonides, Thalia and the kneeling Pericles. The twelve knights are divided into two groups of six at either end of the horseshoe with twelve lords seated in front surrounding the three major protagonists in the scene. Skeele (50) observes that the scene with its noise and colour foregrounded Pericles's melancholy in dramatic fashion as he sat in the centre, as Per.2 indicates, "dejected and alone".

The scenery in the third act seemed again to have been designed to reinforce the theme of the instability of fortune as characterised by the sea. Once again the promptbooks call for "thunder, wind & rain, lightning, bass drum, the gauze drop down and the deck is set to 'rock'" - Foulkes explained (88) that the deck was a cross-section which rocked on its own axis. In his *Athenæum* review Heraud claimed that the ship at sea which "rocked with the tempest" was a "fine piece of machinery" (*Athenæum*, 21 October 1854, p.1268). Indeed so fine a piece of machinery was the ship that Oxenford commented dryly in his review that "spectators of delicate stomachs may have uneasy reminiscences of Folkestone and Boulogne" (*Times*, 16 October, 1854).

Phelps followed his usual pattern throughout the production by varying the spectacular set scenes with carpenter scenes. The third act ended with the room in Cerimon's house and appeared to have been played in front of the first, second and

third grooves. Gossett (90-91) draws attention to a change Phelps made to obviate the difficulty of carrying a heavy chest with Thaisa's body in it onto the stage. Cerimon sent Philemon out to investigate the chest and when he returned to announce there was a corpse there, Cerimon and his servants exited to examine it. The next scene then opened with Thaisa in a kind of shroud reclining in a chair with the chest covered with a rich cloth and a lighted brazier to either side.

The fourth act opened, according to the scene direction on the pasted text, on the sea shore at Tharsus but it is specifically marked as an "extreme set"; that is, one probably set in the 6th grooves. Textually, this was the act which presented Phelps with most problems as it contained the brothel scenes. He described the brothel as a "Poor Chamber", combined IV.ii. and IV.v.. (losing over 200 lines in the process), renamed the Bawd "Woman" and made sure, in Morley's words, that not a syllable remained at which "true delicacy" could have "conceived offence" (82). Morley goes on to say that the "calling" of Blount and the Woman was "covered" in the pure language of Marina with "so hearty a contempt" that the scene became one in which the purest minds would take the most "especial pleasure".

The textual stage directions for the first scene of the final act of the play are, as Foulkes observes, "unusually full" (89), an indication of Phelps's interest in spectacle in this production: "On board Pericles' ship off Mitylene. A close pavilion on deck with a curtain before it; Pericles within it, reclined on a couch. A barge lying beside the Tyrian vessel." In both Per.2 and Per.3 these are underlined which seems to indicate they are to be followed in the production. Per.3 indicates the diorama of Ephesus was to be ready on its cylinders and was to form the "backing to the scene". Also to be ready on the diorama groves were the dark clouds on flats which were to be worked from right to left around the vision of Diana "with her car in the clouds" -

as Oxenford described it. A sketch indicates that there were to be oars and seats for five men immediately in front of the diorama with an elaborate four-posted, becurtained couch for Pericles centre stage and a further set of oars and seats for another five men in front of that. The men were to row during the diorama. When, at the end of the scene, the vision appears, Diana was discovered, surrounded by moonlight, her arrival heralded by soft hunting music which ceased as the vision disappeared. The action moved to the Temple of Diana - Per.3 indicates: "Music Enter 10 rowers – 2 2 Steersmen led by director. The back row takes off couch, and 2 of the front row draw on 2 deck pieces in front. They then take their seats when they are ready and in motion the back Diorama moves, showing first moonlight sea and working to sunrise, lights worked ascendingly." It came to the city of Ephesus. Morley (83) described the effect from the auditorium: "When [Pericles] sails at last to the temple of Diana of the Ephesians, rowers take their places on the banks, the vessel seems to glide along the coast, an admirably-painted panorama slides before the eye, and the whole theatre seems to be in the course of actual transportation to the temple at Ephesus, which is the crowning scenic glory of the play". The *Daily News* told of the audience's "enthusiasm" as Pericles was reunited with Thaisa. Oxenford described the set scene of the interior of the temple with its "colossal figure of the many-breasted goddess" standing in all its glory amid "gorgeously attired votaries" as the last "bang" of the "general magnificence".

Phelps's principal adaptation was to cut Gower and the dumb scenes. Henry Morley in *The Examiner*, (Morley, 78-84) gave a carefully argued consideration of Phelps's omission of Gower, although he made no mention of the dumb shows. Morley, who subscribed to the single, immature authorship argument, posited that Shakespeare intended Pericles's story should be presented as a tale and used Gower in

the character of an eastern storyteller to control a narrative illuminated by five acts of dramatic illustration. Phelps, therefore, had to choose between the omission of Gower, "a loss to the play in an artistic sense", and retaining Gower which might "endanger" the play's effect in a "theatrical sense" unless his lines were spoken by an actor of unusual power. As it was not possible for Phelps to have taken both the role of Gower and that of Pericles and as, by implication, he did not have a player of unusual power to take the former role, the omission of Gower was justified: "the frequent introduction of a bearded story telling [*sic*] gentleman would have been an extremely hazardous experiment, even before such an earnest audience as that Sadler's Wells" (82). The omission was "effected modestly and well" through interpolation:

> [He added] to certain scenes in the drama passages of his own writing, strictly confined to the explanation of those parts of the story which Shakespeare represents Gower as narrating between the acts. (81)

Gossett emphasises the need for Phelps to replace the choruses in order to put *Pericles* on at Sadler's Wells. In some instances he wrote explanatory passages. Gossett (90-91) gives the examples of the two gentlemen discussing why Pericles and Thaisa are travelling so late in her pregnancy and Dionyz justifying her maternal jealousy to Leonine (which also, of course, outlines Marina's time in Tharsus) in a long prose monologue which opens Act IV. To these may be added the dialogue between two sailors describing the storm in Act III and the speech in which Simonides hears of the death of Antiochus and his daughter. It is worth noting, though, that where contemporary reviewers remarked on Phelps's interpolations in *Richard III*, his interpolations in *Pericles* attracted little comment although the reviewers had plenty to say about the cuts and omissions in Phelps's acting text. Heraud in the *Athenæum* complained of the "risk of unintelligibility"(*Athenæum*, 21 October 1854, p.1268). He repeated this in the *Illustrated London News*: Phelps had

"carefully expurgated the text of every offensive expression, and left great blanks in the narrative by his omissions, trusting to the spectator to imply the parts omitted" (*Illustrated London News*, 21 October 1854, p.399).

Whether or not the audience would have been familiar with the text was mentioned in a number of the daily newspaper reviews where there is evidence that the Steevens/Malone debate was still unresolved. The first performance of *Pericles* took place at Sadler's Wells on 14 October, 1854. A week later, a paragraph in *The Preston Chronicle and Lancashire Advertiser'*s "Miscellaneous News" columns read as follows:

> The play of Pericles, which, though now regularly included in the works of Shakspere, was long a subject of dispute among dramatic critics, as to whether our great dramatist really wrote any portion of it, was on Saturday last produced by Mr. Phelps at Sadler's Wells Theatre, after an absence from the stage of nearly two hundred years. Its revival has induced lengthy disquisitions in the London press on the play itself and its adaptability for dramatic representation. (*The Preston Chronicle and Lancashire Advertiser*, 27 October 1854, p.7)

The disquisitions on the play and its adaptability for dramatic representation had begun in the London press on 16 October. Extant reviews in contemporary newspapers, as ever the principal means of accessing the reception of Phelps's productions, reveal the interest aroused by the diversity of opinion on the play's authorship. The reviews emphasised the lack of cohesion in *Pericles'*s plot, its episodes of indecency, the unevenness of the writing and the paucity of its characterisation. Not only did the reviewers foreground the main participants in the debate discussed above, they expanded the discussion. They both recorded contributions to the argument from contemporary literati and, in effect, set up a debate of their own on Phelps's treatment of the text.

I begin with the *Daily News*'s "Drama" column of 16 October which presented a résumé of the current state of the controversy over who wrote *Pericles*.

Scholars, the reviewer declared (3), agreed only that the play was inferior to any of the undoubted works of Shakespeare but that there were unquestionably traces of Shakespeare's hand within the play. From this two opinions had emerged: one that *Pericles* was an early, immature work and the other that the play was written by some obscure dramatist and improved by Shakspeare. The reviewer leant to the dual authorship hypothesis for two reasons: first, because he agreed with Hallam that although the play was structurally too inept to be Shakespeare's, there were many passages in Shakespeare's manner and second because he refused to believe Shakespeare capable of scenes which he considered essential to the play: the filthy and disgusting obscenity of the brothel. However, these scenes were not excrescences which may be lopped off but were designed to foreground Marina's purity and to give strength and relief to an otherwise "weak and common-place" character: "[w]e wondered what Mr. Phelps would make of these indispensable scenes" (3). The answer was that in making the scenes decent, Phelps had reduced them to almost nothing and, thus, destroyed what was evidently meant by the dramatist -"whoever he was" ; similarly, slurring over the "monstrous" incest between Antiochus and his daughter mutilated the opening scene in a way which would make it "unintelligible" to anyone who had not read the play (3). He went on: "Indeed throughout the play Mr. Phelps takes it for granted that the audience have read it" (3).

The *Morning Chronicle*'s reviewer, on the other hand, did not assume familiarity with the text on the part of his readers (*Morning Chronicle*, 16 October 1854, p.3), as the offensive character of many of the scenes, its general inferiority to Shakespeare's other plays, and the doubts cast on its authenticity made the play probably unknown to any but professed students of Shakespeare. He therefore presented a sketch of the plot. That completed, he commented that it was an outline

which was not wholly filled up by dramatic action. The play, he elaborated, was "epical" rather than "dramatical". Shakespeare followed "almost servilely" the story of Apollonius in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and then used Gower as a chorus to take up the dropped threads of the action - which were dislocated, often incomplete and unintelligible without the intervention of Gower and the dumb-shows, neither of which were in Phelps's production. Nor are the faults of the plot redeemed by "excellences of another kind": the characters are "shadowy", lacking in passion. However, despite these imperfections, and despite the cogency of Hallam's arguments in favour of dual authorship, this reviewer was disposed to accept the single authorship theory. With the proviso of subsequent mature revision, he agreed with Dryden that *Pericles* must be an early work. For this critic, the play's interest lay in the fact that it was an early play, a work at the start of a career which culminated in *King Lear* and *Hamlet*. It also provided a connecting link between Shakespearean drama and the productions of the early stage where dumb-shows played an important part. But, as an acting drama *Pericles* lacked both the essentials of successful drama: "strong character and an absorbing plot". Where the *Daily News* reviewer had endorsed Phelps's suppression of Gower and his "doggerel rhymes" – "unnecessary in a "reading age" (3) - the *Morning Chronicle* reviewer regretted Phelps's omission of Gower and the dumb-shows. The two reviewers were also at odds over Act IV. As noted above, the *Daily News* reviewer (3), although he vehemently denied Shakespeare any part in the writing of the brothel scenes, nonetheless acknowledged their dramatic function. The *Morning Chronicle* reviewer (3), on the other hand, berated Phelps for being too sparing with the "pruning knife". Too much of the objectionable in the house at Mitylene remained in Phelps's adaptation; too much was

still retained which is “scarcely fit for virgin ears” (3). There is, that is, critical disagreement over Phelps’s bowdlerising of the text.

There is little mention in either of the above reviews of the stage history of the play. The *Daily News* reviewer alleged, without evidence, that Macready considered a revival of *Pericles* but did not “venture” upon it. Beyond commenting that the play had been absent from the stage for two centuries because it was deemed “unactable”, he did not consider the play in production. The *Morning Chronicle* piece observed the play’s popularity as an acting drama “at the time it was written”. The reviewer noted Betterton as the last “great actor” to appear as Pericles. Since then, he too notes that the play has been absent from the stage. In the *Times*, however, Oxenford discussed *Pericles*’s “ancient fame and subsequent neglect” (*Times*, 16 October, 1854). It was, he records, popular during the Elizabethan era which places him firmly in the early play camp, and that it was the first of Shakespeare’s plays to be revived at the Restoration when Rhodes gave Betterton the role “somewhere about” 1660. Oxenford brought his readers’ attention to George Lillo’s *Marina*, the “latter portion of the story” worked up into a three-act play produced at Covent Garden in 1738. Since then the play had “remained on the shelf”. (Lillo’s adaptation which omitted everything preceding Leonine’s thwarted intent to kill Marina and her capture by the pirates, concentrated “almost exclusively on its exemplary female protagonist” (Dobson, “Making”, 155).

Oxenford also observed that the play was the source of the “pretty quarrel” among commentators over who wrote the play. He refers to the evidence adduced in support of the two theories which have emerged about the play’s authorship – in particular he directed readers “who like discussions of the sort” to the Notice on the Authenticity of *Pericles* in Knight’s edition of the play. He gives Knight’s conclusion

that the work was probably an early play "touched up" by Shakespeare in the years of his maturity. However, whether or not *Pericles* was a juvenile work in which may be found "faint indications of characters afterwards brought into strong relief", as it stood, Oxenford was in no doubt that it is a work "utterly without developed character, and utterly without dramatic unity". He endorsed, and expanded, the *Morning Chronicle*'s view (3) that the work was "not a drama at all" but a "mere story" (he gives a paraphrase), devoid of every element that constituted a dramatic work in which the "personages" did little else but walk on and walk off the stage "without betraying or exciting an emotion".

These reviews then, offer some idea of the contemporary controversy over *Pericles*' authorship, some idea of the play's theatrical history and of its subsequent disappearance from the stage. They certainly endorse the epigraph at the head of this chapter, taken from Lucy Hall's paper "Young Shakespeare / Late Shakespeare: The Case of *Pericles*" delivered to the Société Française Shakespeare in 2016 (https://journals.openedition.org/shakespeare/3668?lang=en) that, on balance, it is an early play with concomitant aesthetic deficiencies attributable to youth,. Furthermore, members of the newspaper audience would have a clear idea that the critics found the play wanting in vitality as an acting drama, a view also endorsed in certain publications in the weekly press. In a *Lloyd's Weekly London News* piece, reprinted in *The Life*, for example, Douglas Jerrold objected to Phelps's omission of Gower (*The Life* 143). He noted that Gower acted as a kind of Chorus in the original play, his duty to connect one act with another, "throwing down a series of suspension bridges" by means of which large gaps in the narrative are overcome. Like the *Morning Chronicle* reviewer, however, he was of the opinion that interest in the play would not be increased by Gower's presence as "no explanations spoken at the commencement of

each act" could "bind" the play, essentially not an acting play, into consistency. Jerrold also referred to the fourth act ("so dangerous to represent") where Phelps has "disinfected" the play of its impurities so thoroughly that the most fastidious member of the most moral board of health would praise his success. He commended the way in which the "grossness" of the original had either been removed or "tenderly softened down", a view, as noted above, at odds with those of some of his contemporaries.

The Leader's Saturday review (*The Leader*, 21 October 1854, p.1004) opened with a question which implicitly doubted wide readership of *Pericles* and in answering its own question left its readership in no doubt about its opinion of the play: "Has anybody, not a commentator or a critic, ever read *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, all through from beginning to end?...[W]e ourselves venture to think [Shakespeare] wasted his time and misdirected his genius in having anything to do with it at all". The "tedious, incomprehensible and barbarous story" is enveloped in a "species of dense dramatic fog". It had been better left undisturbed in the "grave of theatrical oblivion". And, as evidenced above, although with less such self-conscious dismissive bravura and more serious consideration of the problems presented by the play, with the possible exception of Morley, most of *The Leader*'s contemporary critics and commentators were united in their aversion to the play, whatever their reasons.

The Leader review's second paragraph also opens with a question: "Why, then did Mr. Phelps revive the play?" The obvious answer to the question is that he was intent on reviving the entire canon but it is Allen's contention (144) that *Pericles* was Phelps's attempt to compete with Kean's revivals at the Princess's, specifically *Sardanapulus (*first performance 13 June, 1853). It was, she posits, his one venture

into direct rivalry with the Princess's. However, an anecdote from John Coleman may perhaps cast doubt on Allen's conjecture:

> When Phelps was about to produce "Pericles," it was resolved, for the sake of colour and variety to transfer the *donnée* of a portion of the play to Assyria. Consequently Mr. Fenton applied to Mr. Layard...for assistance. Mr Layard alleged that he was unable to comply...but would give him an introduction to a friend...an eminent authority on the subject. From this gentleman, Fenton obtained all the requisite information...utilized it in..."Pericles," after which he handed over the sketches to Mr. Grieve who availed himself of them for Kean's "Sardanapalus". (Coleman, "Players", 95)

In addition, it is interesting to note, Phelps's production was not referred to as a rival to Kean's in reviews although the production was still in Kean's repertory as late as February 1854. (A playbill in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre Collections advertises the play for performance on 28 February, 1854 for the "93rd time"). I agree with Oxenford that rather than seizing on the play as an opportunity to out-Kean Kean, Phelps was attracted to *Pericles* because it had been absent from the stage for so long. Oxenford had opened his review of *All's Well that Ends Well* thus: "Of all the plays of the Shakspearian collection that are not actually banished from the stage...not one is so little familiar to the public, through the medium of theatrical representation, as *All's Well that Ends Well*". What Oxenford said about *All's Well hat Ends Well* applies equally to *Pericles*:

> That the piece is by Shakspeare, and that the piece is rare, is in itself a sufficient recommendation to the manager, who is sure that a number of the *literati* will pay him a visit. (*Times,* 2 September, 1852, p.6)

Rather than Allen's assumption of managerial rivalry, it was *Pericles'* position as a dramatic "curiosity" which recommended it to Phelps.

This certainly seems to be the contemporary viewpoint. The *Daily News* review, for example, opens with a paragraph in which the reviewer acknowledges Phelps's success in establishing Sadler's Wells as the Shakspearian theatre and making the people of Islington the Shakspearian audience of the day. He notes with

approval Phelps's policy of reviving plays "*long laid aside as acting pieces*" (3). [my italics]. Not only was it a dramatic curiosity but, as *The Leader* reviewer adds in answer to his second question "It offered him the chance of astonishing the public by a wonderful theatrical show" (1004). Douglas Jerrold concludes that Phelps's "annual tribute" to Shakespeare has made *Pericles* a play "more to be seen than heard" . Even Morley concludes that whether it would attract as a "mere acted play" is "impossible to say" as it succeeds at Sadler's Wells only because it is "a spectacle" (84).

Typically for a Phelps production, the audience was presented with striking *mises-en-scène*: spectacular scenery, carefully choreographed discovery scenes, diorama, lavish costumes and music. But, above all, in *Pericles* the audience witnessed the breath-taking special effects devised by Phelps's machinist, whose name, oddly, is not on the bill. As noted above, for the sake of colour and variety, some of the action of the play was transferred to Assyria. John Heraud claimed in his *Illustrated London News* review that the scenery had been "several years in the making" (39). As Richard Foulkes demonstrates Layard's discoveries (and his illustrations thereof) at Nineveh and other Assyrian sites between 1845 and 1851, had "captured the imagination of Victorian London" (85) and the debt owed to Layard by both Kean in *Sardanapulus* and Phelps in *Pericles* would have been obvious to many in the audience. (Heraud, in his *Athenæum* review posits greater variety in the Phelps's production than in Kean's, the whole blended with "admirable harmony".) The *Morning Chronicle* reviewer suggests that it would have been "mere pedantry" to object to the "anachronism" of introducing the Assyrian costumes and architecture of Nineveh to *Pericles* when the "text of the play itself contains many greater". He continued: "The management rightly...give without minute archaeological correctness a brilliant succession of pictures of the poetical rather than the geographical 'East' of those ancient times,

and... since recent discoveries have familiarized us with the architecture and sculpture of ancient Nineveh, they will now and henceforth be indissolubly blended with the popular and poetical notions of the ancient 'east'".

Whether all the interior scenes in the play were set in Assyria, it is not possible to ascertain from the promptbooks. The *Morning Chronicle* review specifically refers not to the connection between Antioch and Layard's discoveries but to that between the interior of the palace of Simonides (and the temple of Diana) and the recent disclosures. The playbill reveals the opening scene, a discovery scene, is set in the Palace of Antiochus. Foulkes's paper implied an Assyrian setting. The degeneracy of Nineveh, he argues, was a suitable context for the incestuous Antiochus and his daughter, although, as he notes, Phelps's cuts may have meant that for some members of the audience, at this stage, the riddle may have remained unsolved. Phelps's stage direction reads: "The daughter of Antiochus discovered surrounded by a group of ladies. One or Two with musical instruments which they play as the curtain rises." The promptbook sketch is of a centre-stage tableau with the daughter lying on a couch, an attendant on either side, with four lady dancers standing grouped behind the couch and the four musicians in a row behind the dancers.

The staging attracted comment. Heraud wrote that the "grouping and costume" revived the grandeurs of the Old World; the *Leader* review pronounced the groupings, and processions, "striking and picturesque in the best meaning of the word". No sketches remain of Miss Bailey's design for the costumes, and nether the promptbooks nor the reviewers offer much by way of specific description. The *Morning Chronicle* alleged they were all new and "got up with the greatest taste". Morley described them as "brilliant", adding that the spectators see a scene "occupied" by characters who "appear to have stepped out of a Greek vase" who then

moved to an Assyrian palace where they seemed “figures that have come to life and colour from the stones of Nineveh” (83-4). The *Leader* judges the costumes as among the “most brilliant” that have been displayed on any stage. Phelps’s spectacle may have mitigated certain of the objections to his treatment of the text.

There is little doubt that the *Daily News* columnist was correct in his observation that Phelps used scenic displays, tableaux, pageants, processions, music, and dancing to pad out the much-cut text to the “usual dimensions [of a five act play]” but despite Oxenford’s insistence that the play was without developed character and dramatic unity, there are small instances in the reviews which suggest that Phelps was not immune to its romantic nature. The part of Marina, for example, was taken by Edith Heraud and was singled out for praise by the critics. The *Daily News* notes she was a “young debutante of very great promise”. The *Morning Chronicle* said she played the part with natural feeling and intelligence and “an absence of conventionality which augurs well for her future success”. Jerrold agrees with Morley that because of her “grace and dignity”, the “most dangerous” scene in the play was met with great applause. Edith Heraud’s role, Jerrold wrote, was the “gem of the play” and her part in the recognition scene was also much praised. But above all it was Phelps’s role as Pericles which drew down paeans of praise from the critics, particularly in the recognition scene. Oxenford writes of his admiration for the way in which Phelps portrayed the feelings of the father and Jerrold of his wonderful strength and feeling. Heraud commends the “fine gradations, with all their poetry of expression...distinguished with the nicest art”.

In the end, however, it was the scenery which was the “great splendour and crowning success of the production” (*The Life*, 139). Contemporary critics did not hold the play in high regard as an acting drama. “It is no exponent of the mind to

which we owe the great monuments of our dramatic literature", Oxenford opined, but "in the hands of Mr Phelps" it assumes a value, "not its own" – that is through the opportunity for variety of scenic effect. And the *Leader* review which opened so vehemently in its condemnation of the play urged its readers that, "Tedious as the play is, we can honestly assure our readers that they will be justified in journeying any distance through the streets of London to see the manner in which *Pericles* is got up." And the fact that Phelps, entirely at odds with his usual custom of varying the repertoire week by week, allowed this production to run for forty-six consecutive performances between 14 October and 6 December is convincing evidence that he astonished audiences with a spectacular show in which, for once, the spectacle did not so much serve the text but the text served the spectacle.

CONCLUSION

> The only frequenters of his theatre who were not
> altogether of the unfashionable kind were the
> celebrated men of letters, science, and art of that day.
> (Geoffrey Turner, 1 May 1887)

The subject of this thesis has been Samuel Phelps's regime at Sadler's Wells Theatre between 1844 and 1862, my purpose to establish demographic profiles for Phelps's potential audiences, to look for evidence of any management agenda beyond theatrical acclaim and commercial success, and to show how and why Phelps's repertoire appealed during his management but failed after his retirement. I have provided sketches of the population in the theatre's catchment area from the limited quantitative data and rejected the contemporary view that Phelps's regime transformed the disposition of an unruly, ill-educated Sadler's Wells' mob into a pliant, passive congregation. The ambitious programme of legitimate drama initiated by Phelps appeared sustained from its inception by the response of audiences apparently actively invested in its success. The promptbooks evidence relatively full texts and a concern for the cohesion of all elements in the interpretation of the text. I remain unconvinced of motivation beyond a combination of literary, theatrical and commercial agendas. However, the view that Phelps had an ideological agenda driving his management credo persisted in contemporary reviews of his work. Therefore, the research questions went on to test the hypothesis that the success of Phelps's management might indeed be identified with a presumption of an educational purpose, albeit the response to such questions is stymied by lack of autograph evidence from Turner's unfashionable frequenters. This, for the main part, required me to rely on the very reviewers who instigated and then, I argue, imposed the suggestion of purpose in the first place. However, despite the dearth of first-hand

response from indigenous spectators, and the limited quantitative evidence available, the success of the management may be demonstrated. The final research question addresses the failure of the theatre after Phelps left. In this conclusion, I will argue that Bourdieu's tools of habitus, field and cultural capital offer theoretical assumptions which allow a discussion of how social context (Bourdieu's "field") and the agency of individuals ("habitus") may disband as well as make up an audience.

It is clear from the reviews referred to in the chapters above that Morley was the chief purveyor of the educational agenda argument. In an essay, "Shakespeare in the theatrical criticism of Henry Morley", Russell Jackson writes (188) that the most important feature of Morley's theatrical criticism is his social and cultural agenda, his insistence that the theatre is of great importance, and that for the educated middle-classes to ignore it is an abdication of responsibility. However, it is interesting to note that most of his criticism of Phelps's productions concern his cultural agenda, principally the way in which Phelps, in Morley's view, always presented the plays as poems. The effect on the audiences of the productions seems, from Morley's reviews, to render them curiously passive. Douglas Jerrold's reaction to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, discussed in Chapter 3, may perhaps explain Morley's reference (61) to the "silent and reverent" playgoers he saw at the production but the church-like reverence noted in the audience's reaction to *Twelfth Night*, noted in the Introduction, smacks of Dickens.

Another attempt to establish whether or not Phelps was implementing an ideological agenda may be seen in the work of the German novelist, and poet, Theodor Fontane. During his time as a journalist in London, he wrote a number of articles comparing how Shakespeare was staged in the theatres of London and Berlin. On his return to Germany, he gathered together his articles on London's theatres, its art and

its press and published them as *Aus England, Studien und Briefer über Londoner Theater, Kunst and Presse.* Russell Jackson, from whose translation of Fontane I quote, notes in the Introduction to the text that although Fontane does not offer a detailed social analysis of the audiences he experiences, the fact that he is writing for Berlin newspaper-readers necessitates some description (Jackson, "Fontane", xvii). As far as Sadler's Wells is concerned, Fontane sees distinctions within the audience. He describes (59) the theatre as a "people's theatre" for the "by no means elegant public of Islington." However, he also sees "faces and dresses" in the front row of boxes who do not come from Islington.

Turner, that is, in the epigraph above, is echoing Fontane when he sees two disparate audiences. There is also an interesting first-hand account of Phelps's audiences which is not that of a journalist, in the second volume of William Tinsley's *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* (1900). Tinsley endorses both Fontane's and Turner's accounts that there were two audiences:

> I hope I am in no way doing Mr. Phelps an injustice by calling him the "people's actor'…his patrons in the higher priced part of the theatre appreciated his splendid talent…he had a good but not great following among them… [but]it was the pit and gallery that knew him most and appreciated him best. At the Wells, Phelps's patrons were a good deal on the level with each other, and were one in their love of Phelps…[and] his company…and there was splendid intelligence in their honest shouts of approval. (143)

In the pieces Turner contributed to Clement Scott's, fairly short-lived, monthly review, *The Theatre,* he gives details of the rapport between the auditorium and the stage. Of Phelps's portrayal of Vicentio in the opening night of *Measure for Measure,* for example, he writes:

> I]n the last scene [he]had the audience at his will, to mould and sway as pleased him….Through the old rafters of the house rang the stout, emphatic syllables, finding an echo unmistakable in the genuine spontaneous sympathy of men and women. (249)

He goes on that the later touch of humour in the implied pardon, “By this Lord Angelo perceives he’s safe” (V.i.492), was delivered with a “significant side-look of princely amenity” to which the audience “likewise” responded, a rare glimpse of what Shattuck (3) laments is too often missing from the promptbooks, “a hint of voice or temper or histrionic manner”. However, such insights into audience response are rare in the contemporary reviews which tend to tack on general remarks on the size of the audience at the end of their reviews with, occasional, mention of applause. Although Kathryn Prince argues (82) that the *Theatrical Journal* takes an audience-centred view of theatre because of its sense that “theatrical achievements should be measured with reference to its audience”, close reading of the Sadler’s Wells reviews during Phelps’s tenure reveals that the measure of achievement lay principally in recording the size of the audience and any enthusiasm in its response, not in any critical appraisal of its aesthetic response. Thus, for example, its review of the 1849 *Richard III* discussed in Chapter 1 noted only that the response to Dickinson’s rendition of Clarence’s dream was “a well-merited round of applause” (29 March 1849, p.96), that the house was “crowded to overflow” for *Timon* (18 October 1851, p.330) and there was “unanimous and enthusiastic applause” for *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (12 October 1853, p.318). Only in the review for *Pericles* is there any reference to response to scenery: “The audience insisted on the scene painter appearing before them which…he complied with amidst enthusiastic cheering.” The *Theatrical Journal* is a significant resource not only because its archive presents, with rare exceptions, an unmediated run of weekly reports on Sadler’s Wells theatre throughout Phelps’s tenure but also because the demographic of its projected audience, described by the editor William Bestow in the opening address of the first issue as the “middling and operative classes”, replicates that of Phelps.

In the Introduction to this thesis, I outlined an intention to use Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and field to frame my contentions. Bourdieu approached the two major topics of his research – education and culture – in the 1960s, with the intention of breaking with their standard interpretations as social phenomena (Grenfell, 15). These were preconstructed interpretations established by history and consequent repetition. He argues, "The force of the preconstructed resides in the fact that, being inscribed both in things and in minds, it presents itself under the cloak of the self-evident which goes unnoticed because it is by definition taken for granted" ("Reflexive Sociology", 251). Dickens immediately springs to mind: Phelps's purported banishment of the ethos of Newgate culture at Sadler's Wells gave him a quasi-missionary status, an interpretation established and repeated until it achieved mythic status. As Dickens wrote,

> [Phelps] conceived of the desperate idea of changing the character of the dramatic entertainments presented at this den, from the lowest to the highest, and of utterly changing with it the character of the audience. (*Household Words*, 4 October 1851)

Indeed, Phelps, in the Mansion House speech (transcribed in *The Life*, pp.334-5) arguing the educational, and commercial, case for a government-subsidised, national theatre, saw it as an adjunct to "the late education scheme by which children are forced somehow or other into school."

BOURDIEU'S THINKING TOOLS

Bourdieu uses the "thinking tools" of habitus, field and capital ("Reflexive Sociology", 50) to make sense of the relationship between social structures and everyday practices. What is critical to his theory of practice is that any analysis be relational, which is why habitus, field and capital should be used together. The concept of *habitus* arose from a question of how social behaviour could be understood

as regulated, without being depicted as merely the product of conscious obedience to rules. Bourdieu examined everyday practice in terms of "sustained improvisation within a framework of schemata inculcated by the culture in body and mind alike" (Burke 58).

HABITUS

Formally, Bourdieu defines habitus as a property of actors/agents (whether individuals, groups or institutions). It comprises:

> the system of durable structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (qtd. Thomson 5)

Often defined as "a feel for the game", the habitus is a structuring concept which not only generates inherent attitudes but also promotes the ways in which such dispositions are practised. Individuals do not act in a vacuum but in social situations governed by a set of objective social relations or contexts. In many ways consonant with the "specific dispositions" provided by a "horizon of expectations" in the theory of Hans Robert Jauss (22), habitus adapts understanding and enables reception. The prevalent impression from an overview of contemporary criticism of the Sadler's Wells audience is that Phelps's productions instigated the understanding and response which enabled the house, for the first time, to be associated with Shakespeare. However, a notice in the *Theatrical Journal* of 5 June 1841, which records that Sadler's Wells had opened for the season on 31 May observes:

> [The theatre] has undergone a thorough change in its interior…The ceiling represents Jove conferring immortality on Shakspear, who is presented by Genius and Fame, and attended by Melpomene and Thalia. The circle [is] most richly ornamented with medallions, representing Shakspear's seven ages. (179)

Robert William Honner was the lessee and stage manager at the Wells at that time and the article, which later credits Frederick Fenton (who was to remain as Phelps's scene

painter) and a Mr G. Morris with the design and he execution of the entire "decorative part of the theatre…papier machie [*sic*] ornaments, medallions, mouldings, &c.," offers evidence of some identification of the theatre with Shakespeare before the Phelps management began.

Dewey Ganzel's essay, "Patent Wrongs and Patent Theatres: Drama and Law in the Early Nineteenth Century", is pertinent here. Ganzel argues (388) that even by 1832, with Buwer-Lytton's motion to establish a select committee to investigate the state of dramatic literature in England, the patent monopoly had ceased to be a real factor in English dramatic development: unpatented theatres in London and its environs produced the regular drama and there was little the patent theatres could do about it. As far as Sadler's Wells is concerned, this is borne out by an unidentified clipping in the Sadler's Wells Performance Files in the Victoria and Albert Museum's Theatre Collection. Dated 1838, the clipping is an account of a court case, Ewing *v.* Osbaldistone, in which David Osbaldistone (then manager of the theatre) was accused of infringing the 1737 Licensing Act by mounting legitimate drama at Sadler's Wells:

> Plays were publicly acted in a regular manner. Among others Shakspeare's plays, and there were witnesses who had been present, and followed the performance from the books… Of all that there was direct and positive evidence…Mr. Osbaldiston was not only the manager but an actor, and he acted among other characters those of Macbeth and Virginius…*It was shown that the public regularly attended the theatre*". [my emphasis] The Sadler's Wells theatre audiences display a disposition for Shakespeare.

The Sadler's Wells theatre audiences thus displayed a disposition for Shakespeare well before Phelps is supposed to have converted them to the cause of legitimate drama.

According to Bourdieu, such dispositions are "durable" and "transposable", durable because they last throughout an individual's (or "agent" in Bourdieu's terminology) lifetime and transposable because they may "*generate* practices in

multiple and diverse fields of activity", [my emphasis] and they are structured structures in that they "inevitably incorporate the objective social conditions of their inculcation". Finally, the dispositions of the habitus are structuring structures through their ability to "generate practices adjusted to specific situations" (Bourdieu, "Field" 5). Davis and Emeljanow argue Phelps and Mrs Warner were "faced" (114) with an audience looking for a theatre whose repertoire would affirm its own "self-conscious respectability", with little attempt to explain that concept. I submit that the new managers of Sadler's Wells inherited audiences which had dispositions in place to adapt to their repertoire. The Davis/Emeljanow claim to self-conscious respectability may also be tempered somewhat by a note in *The Life* (17), initialled J.F.R. (John Forbes-Robertson) which reads:

> I remember [Phelps] telling me that the first night or two at Sadler's Wells he was obliged to have an extra body of police from head-quarters, and that these men did their duty so vigorously, that he was never afterwards troubled.

The note, moreover, goes on to suggest that Forbes-Robertson had "repeatedly" seen doubtful characters turned back and refused admission which suggests there was an unruly element to be considered.

There is also an unidentified cutting to be found in the Sadler's Wells files in The Islington Local History Centre, dated 25 August 1902, and headed "How Phelps Reformed Sadler's Theatre", which further emphasises the management's initial anxiety about the success of their proposed programme. What follows is an extract from its closing paragraph:

> It must not be supposed, however, that the new management tried to force Shakespeare down the throats of its patrons…It is a fact that the management had, in the event of its legitimate drama failing to attract, actually commissioned a transpontine dramatist to prepare a 'red-fire' melodrama…This was to be held in readiness in case Shakespeare was unsuccessful".

Obviously, the extract is unevidenced, but, taken in conjunction with the Forbes-Robertson note, it counsels a more cautious approach than an assumption of a ready-made audience waiting for Phelps. Instead, there is a more nuanced view: that the management were embarking on their venture with audiences predisposed to respond.

Agents within a field can speculate for capital to improve, to transform, their own value and place within the field. A memoir such as William Tinsley's *Random Recollections of an Old Publisher* records that, as a young man and still one of Turner's unfashionables, he saw around twenty revivals of Shakespeare's plays at Sadler's Wells. Tinsley writes that getting to the theatre from Shepherd's Bush often took close to an hour and a half but "even though my time for work in the morning was six o'clock sharp, I never worked more cheerfully all the day than when I had a couple of shillings to spare for a dramatic treat at Sadler's Wells in the evening" (140). Here economic capital enabled speculation to increase cultural capital. He adds that the couple of shillings ensured a chance of the pit, rather than the gallery, and the chance of the glass of his watch being "ground to a powder" against the "rib-smashing wooden barrier" that barred its entrance (142). Nearer to the theatre, students from St. Bartholomew's were to be seen in the pit. In a biographical sketch of Phelps, Richard Lee wrote:

> They were an audience of students, who came to see presented on the stage what they had seen and reflected on at home. In the boxes, the pit…[they]…were nightly to be seen checking the text as it fell from the actor's [*sic*] lips by reference to their open Shakespeare.

Not only the pittites compete within the field: one of the writer Edward Litt Laman Blanchard's diary entries (Scott, "Life", 99) records the house full of the *literati* at a performance of *The City Madam*. Such a commitment to the values and capital of cultural capital accords with what Bourdieu calls "illusio": Tinsley, the medical students, the *literati* are clearly caught up in the game, "believing…that playing is

worth the effort…to participate, to admit that the game is worth playing and that the stakes created in and through the fact of playing are worth pursuing" (Webb, 26).

FIELD

Bourdieu insists that analysis be relational and, therefore, it is necessary to consider the social formation in which agent interaction occurs. Jen Webb *et al* in *Understanding Bourdieu* define the field of cultural production:

> [A] series of institutions, rules, rituals, conventions, categories, designations and appointments which constitute an objective hierarchy, and which produce and authorise certain discourses and activities. (Webb, xi)

The analysis of social spaces, from which Bourdieu developed the concept of "field", meant not only examining the object of research both in its specific historical context but questioning the ways in which "previous knowledge" of any research object had been generated, by whom, and "whose interests were served by those knowledge generation practices" (Thomson, "Field". 65). As demonstrated, it is possible to say that the previous knowledge of the Sadler's Wells audience has been generated by *Punch* then promulgated by Dickens and disseminated through his journalism. Alan R. Young argues persuasively (33-34) that the stated goal of *Punch*, from whom Dickens borrowed the tropes he used to such effect, may have been humorous entertainment but behind the "mask of jocularity", there was a "consistent strain" of political seriousness and especially in its earlier years a "relatively radical vision of the need for social reform". Furthermore, Dickens, and Morley, clearly provide evidence of a social and cultural agenda in which theatre is of great importance in society.

In any given field, agents occupying the diverse available positions (or in some cases creating new positions) engage in competition for control of the interests or resources which are specific to the field in question. However, the interests and the

resources at stake are not always material and competition among agents, which Bourdieu sees as one universal unvarying property of fields, is not always based on conscious calculation, although it seems plausible to suggest that both Dickens's and Morley's agendas were very much the result of conscious calculation.

In the cultural field, competition often concerns the authority inherent in recognition, consecration and prestige, particularly the latter. This is especially so in what Bourdieu calls the sub-field of restricted production, that is, production such as that of Sadler's Wells, not aimed at a large-scale market. The most significant individuals in the social space, Phelps and Greenwood, for example, and, increasingly, reviewers such as Oxenford, Morley and Heraud, would occupy the most dominant field positions, where they would determine the value of field-specific, symbolic, capital.

Authority based on prestige is also purely symbolic. There is, for example, an inherent recognition of their symbolic capital in the prospectus issued in advance of the Phelps/Warner management, which also clearly establishes the specific logic of the particular field. From an admitted self-proclaimed dominance in the field, the symbolic capital associated with the Patent theatres is now to be struggled for in Sadler's Wells. As the management progressed, Phelps's position within the field became endowed with a special aura and achieved symbolic distinction. To return to Tinsley: "[O]utside [Phelps's house in Canonbury Square, Islington], each evenng, many Isingtonians used to assemble to see their great actor go to the theatre" (151).

Of the cultural intermediaries in the field, that is, the reviewers, Morley was probably most invested through his clear educational agenda. The educational field had conferred distinction on him and he brought symbolic capital into the field that was Sadler's Wells theatre. In a paper "Theatrical hierarchy, cultural capital and the

legitimate/illegitimate divide" (2016), Caroline Radcliffe writes: "Bourdieu examines how systems of social inequality are embedded in cultural practices" (81). This was certainly the case with Morley who, as observed in the Introduction above, foregrounded the fact that cultural capital could maintain class distinctions: "There sit our working classes…orderly and reverent" (*Journal*, 138). He confined his attentions to the high culture of the "legitimate" in Phelps's bills with, in particular, an absolute insistence in his notices of what, in particular Shakespeare was permitted to mean.

CULTURAL CAPITAL

> In all fields of social practice…the symbolic forms of capital are associated with the well-formed habitus and…those with [that distinction] are higher in cultural capital. (Rob Moore, 2014)

Within the cultural field, symbolic capital, specifically here cultural capital, culturally-valued taste and consumption patterns, is particularly important. "[It] is…constituted by, or out of, the conflict which is involved when groups or individuals attempt to determine what constitutes capital within that field and how that capital is to be distributed (Webb, xi). It is my argument that with the departure from the field, first of Greenwood, a man of distinction, then Phelps, a figure of consecration, the dynamic of the field changed irrevocably. Morley's final review of Sadler's Wells, for example, was of a production of *Coriolanus* in September 1860, although he continued to notice Phelps's performances in other theatres. Oxenford suggests agents no longer invested in the capital of the field, petrified in nostalgia for the past:

> For so many years have the winter seasons of Sadlers'-wells [*sic*] been associated with the name of Mr. Phelps that local patrons will at first…feel a difficulty in conceiving the reins of government in other hands (29 September 1862, p.9)

Phelps's immediate successor Catherine Lucette, despite frequently changing her bills from melodrama to vaudeville, failed. Perhaps part of the failure lay in the arch-conservatism of the local inhabitants:

> A passionate love of theatricals is not among the characteristics of Pentonville, and though Mr. Phelps could infuse into it a stern veneration for Shakesperian tragedy, it has not yet learnt to appreciate the lighter forms of recreation which prove so successful at the West-end. It is not impossible that a morbid dread of appearing frivolous hovers about the region of the Angel. (*Times*, 12 February 1863, p.6)

By the following winter season, Oxenford was considering the management of Alice Marriott who had both Marston and Edmund Phelps in her company. He was still emphasising the traditionalism of the audience: "The race that inhabits the hill of Pentonville and the valley of the New River does not… allow its traditions to be disturbed" (7 September 1863, p.10). Miss Marriott's reign progressed with encouraging notices on, for example, her revival of *The Duchess of Malfi* and her own appearance as Hamlet in the tercentenary year: "It is the Hamlet of Miss Marriott that will attract the Shakespearians in this Shakespearian year" (25 February 1864, p.5).

Interpretation of Phelps's departure, then, was to lead to the formation of another instance of the preconstructed: what Davis and Emeljanow describe as a "new mythopoeia". "The extraordinary nostalgia with which critics remembered the Phelps management provoked the invention of a golden age" (127). Bourdieu writes of the competition in which agents in the field engage:

> The struggle itself creates the history of the field; through the struggle the field is given a temporal dimension…It is the continuous creation of the battle between those who have made their names…and those who cannot make their own names without relegating to the past the established figures. ("Field", 106)

Any relegation of Phelps to the past was hindered by local agents remaining in the field:

> The stamp of "legitimacy" imprinted on it by Mr. Phelps and Mrs. Warner in 1844 can never it seems be effaced, and all attempts to bring it back to its old melodramatic condition have been miserable failures. (11 December 1867, p.12)

Davis and Emeljanow argue persuasively that, "[T]he managers who followed Phelps subscribed to a belief that they could preserve this golden age merely by replicating Phelps's repertoire" (136). Arundel's description (164) of the theatre in 1875 emphasises just how wrong this was:

> In 1875 cobwebs filled the Wells and 104 pounds of lead were stolen from its roof. In August the unexpired thirty-eight year lease was put up for auction together with its fixtures and fittings.

In the end, that is, Phelps's great success was to lead to great failure. The managers who succeeded him, because they tried unsuccessfully either to replicate Phelps's legitimate repertoire or in some cases to return to the pre-Phelps repertoire, merely caused stasis when the most important feature of any cultural field is that it exists diachronically in its flow of positioning in the feel for the game.

The success enjoyed by the productions discussed in the chapters above lay principally in the harmony Phelps achieved. The promptbooks reveal that the underlying concept was always focused on a balanced whole so that even spectacle - and each production had its spectacle - did not overshadow the text. Text and *mise-en-scène* coalesced, the former, perhaps, more interesting for the *literati,* the latter ensuring popular success. The theatre's reputation may have spread *via* Fontane's occupants of the first row of boxes but it was sustained by the active involvement of the gallery and the pit. My research for this thesis in the end returned me to the Mansion House speech. At one point (335) Phelps spoke of the effect, "if nothing more" of the "constant iteration" of Shakespeare's words. I conclude that his purpose in management, born of his commitment to legitimate drama, was to inculcate appreciation of Shakespeare's words not necessarily with a pedagogic intent but to promote their appreciation through his interpretations.

APPENDIX 1: The Particulars of Sale

The particulars, albeit there is a disclaimer after the conditions of sale - "the number of persons which the auditory is capable of accommodating is believed to be correctly stated…but the vendors will not hold themselves liable to compensate the purchaser for any inaccuracy" are as follows:

> Particulars – The first-class long leasehold property known as The Theatre Royal, Sadler's Wells, covers a large area of ground, in a very populous and respectable neighbourhood, and has excellent access from St. John-street-road and Arlington-street, with a large area or courtyard, affording unusual facilities for carriage visitors. The Theatre is brick-built, slated and tiled, admirably arranged, tastefully embellished, and approached by a portico; the auditory is planned so as to secure a good view of the stage, as well as acoustic facilities, and comprises the dress circle, with seats for one hundred and two persons; the boxes, to accommodate one hundred and fifty persons; six private boxes; roomy pit; to accommodate one thousand persons; the gallery, to hold eight hundred to one thousand persons. There are two refreshment saloons, and a good box office. The stage is ample and lofty (the width from fly rail to fly rail being thirty two feet nine inches), with handsome proscenium, orchestra, and every facility for producing pieces involving scenic effects, and the introduction of a large corps of performers. Over the stage &c, are the upper and lower flies, carpenter's shop, and barrel loft; and conveniently disposed are the green room, painting room, music room, ladies' private dressing rooms, and general dressing rooms, and gentlemen's ditto ditto; private and general wardrobe rooms, property rooms, cellarage, and other conveniences.

APPENDIX 2: Mendelssohn's Melodrams in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

The opening line of Act II, Puck's "How now, spirit! Whither wander you?" is quoted below the final 4 bars of the Scherzo which precedes the first melodrama. The opening 2 bars of the piece are played by the flutes. The instruments are then given a dotted rest while the Fairy, unaccompanied, speaks the lines inscribed on the score ("Over hill, over dale,/Through bush, through fire,/ Over park, over pale/Through flood, through fire,/I do wander every- where/Swifter than the moon's sphere" - II.i.2-7). Then 2 bars from the clarinets are followed by another dotted rest while the Fairy, again unaccompanied, continues, "And I serve the fairy queen,/To dew her orbs upon the green:/The cowslips tall, her pensioners be,/In their gold coats spots you see:/Those be rubies, fairy favours,/In those freckles live their savours:/I must go seek some dew-drops here". (II.i.8-14) The next line, "And hang a pearl in every cowslip's ear" is recited over 5 bars of orchestral accompaniment. At "Farewell thou lob of spirits, I'll be gone;/Our queen and all our elves come here anon" the "Farewell" is given one bar with accompaniment in the lower registers and "thou lob of spirits, I'll be gone;/Our queen and all our elves come here anon" has the next bar – one chord followed by two rests, the second dotted. There follow 4 bars of orchestral accompaniment when Puck's speech at II.i.18 is given another dotted rest bar. There is insufficient room in the bar for the lines to be quoted so the opening and closing lines are given with "&c" inserted between to indicate omitted lines: "The king doth keep his revels here to-night;/Take heed, the queen come not within his sight./For Oberon is passing fell and wrath*/&c/*But, they do square, that all their elves for fear/Creep into acorn cups and hide them there." 5 bars of orchestral music follow before the Fairy's speech at II.i.32 which again appears with an et cetera to indicate an omission: "Either I mistake your shape and making quite,/Or else you are that shrewd and knavish sprite/&c/Those that 'Hobgoblin' call you and 'Sweet Puck',/You do their work, and they shall have good luck./Are not you he?" The score has the orchestra play 22 bars between Titania's "We shall chide downright if we longer stay", and Oberon's "Well, go thy way". 30 lines are to be spoken (II.i.146-176) at the next bar before the music resumes for 5 bars after Puck's "I'll put a girdle round about the earth/In forty minutes". (II.i.175-6) Then there is another lengthy, unorchestrated, passage of text from II.i.176-246, a further 5 bars of orchestral music and "Melodram und Elfenmarsch" comes to a close. 7 bars are interspersed between the Fairy's speech and Puck's next speech at II.ii.42: "Thou speak'st aright;/I am that merry wanderer of the night./I jest to Oberon and make him smile/&c/ Then slip I from her bum, down topples she,/And 'Tailor' cries, and falls into a cough;/&". 3 bars of orchestral music then, at the next unaccompanied bar the close of Puck's speech at II.ii.58, "But room, Fairy: here comes Oberon" followed – in the same bar - by the Fairy's "And here my mistress. Would that he were gone!" (II.ii.59).

Mendelssohn "scores" the lines for Demetrius and Helena between II.i.188 and ii.i.244 within bars of the Elfenmarsch. For the second of Mendelssohn's melodrams, Oberon's spell at II.ii.33 is spoken over 4 bars marked "Andante". Only the 1st violins are playing *pp* and with their mutes on. Then, after the spell is cast, there is an abrupt change of tempo to "Allegro molto" and 5 bars played before Lysander's and Hermia's entry at II.ii.41. and the passage of dialogue between them scored, unorchestrated. This continues till Puck's "Churl, upon thy eyes I throw/All the power this charm doth owe" at II.ii.84-5. Then the tempo returns to "Andante" with Puck now speaking the words of his spell over the 1st violins, still scored *pp* but unmuted.

At the end of Puck's spell, the tempo returns to "Allegro molto" for 5 bars before the piece comes to an end. Under the double bass stave is written, "Enter Demetrius and Helena". He resumes the melodrama at bar 63 of the Elfenmarsch with Oberon's, "Ill met by moonlight, proud Titania &c". (II.i.60). As usual, the et cetera indicates this as the opening line of a longer quotation. Then at "How long within this wood intend you to stay?" (II.ii.138) 8 lines (II.ii138-145) are given one unorchestrated bar.

Mendelssohn's third melodram has a quotation from Quince immediately below the title: "When you have spoken your speech, enter into that brake, and so everyone according to his cue." (III.i.57). It is the longest of the melodrams as it encompasses most of Act III – from Puck's entry at III.i.60, "What hempen homespuns have we swaggering here/So near the cradle of the Fairy Queen?" to Puck's exit at III.ii.463. At III.i.59 Puck's lines are spoken through music. Mendelssohn preceded Puck's aside, "A stranger Pyramus than e'er played here" (III.i.71) with two plucked chords in the violins, and accompanies Puck's, "I'll follow you: I'll lead you about a round,/Through bog, through bush, through brake, through briar;/Sometimes a horse I'll be, sometimes a fire,/And neigh, and bark, and grunt, and roar, and burn,/Like horse, hound, hog, bear, fire at every turn" (III.i.87-93) with a scurrying orchestral accompaniment – with a gradual *ritardando* to emphasise the monosyllabic nouns in the final line. He presents the next 7 lines and then Bottom's "ousel cock" song with no orchestral accompaniment. In the score Titania's "What angel wakes me from my flowery bed?" (III.i.107) is complemented by chords in the woodwind section. He accompanies both Titania's summons to Peaseblossom, Cobweb, Moth and Mustardseed and her instructions to "nod" to Bottom and "do him courtesies" with music. (III.i.152) III.ii – still part of Mendelssohn's third melodram – contains long passages of dialogue, unorchestrated in the score. However, the Demetrius–Hermia confrontation from III.ii.44 – 81, the ensuing stage directions and Oberon's lines before he charms Demetrius is scored "(Enter Demetrius and Hermia)/Dialogue./(Hermia exit. Demetrius lies down)/Oberon./What hast thou done &c/By some illusion see thou bring her here/I'll charm his eyes against she do appear." "Dialogue./(Enter Lysander and Helena)/(Demetrius awakes.)/(Enter Hermia.)/(Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.)/(Exit Hermia pursuing Helena.)/(Oberon and Puck alone till:)/Oberon./But not withstanding, haste, make no delay;/We may effect this business yet ere day./Exit Oberon." (III.ii.121-395)

Mendelssohn's final melodram is concerned with Act IV with, under the title, a quotation from the first scene (IV.i.66.70)

> Oberon. Her dotage now I do begin to pity etc. till:
> Oberon. But as the fierce vexation of a dream.
> But first I will release the fairy queen."

The spell releasing Titania from her charmed state is accompanied by the first violins again playing *pp*, the tempo andante. The bassoons and the horns join in the penultimate two bars of the incantation as Titania wakens. The promptbook mirrors this with //*Music*// directed at "I will release the fairy queen." The lines as Oberon releases Titania are *thr^{o} music*. And at Oberon's "Sound, music!" at IV.i.82 *Music* is the stage direction. In the score, the opening bars of the Nocturne are played at Oberon's command. Then Puck's theme interrupts Oberon's apostrophes to Titania – "I do hear the morning lark." (IV.i.91)

ENDNOTES

[i] The theatre is mentioned in *Old Drury Lane,* the memoirs of Edward Stirling (1807–1894), in which he recalls his own “first advent on the stage” at the age of fourteen at a ”small Thespian Temple in Rawstorne-street, Goswell-road”. Stirling recalls Samuel Phelps as one of the “amateur actors in our motley troupe”. They paid to act: “Prices ran high for Shaksperian heroes. Thirty shillings enabled the fortunate possessor to strut and fret his hour as Othello or Macbeth. Fifteen shillings was the price paid for the Thane of Fife. Malcolm went at seven; Lady Macbeth fetched high prices, according to the ladies' purses.” (Stirling, 6)

[ii] As defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) – source, Economic Commission for Europe of the United Nations (UNECE), "Terminology on Statistical Metadata,” Conference of European Statisticians Statistical Standards and Studies, No. 53, Geneva 2000.

[iii] The term “Newgate” was first applied to certain English novels of the 1830s which were based on the legends of eighteenth-century highwaymen and other notorious criminals recorded in the Newgate Calendar; several of the novels were adapted for the theatre.

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