The Theater in the South During the American Revolution

JARED A. BROWN

Although the performance of plays on American soil during the period of the Revolution was strictly prohibited by a Congressional resolution of 1774 (reinforced by a similar resolution passed in 1778), numerous theatrical productions were given by British officers garrisoned or imprisoned in various American cities between 1775 and 1783. American officers countered with occasional productions of their own, but Congress's will was scrupulously obeyed in the case of professional American performers—until 1781, when a professional theatrical troupe began giving a series of performances in various Maryland cities. What follows is the history of the theater in the South during the Revolution.

Staunton, Virginia, 1779

The account of an unidentified Brunswick officer provides the only information we have concerning the theatrical activities of the British military while they were held prisoner in Staunton, Virginia, in 1779. The officer's account appeared in August Ludwig Schlozer's periodical, *Versuch eines Briefwechsels* ("Attempt at Letter Exchange"). It was written on June 1, 1779, and received in Brunswick on November 10. The captive officer described Staunton as a town of "about thirty houses, of which twenty-four are built just like the common houses in Zellerfeld." According to his letter life in captivity was not entirely unpleasant. He spoke of having "the opportunity to take real healthy exercise and frequently to doff my hat most respectfully in forests and mountains to right big, fat snakes, which, however, are quite polite as long as my horse does not chance to tread on them."

Other pleasures included "countless . . . German gardens" which attracted "visitors from sixty miles around," a large church built by the 21st English Regiment, and "taverns in which there are already two

billiard-tables" built by "two enterprising Americans." Furthermore, said the Brunswick officer:

> A group of English soldiers has put up a Comedy House, where plays are given twice a week, and in which there are already three sets of scenery. On the curtain is painted a harlequin who points with his wooden sword to the words: "Who would have expected this here?" [Seats in the] *parquet* cost four, [in the] *parterre* two dollars paper money. The officers lend the actors the necessary articles of clothing; drummers are transformed into queens and beauties. Very good pieces are performed, which, because of their satirical additions, do not always please the Americans, wherefore they are forbidden by their superiors to attend these comedies.[1]

It would be interesting to know just who did attend these comedies, and what the comedies were. But we possess no additional information. We can infer from the Brunswick officer's tantalizing general account, however, that the British soldiers in America during the Revolution were such inveterate theatergoers, and their officers such avid performers, that not even imprisonment could put a stop to their theatrical entertainments.

Savannah, 1781

The British army garrisoned in Savannah, Georgia, offered two performances in a theater on Broughton Street in 1781. It seems that no plays had been given in Savannah before that time, so itis possible that the army constructed the theater, although it is more likely that they appropriated a structure built for another purpose and converted it into a theater. In any case, the first announcement of their intentions appeared in *The Royal Georgia Gazette* on September 20, 1781:

> BY PERMISSION.
> At the small THEATRE, BROUGHTON STREET.
> For the BENEFIT of a PUBLICK
> CHARITY,
> On THURSDAY Evening next, being the 27th
> Instant, will be presented,
> The TRAGEDY of
> JANE SHORE,
> TO WHICH WILL BE ADDED
> A FARCE, called,
> THE MOCK DOCTOR.
> The Characters by Gentlemen of the Garrison. TICKETS to be had at the

Printing Office. Pit Seven Shillings. Gallery Five Shillings and Tenpence. No Money will be taken at the door, nor will any one be admitted behind the Scenes on any consideration whatever. The Doors to be open at Half past Five, and the Curtain to rise precisely at Six o' Clock.

VIVANT REX ET REGINA.

Savannah, Sept. 20, 1781.[2]

Three weeks elapsed before the next production was scheduled. On October 11, the public was informed that the gentlemen of the garrison would present *The West Indian* and *The Lying Valet* for the "charitable society." In addition, "Between the Play and Farce will be spoken, A PROLOGUE, in Character of a Country Boy." The advertisement also carried the information that this performance would begin at half past six rather than at six o'clock, and that "It is required that the Ladies and Gentlemen will not attend at the Doors before Six o'clock, as none will be admitted prior to that Period." Apparently the managers of the small theater on Broughton Street had been beseiged by theatergoers eager to gain entry to the theater on the occasion of the first performance.

But when October 18, the date of the scheduled second performance, arrived, the management was forced to insert a notice of cancellation in *The Royal Georgia Gazette*: "It is with concern the Managers of the Theatre inform the Publick, That the COMEDY of the WEST-INDIAN must be postponed, as two of the Performers are under the necessity of going out of town on duty. Timely notice of the next Play will be given in hand-bills."

On October 25, another entertainment was announced "for the benefit of Publick Charity." *Douglas* would be performed on October 29, without afterpiece, but with a song called "The Early Horn" to be sung "between the 2d and 3d Acts," and with the prologue "in Character of a Country Boy" that had been scheduled for the aborted performance on October 18. But immediately below the notice announcing this entertainment in *The Royal Georgia Gazette* appeared this embarrassed retraction:

It is with a degree of inexpressible chagrin that the Managers of the THEATRE are under the necessity of deferring the Representation of DOUGLASS. They flatter themselves that the Publick will be readily induced to admit of the present disappointment, when they are assured that t e indisposition of a principal acting Member, and the unexpected call on

> another in the line of professional duty, have conspired to form insurmountable obstacles. The period was infinitely too short to admit of appointing other Gentlemen to appear in two characters of importance.

Apparently discouraged by the many problems they had encountered, the managers announced no plans for future performances. One theatergoer expressed his disappointment in a letter to *The Royal Georgia Gazette* on November 22. "Mr. Printer," it began,

> As nothing can have a more direct tendency towards infusing into young minds the principles of virtue and honour than theatrical exhibit ons, when under the indispensible regulations of morality and decor m, independent of the advantages derived from their softening and giving polish to the manners, I cannot help expressing my surprize and disappointment at the stop which seems put to their further existence, especially as the applause so justly bestowed on their first essay might have insured to the gentlemen performers a continuance of the patronage and approbation of the publick.
>
> Whatever the cause may be that has depr ved us of so rational and pleasing an entertainment, we have only to lament its consequences, to wish for a speedy removal of it, and to hope that the gentlemen who so laudably set on foot this agreeable mode of relieving the distresses of our fellow creatures, and contributing to the instructions and entertainment of ourselves, would continue to persevere in it, and by that means merit at once the prayers of the unfortunate, as well as the approbation and esteem of every man of sent ment and taste in this part of the world.
>
> I am Sir, your most obedient servant,
>
> Philo-Theatricus.

Such an appeal could hardly be resisted, and the managers hastily prepared a production of *The Fair Penitent* and *Miss in Her Teens* for December 1, which they announced on November 29. The performance was apparently given, as no cancellation notice appeared in the newspaper. Military duty must have become increasingly time consuming that winter, however, for there is no evidence that any additional plays were produced by the British military in Savannah during the Revolution.

Whether any civilians were involved in the two Savannah productions or whether any money was actually given to charity is not known. The details of the performances given in Savannah, in Staunton (and in Charlottesville, Virginia, where Burgoyne's captive army gave entertainments in 1779-80), are completely obscure. Since neither Staunton nor Charlottesville had newspapers at the time the plays were offered in their communities, specific details are nearly

impossible to obtain. Given this paucity of verifiable records, it is possible that British military performers were active in other Southern localities during the Revolution. But if they were, their activities were well-kept secrets.

Baltimore and Annapolis, 1781-83

Congress's injunctions against theatrical entertainments presented by Americans were thoroughly ignored in Maryland, where, on July 14, 1781, the first in a series of performances was presented at a theater in Annapolis. This was advertised as "a medley of theatrical trifles" including "A Critical Dissertation [on] Noses,"[3] indicating that the performance consisted of specialty acts rather than a play or plays. Thomas Wall, a former actor with the American Company of Comedians (America's first fully professional acting company), was evidently in charge of the enterprise, for eight days later Mr. Wall was in Baltimore, appearing at Mr. L'Argeau's Dancing-Room, where he was advertised as having come "From Annapolis." On this occasion, Wall presented "A new Lecture on Heads," which was followed on June 28 by "The Old Lecture on Heads, not performed here these Eight Years."[4] These first performances may have been given by Wall alone, but he was later joined by his wife and daughter ("a Child of seven Years"), and subsequently by another actor, Mr. Tilyard.[5]

In all, Thomas Wall's company offered sixteen performances in 1781, nine of them at the theater in Annapolis and seven more at various locations in Baltimore (these included "Mr. Johnson's Sail-Warehouse" and "Mr. Lindsay's Coffee-House, on Fell's Point," in addition to Mr. L'Argeau's Dancing-Room). The productions were variously advertised as "A Medley of Theatrical Trifles" and "A Farrago of Theatrical Amusements." Among the amusements were scenes from *The Beggar's Opera, The Recruiting Officer, Love for Love, Rule a Wife and Have a Wife, Taste,* and *Miss in Her Teens*, all plays and afterpieces that had already proven popular with eighteenth-century audiences in England and America. On September 18, in Annapolis, music was provided by a band which "belong'd to the Regiment of the Count de Chaleur who with the French Army

were on their March to Virginia to attack Lord Cornwallis, posted at York Town."[6]

While Mr. Wall was travelling back and forth between Baltimore and Annapolis in 1781, he was also overseeing the construction of a theater in Baltimore, which was to become the first theater in that city. The theater was ready for operation at the beginning of the following year, and Wall, in partnership with Adam Lindsay (the owner of the tavern at Fell's Point), became the manager of the first professional troupe in America during the Revolution.

Apparently, managers had little difficulty in locating a sufficient number of actors and actresses for their purposes, although good musicians were harder to find. In an advertisement in *The Maryland Journal* on January 7, the managers noted that their inability to locate musicians capable of playing in the orchestra was preventing them from opening their theater.[7] The advertisement must have borne fruit, for the theater opened slightly more than a week later.

The season began on January 15, 1782, with a performance of *Richard III*, followed by *Miss in Her Teens*. Wall played Richard on that occasion, and Mrs. Wall played Queen Elizabeth. Their daughter played the Duke of York, and Adam Lindsay took the role of Lord Stanley. Listed among the other actors were a Mr. Shakespeare (who played the Duke of Buckingham) and two "gentlemen" who played the minor roles of Tressel and Richmond "for their Amusement." Evidently, Wall and Lindsay honored the old custom of permitting amateurs to pay for the opportunity to perform with the professional actors. A handwritten note on the broadside indicates that the "Gross Proceeds" for the performance came to £ 96, 8s., 9d.[8]

Curiously, the prologue written and spoken for the first production of the Maryland Company of Comedians, as they came to be known, contained no reference whatever to the Revolution that was still in progress. Perhaps the managers felt that the subject should be mentioned as little as possible since they were flouting the expressed wish of the Congress. The prologue spoken on March 5 for the production of *Venice Preserved*, however, concluded by complimenting the American patriots on their courage in battle, while asking them to approve the efforts of the acting company. "You've fought like Romans," said the last line of the prologue; "now like Romans feel."[9]

The season continued until July 9, during which nineteen plays were given for a total of forty-three performances, six of which were benefits. The plays included *King Lear, Richard III, Venice Preserved,* and *Gustavus Vasa,* as well as the customary afterpieces. The most popular productions were *The Orphan* and *The Fair Penitent,* both of which were offered on four occasions. Several plays, among which were *Jane Shore* and *The London Merchant*, were only performed once.[10] The repertoire was clearly a challenging one, and, in fact, the company's actors may have been ignorant of the difficulties involved in producing so many plays in so short a time. Only Mr. and Mrs. Wall are known to have had previous professional experience, so the other actors were perhaps less aware of the hazards involved in theatrical production.

One of the actors, Mr. Heard, later appeared in New York as a professional performer. He was evidently the finest actor in Lindsay and Wall's company during their first season; in a review of *Venice Preserved, The Maryland Journal* noted that "Mr. Heard in [the role of] *Jaffier* convinces us he can be as excellent in the tragic as he is great in the comic." Mrs. Robinson was also highly praised for her performance in that play. The *Journal* noted: "The character of *Belvidera* was supported with great judgment and fine feeling by Mrs. Robinson. . . . The expression of her countenance at *Jaffier's* recommending their little infant to her peculiar care drew tears from almost all the audience; nor do we ever remember seeing the frantic dying scene supported with such exquisite sensibility."[11]

It is probable that Mr. Wall, who played most of the leading male roles during the company's first season, was a mediocre performer. The fact that Wall managed the company permitted him to appropriate the best parts for himself, but later, when Wall retired from the management, he was given only secondary roles to perform. In 1782, however, Wall saw to it that, except for the notable occasion on which Mr. Heard played King Lear, the best roles fell to himself. Mrs. Wall, on the other hand, was quickly surpassed by Mrs. Robinson, who, like Mr. Heard, may have had prior theatrical experience, although probably not as a professional.

The names of Mr. Lewis, Mr. Street, Mr. Kilgour, Mr. Tilyard, Mr. Atherton, and Mrs. Elm all appear in the cast lists that Lindsay and

Wall printed in the newspapers during the first season.[12] All of them were amateurs before being hired to act with the Baltimore company, and their lack of training was painfully apparent at times. Even in 1782, when American critics were uncommonly kind to actors, "Philo-Theatricus" of *The Maryland Journal* noted in his review of *Venice Preserved* that "we could wish the other performers to be more perfect; for we are sorry to give it as our opinion that *Belvidera's* female attendants expressed, in their silent parts, countenances for more picturesque of sensibility [sic]."[13]

The performance of *Gustavus Vasa, or The Deliverer of His Country* on June 21 was significant in that it was dedicated to George Washington. For many years afterwards the play was frequently produced on patriotic occasions, and it was always associated with Washington. This performance marked the first time that the play, which had been officially banned in England, was given in America. It was chosen by Mrs. Bartholomew, whom Arthur Hornblow called "an ambitious and capable actress," for her benefit.[14] The epilogue, written by Mr. Heard, paid tribute to America's victory in the war for independence (despite the fact that victory was not official at the time that the play was produced.)[15]

The amount of money taken in for most of the performances was entered on each broadside by hand. Income ranged from a high of £154 for a performance of *The London Merchant* in Baltimore on April 1, to a low of £39, 6s., 3d. for the production of *A Woman Keeps a Secret* on April 12.[16] Perhaps the fact that the latter performance was a repeat of one given only three days earlier accounts for its lack of appeal; conversely, it may have been the novelty of *The London Merchant,* which was presented only once in Baltimore during the 1782 season, that accounted for its popularity.

Information derived from the broadsides of 1782 also tells us that the company requested "Any Gentleman possessed of good Farces" to lend them to the managers; that "Some Tunes" gave offense to some members of the audience; and—an indication that an actor's life in Baltimore in 1782 was not merely financially precarious but physically hazardous as well—a warning included in the advertisement for the performance on March 22: "Whereas several evil-disposed Persons frequent the Theatre, for no other Purpose than to create

Disturbance, by throwing Apples, Bottles, &c. on the Stage, —This is to give Notice, that proper Means will be taken to detect such Practices for the Future, and bring the Perpetrators to the most exemplary Punishment."[17]

Because performances of the plays were not advertised on a regular basis in *The Maryland Journal,* some performances were known to the public only through the issuance of broadsides. Fortunately, William Tilyard preserved all of the broadsides for the company's two seasons, and they give us a complete accounting of the performances in 1782 and 1783.

An advertisement was placed in *The Maryland Journal* on August 6, 1782, notifying the actors in Lindsay and Wall's company of the date on which they should report to the managers for the first rehearsals of the second season, and requesting prospective actresses to apply: "THE PERFORMERS belonging to the BALTIMORE THEATRE, are desired to repair to Baltimore, by the 25th Instant, as the House will be opened in a short Time afterwards," the advertisement began. It went on: "The Managers being desirous of giving all the Satisfaction in their Power to the Public, will give the highest Encouragement to ACTRESSES of real Merit, who will apply to Mr. ADAM LINDSAY, in Philadelphia, or Mr. WALL, in Baltimore."[18]

Few actresses of real merit applied, it seems, as the only female performer scheduled to appear in the first production of the 1782-83 season (who had not appeared with the company the season before) was a Mrs. Parsons. She received special billing in the advertisement that appeared in *The Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* on Tuesday, September 3, 1782:

(By Permission)
On FRIDAY, the 13th of September, 1782,
The THEATRE, in BALTIMORE,
Will be opened for the ensuing Season,
With the TRAGEDY of
MAHOMET,
The IMPOSTOR.
Mahomet, Mr. LEWIS
Mirvan, Mr. TILYARD
Ali, Mr. TOBINE
(*being his first Appearance on this Stage*)
Hercides, Mr. Atherton; Ammon, Mr. Patterson;

Zaphna, Mr. SMITH;
Pharon, Mr. SHAKESPEAR;
Alcanor, Mr. HEARD.
Palmira, Mrs. ROBINSON.
To which will be added, a FARCE, called
The G H O S T.
Sir Jeffrey Constant, Mr. Lewis; Captain Constant,
Mr. Street; Clinch, Mr. Atherton; Trusty, Mr.
Tilyard; Roger, Mr. Shakespear.
Belinda, Mrs. Elm; Dolly, Mrs. Parsons, *being her first Appearance on this Stage.*
Boxes, *One Dollar*; Pit, *Five Shillings.*
The Doors to be opened at Half past Five, and to
begin at Half past Six o'Clock.[19]

Unfortunately, the advertised performance was "obliged to be deferr'd . . . on Account of particular Scenery that cannot be finished on Friday." Instead of *Mahomet*, the season opened with *The Drummer, or, the Haunted House* on September 17. A remarkable total of seventy-four performances were given in the 1782-83 season, of which twelve were produced in a theater in Annapolis.[20] It would be difficult to imagine a more demanding season, even for the most experienced actors. The Maryland Company presented thirty-two full length plays and twenty-eight afterpieces in less than ten months. In addition, four performances were advertised for production in Upper Marlborough, beginning on April 30, 1783.[21] Evidently, the same plays (*The Grecian Daughter* and *The Lying Valet*) were given on all four nights of performance in Upper Marlborough; still, both the actors and the prompter must have been near exhaustion by the end of the season.

The repertoire of the Maryland Company in its final season of 1782-83 included seven of Shakespeare's plays, of which *Romeo and Juliet* was the most popular, being given on three occasions. The plays and afterpieces given most often that season were *The Grecian Daughter* (nine performances, including the four in Upper Marlborough), *The Lying Valet* (eight performances, including the four in Upper Marlborough), *The Witches* (a pantomime afterpiece, played on six occasions), and *Douglas*, *The Wrangling Lovers*, and *The Mock Doctor*, each performed five times.[22]

Lindsay and Wall continued to permit "gentlemen" to pay for the privilege of appearing with the company during its second season.

One of these gentlemen was the Reverend James Twyford, who appeared in *Romeo and Juliet* on October 18. Twyford seems to have been the first clergyman ever to have acted a role in a play in America.

Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Ryan joined the company in 1782-83. They had been professional performers in Ireland,[23] and they immediately proved themselves to be the finest actors in the company. As professionals, the Ryans must have been pained by the shoddy management of the Maryland Company. Not only did Thomas Wall continue to play leading roles, despite the likelihood that he was less gifted than several other actors in the troupe, but the company's box-office income was generally unimpressive. The receipts for the first seventeen performances are handwritten at the bottom of the playbills that are now collected at the New York Historical Society. These handwritten notes show that the receipts never exceeded £127, 10s., 8d. (collected for the October 18 performance of *Romeo and Juliet*—perhaps the friends of the Rev. Mr. Twyford helped to increase the size of the audience), and often dipped below £100. The worst showing occurred with the performance of *Mahomet* on October 1, when only £54, 11s., 3d. were taken in. The average nightly income for the first seventeen performances was less than £94.

There is no indication whether or not the company managed to attract larger houses after November 6 (the last date on which receipts were recorded), but the likelihood is that they did not. On February 7, 1783, Lindsay and Wall retired or were forced out of the management of the theater, and Dennis Ryan took charge of the company's fortunes. Adam Lindsay evidently returned to his former profession, but Thomas Wall remained with the troupe, playing minor roles from then on.

Mrs. Robinson, like Adam Lindsay, left the Baltimore company in 1783, but most of the other actors remained throughout the season. Twelve members of the company were given benefits during the season, according to the information included in the theater's handbills and advertisements. Others were paid salaries that must have varied according to the value of each performer to the company. Some of the actors may not have been paid at all, for the list of performers in 1782-83 is a long one, and Ryan's overhead would have been extremely high if everyone who appeared in his productions had drawn

a regular salary. Included in the casts advertised in the newspapers were such names as Mr. Gittings, Mr. Ridgeley, Dr. Andrew Weisenthall, Mr. Graham, Mr. Buckhannan, Mr. Nelson, Mr. Craig, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Round, Mr. Allen, Mr. Church, Mr. Davids, Mrs. Foster, Mrs. Potter, Mr. Atherton, Mr. Patterson, Mr. Brown, Mrs. Smith, and Mrs. Bradshaw, in addition to those who had performed with the company during its first season.[24]

Dennis Ryan seems to have taken over a debt-ridden company. He began his managerial career by announcing that any tickets issued before the change of management would not be honored for new performances. He then solicited help from a number of Baltimore "gentlemen," who agreed to appear in *The West Indian* on October 18 in order "to enable Mr. Ryan to accomplish the purpose of his undertaking." Admission receipts for that performance are unavailable, but they were presumably high, and they probably helped Ryan to pay some of the debts under which his company was laboring.

In April, 1783, Ryan took his company, now renamed "The American Company of Comedians," to Annapolis, where they gave six performances in nine days. Not a single play or afterpiece was repeated during this brief engagement. For the performance of *The Roman Father* in Annapolis on April 24, Mr. Heard wrote and recited a prologue in which he thanked the citizens of Maryland for their liberality in permitting the company to perform in 1782 and 1783. The prologue concluded:

> When war surrounded us with dreadful rage,
> The State alone indulged our infant stage,
> Grateful to you our ardor will increase
> With glorious independency and peace.[25]

The Revolution had not yet come to an official end, but on February 14, 1783, George III had issued a proclamation calling for the cessation of hostilities. "Glorious independency" would become official in less than seven months, when the formal treaty of peace would be signed.

An unsigned article appeared in *The Maryland Journal* of March 28, 1783, discussing arguments for and against "Theatrical Entertainments." Because it is one of the few genuinely critical discussions of the subject during the period, and because it tells us a great deal about

the mode of performance of the Maryland company, it is reproduced here in full:

OBSERVATIONS on the BALTIMORE THEATRE, &c.

After what has been said against and in favour of Theatrical Entertainments, it would not be easy to advance any thing new on the subject. While one party urges that the Stage, under a proper administration, tends to improve the morals, it is contended by another, with equal shew of argument, that as the Stage is managed, it has a contrary effect. Should the Manager of our little Theatre be desirous of supporting this last judgment, he will persevere in an abuse, which has already given great offence to a number of persons who are disposed to countenance his undertaking. From some cause or other, the Players have taken it into their heads, that the Plays which they act are not witty enough in themselves, and that they require to be spiced with their own wit to make them more palatable. When it is considered that there is not, perhaps, a single Comedy or Farce in the English language without indelicacies, and that even many of the most celebrated English Tragedies are not clear of this fault, one would think it unnecess ry for the Players to subjoin any loose b lderdash or gross obscenities of their own. The business of a Player, s I view it, is to please the Public, by representing life and manners, agreeable to the spirit in which they are described. Instead of attending solely to this, our Players are degenerating into a group of obscene blunderers, and abominable interpolators. It is to be hoped, however, that Mr. RYAN will, in future confine them to their author, and set the example himself, as the principal. No one can tell where liberties of this nature are to end; nor will it be prudent for a modest woman to be seen at the Playhouse, should they be continued. If any Actor thinks he has wit, let him cast it into a play, that it may be judged of in the usu l manner, and not keep popping it upon the audience, who come only prepared to relish the wit of another.

I flatter myself these few observations will not be looked upon as proceeding from ill nature, but from a desire to improve our little Stage, and render it more deserving of patronage. Under the refonn we suggest, the Playhouse opens an entertainment suited to persons of every taste; and men themselves will be to blame, and not the Playhouse, should they leave it with worse dispositions than when they enter it.

Mr. and Mrs. RYAN are real acquisitions. The latter, in particular characters, has few equals. In *Euphrasia* in *The Grecian Daughter*, which we have seen acted for her benefit, she was throughout interesting, and held the tender affections under the most absolute controul [sic]. Mr. RYAN has merit also and seems to possess talents for rising on the Stage. Mr. WALL's abilities in Comedy are generally known. Mr. HEARD is a clear, distinct, penetrating speaker; and when he does not exceed the natural pitch of his voice, seldom fails to affect the heart. Without mentioning some of the other performers, it is but justice to acknowledge, that we may pass away an evening, both rationally and agreeably, at the Playhouse. There is no doubt but further encouragement will still further improve the present Actors, as well as invite others capable of increasing our pleasures. The people of

Baltimore are a generous people, and, I dare say, while the Stage is conducted with decorum, will not withold [sic] their protection.[26]

After the final performance of *Isabella* and *The Wrangling Lovers* had been given in Baltimore on June 9, ending the 1782-83 season, the Ryans and their actors departed for New York, where they began performing only ten days later.

Other kinds of theatrical entertainments were offered in Baltimore during 1782 and 1783. One of them was announced by a handbill that advertised a performance by "THE NOTED BAYLY," who "Will exhibit his grand Medley of ENTERTAINMENTS, Consisting of sundry curious Performances, by DEXTERITY OF HAND, Interspersed with moral and entertaining LECTURES On the Art of Deception and Force of Credulity, with the COMICAL, FARCICAL, OPERATICAL, WHIMSICAL Humours of Seignor PUNCHINELLO, and his Artificial COMPANY OF COMEDIANS, near four Feet high, properly dressed, &c." This production, which was to include a "PLAY or FARCE, with sundry DROLLS and INTERLUDES," as well as "sundry incidental PROLOGUES and EPILOGUES," was advertised for December 2 "and every *Monday* and *Thursday* following, If fair, for a few Weeks." It was to be given, not at the Baltimore Theater, but "At the Sign of the Indian King, IN BALTIMORE, In a large Room fitted up in a Theatrical Manner." Tickets for the performance were priced at five Shillings each, with "Children at Half a Dollar, or One Ticket for two, if under ten Years." The engagement was evidently successful, for on December 17, 1782, an advertisement in *The Maryland Journal* noted that "A SOBER *YOUNG MAN*, of an affable and obliging temper, whose pride will not conquer his reason" was wanted "to attend on and assist the NOTED OLD ARTIST in his domestic and theatrical business." Since the handbill for the December 2 performance had referred to Mr. Bayly as an "old noted Artist," it seems clear that Bayly did well in Baltimore, and that his performances continued at least for the "few Weeks" for which they were originally advertised.

Another entertainment was advertised for May 26, 1783, in a handbill. It was to take place "At the next Door to the NEW-ENGLAND COFFEE-HOUSE, in FELL'S POINT, BALTIMORE." Featured was "JACOB HENNIGER, [who] will exhibit his grand Medley of

ENTERTAINMENTS, Consisting of sundry curious Performances" that, by coincidence, resembled Mr. Bayly's entertainments in almost every particular. It, too, included "the TRAGICAL COMICAL FARCICAL OPERATICAL WHIMSICAL Humours of Seignior PUNCHINELLO, and his artificial COMPANY of COMEDIANS, four feet high." Either Mr. Henninger was a plagiarist, or this was Mr. Bayly performing under another name. In either case, this performance was enhanced by "an Address to Everybody, not aimed at Anybody, by Somebody, in Character of Nobody." "Ladies and Gentlemen" were assured that "the strictest Regularity, Decency, and Decorum, will be observed throughout the whole Performance."[27] Since this note did not appear in Mr. Bayly's advertisement, it may indicate that the performances in December, 1782, were marred by a noise or rowdy audience.

Although the theater was late in coming to Baltimore (no documented record of any performance exists until 1781), for two years plays and entertainments were in considerable abundance in and around the city. Perhaps the residents of Baltimore had been starved for entertainment. Whatever the reason, the support they gave to the entertainments offered in 1781, '82 and '83 permitted the re-establishment of the professional theater in America.

NOTES

[1]Letter from an unidentified Brunswick officer, reprinted in Ray W. Pettengill, ed., *Letters from America, 1776-1779; Being Letters of Brunswick, Hessian, and Waldeck Officers with the British Armies During the Revolution* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), pp. 149-51.

[2]*The Royal Georgia Gazette* [Savannah, Georgia], 20 September 1781. Dates of subsequent issues quoted will appear in the text.

[3]Joseph Towne Wheeler, *The Maryland Press, 1777-1790* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1938), p. 104; Roger P. Bristol, *Supplement to Charles Evans' American Bibliography*, published for the Bibliographical Society of America and the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 299. Both sources include a collection of broadsides from which information was taken.

[4]Wheeler, p. 106; Bristol, p. 300.

[5]Wheeler, p. 107.

[6]See Wheeler, pp. 105-107.

[7]George O. Seilhamer, *History of the American Theatre: During the Revolution and After* (Philadelphia: Globe Printing House, 1889), II, 54-55.

[8]Wheeler, p. 112.

[9]Seilhamer, p. 62.
[10]Bristol, pp. 311-14.
[11]"Philo-Theatricus," *The Maryland Journal*, 9 March 1782, quoted in Seilhamer, p. 59, footnote.
[12]Seilhamer, pp. 56-65.
[13]Quoted in Seilhamer, p. 60, footnote.
[14]Arthur Hornblow, *A History of the Theatre in America* (1919; rpt. New York: Benjamin Blom, 1965), I, 158-59.
[15]Seilhamer, p. 65.
[16]Wheeler, pp. 117-18.
[17]Wheeler, pp. 114-16.
[18]*The Maryland Journal and the Baltimore Advertiser*, 6 August 1782.
[19]"The Play-Bills of Baltimore Theatre for the Years 1782, and 1783. Wall, and Lindsay, Managers." New York Historical Society.
[20]"The Play-Bills of Baltimore Theatre"; Seilhamer, pp. 70-87; *The Maryland Journal*, various issues, 1782-83; *The Maryland Gazette*, various issues, 1783.
[21]*The Maryland Gazette* [Annapolis], 17 April 1783.
[22]Wheeler, pp. 124-44; Bristol, pp. 312-15.
[23]Hornblow, p. 160.
[24]Seilhamer, pp. 82, 87-95.
[25]Quoted in Seilhamer, p. 92.
[26]*The Maryland Journal*, 28 March 1783.
[27]See "The Play-Bills of Baltimore Theatre."