

Rise of the Monkey Tribe: Simian Impersonation in the British Theatre

In this article Bernard Ince surveys and critically examines for the first time the bizarre phenomenon known as the ‘Monkey Drama’ in the British theatre. A genre of early origin, pre-dating the age of Darwinism, it is to be found in all areas of entertainment, especially during the nineteenth century when the quintessential characteristics of simian mimicry were established. Commonly juxtaposed with the legitimate drama in afterpieces, ‘man-monkey’ spectacles not only blurred conventional man–beast boundaries, but also challenged prevailing conceptions of theatrical legitimacy. The genre attracted myriad performers of varied origins and specialisms, whose ability to mimic simian characteristics stemmed not only from agility and flexibility, but also from careful study of the ‘monkey tribe’ itself. While some familiar names figure among the roll-call of simian impersonators, many artists are little known. Although difficult to quantify precisely, the genre had reached its zenith before the middle of the nineteenth century, the 1820s through the 1840s being a significant formative period. After mid-century, popularity was maintained, but to a lesser degree, largely through pantomime, only to decline significantly after 1900. In a broader context, the study furnishes new material for current interdisciplinary debates regarding the relationship between performance, evolution and visual culture in the Victorian period. Bernard Ince is an independent theatre historian who has contributed earlier studies of the Victorian and Edwardian theatre to *New Theatre Quarterly*.

Key terms: nineteenth-century theatre, man-monkey, animal impersonation, nondescripts.

ANIMAL IMPERSONATION within the theatrical space in general is of early origin.¹ In the English context more specifically, so-called ‘baboonizing’ for example is known to have occurred in the Renaissance theatre, but whether by human or animal actors remains uncertain.² While the mid-eighteenth century saw the emergence of animal performers and other novelties, including the rise of equestrian drama and use of live animals within the circus space, it is from the very beginning of the nineteenth century, primarily in the patent and minor theatres, that spectacles appeared which included simian mimicry. According to some authorities, such enactments originated in France from the mid-eighteenth century.³

The main focus of this study is the identification of plays and performers involving simian impersonation within the British entertainment arena, covering the period 1800 to 1925. Our interest is aroused by an article in the *Era* newspaper, written by E. L. Blanchard, the author of numerous Drury

Lane pantomimes. In this he offers an overview of the phenomenon, suggesting:

Among many curious chapters which might be written on the little known history of the English stage during the early part of the present century . . . one should certainly be devoted to the rise and progress of what ought to be called ‘The Monkey Drama’.⁴

Although information on the ‘man-monkey’ genre may be found from disparate sources, a consolidated historical and critical survey is lacking. Accordingly, my aims are threefold: first, to chart a chronology of the most influential productions and important contemporary ‘moments’ enacted by the principle performers, illustrating how the genre changed and developed through successive decades;⁵ second, to reveal the diversity of artists engaged; and third, to consider contemporary critical response to the genre as a whole, and to the performative attributes of elite artists, in particular. The survey concludes with a review of significant

productions and impersonators of the later nineteenth century and, more briefly, of the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Early Foundations

The seeds of simian impersonation in the British theatre were sown in the latter years of the eighteenth century. The emergent phenomenon can arguably be credited primarily to Joseph (Joe) Grimaldi, the 'quintessential Regency celebrity',⁶ who as Master Grimaldi, is known to have played monkey 'tricks' at Sadler's Wells under his father's tutelage.⁷

But it is within the first three decades of the nineteenth century, before the 1843 Theatres Act removed the monopoly of the spoken drama from the patent theatres, that a small number of influential pieces with a simian theme established the true foundations of the genre. These early templates offered authors scope for adaptation and variation and, for successive performers, vehicles for displaying and refining their acts. Most importantly, this period also set the benchmarks for performance against which future artists were often judged. These standards were based on an exclusive group of artists (mostly pantomimists) for whom, it must be accepted, contemporaneous descriptions and analyses of their art are limited. Thus, clues as to how simian performances were conducted, what made one a successful act, or what distinguished the elite performer from the run-of-the-mill, may only be gleaned inferentially from advertisements, brief reviews, or biographical accounts.

The first decade and a half of the nineteenth century constitutes the formative period of the genre with the production of three influential pieces, namely (using their short titles) *Perouse* (1801), *Philip Quarll* (1803), and *Pitcairn's Island* (1816). Of the others deserving recall, the earliest located with an explicit simian role was the comic pantomime *Safe Arrived; or, Harlequin's Return*. This was first performed at the Royal Circus, Leith Walk, Edinburgh, on 15 March 1800 with a Mr Jeffries as the monkey, but is not listed in Dibdin's *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage*.⁸

Another early piece was the comic pantomime by Charles Dibdin Jnr, *Harlequin Benedick; or, Mother Shipton's Ghost* (Sadler's Wells, 1801),⁹ which, according to advertisements, introduced the sagacious Ourang Outang and his cousin Champanzus, but it is not clear who played these roles.¹⁰ In the 'Comic Ballet of Action' by Gabriel Giroux, *Monkey Island; or, the Faithful Negro* (Sans Pareil, 1807), four juveniles played monkeys,¹¹ and in the melodrama by Charles Dibdin Jnr, *The Wild Man; or, the Water Pageant* (Sadler's Wells, 1809), Joe Grimaldi played the 'Wild Man'.¹² Grimaldi's performance perhaps drew on the earlier interpretation of Jean-Baptiste Dubois in John O'Keeffe's *Valentine and Orson; or, the Wild Man of Orleans* (Sadler's Wells, 1795).¹³

PLAYS AND PERFORMERS

Perouse; or, the Desolate Island

An 'Historic Pantomime Drama' in two parts by John Fawcett, *Perouse* (sometimes billed *La Perouse* or *De La Perouse*) was first performed 28 February 1801 at Covent Garden, with Master (Frederick) Menage as the Ourang Outang, or 'Little Wild Man of the Woods'.¹⁴ *La Perouse* (1799) was originally a drama by Benjamin Thompson translated from the German of Kotzebue,¹⁵ although whether with explicit simian mimicry is not known. Loosely based on the ill-fated French navigator of that name who disappeared in 1788, the plot follows a familiar pattern. Escaping from a shipwreck on a desolate island, Perouse meets an ourang outang-like 'Wild Man' whose fidelity and attachment constitute the principal interest of the piece; the scenario is reminiscent of *Robinson Crusoe* and his man Friday.

Savages come ashore and Umba, mistress of Kanko the Chief, falls in love with Perouse. A battle ensues in which the savages are defeated by Perouse and leave the island, after which appears a French ship bearing his wife and child in search of her husband. The joy of their reunion is short-lived however; the savages return thirsting for revenge but are defeated by the crew of

the French ship. In the midst of this action, Perouse is wounded, but his life (and that of his child) is saved by the simian hero of the piece, a theme that resonates throughout the genre.

The simian role in *Perouse* was played by numerous impersonators up to about 1864. These include: Master (Andrew) Ducrow (Olympic Circus, Glasgow, 1806);¹⁶ Master Benson (Edinburgh TR, 1808); Joe Grimaldi (Haymarket, 1809); Edmund Kean (Waterford, c. 1810);¹⁷ Master Morelli (Covent Garden, 1811);¹⁸ Master Coyle (Dublin TR, 1813);¹⁹ Jack Bologna (Covent Garden, 1816);²⁰ Master (George) Wieland (Drury Lane, 1825), for which see Figure 1, right; Monsieur Gouffé, hereafter Gouffe (Brighton TR, 1826); E. J. Parsloe (Huntingdon, 1827); Signor (William) Plimmeri (Cheltenham TR, 1838); Edward Klischnig (Dublin TR, 1838);²¹ Signor Nicholo (Queen's, Manchester, 1841); Wieland (Drury Lane, 1846); Edwin Edwards (Queen's, Dublin, 1852); Harvey Teasdale (Sheffield TR, 1861);²² and Fred Leopold (Liverpool TR, 1864).

Variations on the *Perouse* theme include the pantomime *Harlequin Perouse*, the 'Wild Man' undetermined but possibly played by J. S. Grimaldi (Sadler's Wells, 1822),²³ and the melodramatic extravaganza, *The Return of Perouse; or, Chimpanzee in France*, with Gouffe (Surrey, 1836).²⁴ Wieland (who died in 1847 aged 37), although principally a pantomimist (not a dedicated man-monkey), nevertheless exemplifies through his art some of the mimetic qualities that set the elite apart from the rank-and-file. E. L. Blanchard, for example, in recalling Wieland as an artist in his 'peculiar' line, considered that he

excelled all who came before him . . . [nor] equalled since. . . He was no mere acrobat or gymnast. His powers of expressing purpose by action were of an extraordinary kind. . . [He was] the greatest exponent of the now almost lost art of pantomime whom he had ever witnessed.²⁵

Philip Quarll; or, The English Hermit

Founded on the familiar 'desolate island/faithful ape' scenario, and derived as early as 1727 from *Robinson Crusoe*, was the fictional

Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.

This Evening the Tragedy of

Romeo and Juliet.

Prince of Verona, Mr COMER, Paris, Mr MERCER,
Montague, Mr THOMPSON,
Capulet, Mr POWELL, Benvolio, Mr YOUNGE,
Romeo, Mr WALLACK,
Mereutio, Mr BROWNE, Tybalt, Mr ARCHER,
Friar Lawrence, Mr POPE, Abram, Mr FENTON,
Peter, Mr KNIGHT,
Friar John, Mr HOWELL, Samson, Mr HUGHES,
Apothecary, Mr W. BENNETT,
Balthazar, Mr WEBSTER, Page, Miss Willmott,
Juliet, by A YOUNG LADY,
(Her 2nd appearance on any stage)
Lady Capulet, Mrs KNIGHT,
Nurse, Mrs HARLOWE.

In Act I. *A MASQUERADE SCENE.*
In Act V.
A Funeral Procession to the Monument of the Capulets
To conclude with, the Historic Drama of

De La Perouse.

Perouse, [the Navigator] Mr NOBLE,
Theodore, (Son of Perouse) Miss LANE,
Conge, Mr T. BLANCHARD,
Madame Perouse, Miss SMITHSON,
Chimpanzee, an Animal of the Island, Mas WIELAND
NATIVES OF A NEIGHBOURING ISLAND.
Kankoo, Mr O. SMITH, Negaske, Mr HOWELL,
Potepataw, Mr Yarnold, Tetaseemar, Mr Webster,
Umba, Mrs NOBLE.

Figure 1: Drury Lane playbill for 14 November 1825 showing Master Wieland in the role of the Chimpanzee in *De La Perouse* (*Theatrical Observer*, No. 1230, 15 November 1825).

character of *Philip Quarll* (variously spelt *Quarl* or *Quarle*) and his 'man Friday', a chimpanzee. On 9 May 1803 the 'Serio-Comic Pantomime', *Philip Quarll; or, The English Hermit*, was first enacted at Sadler's Wells. Written by Charles Dibdin Jnr, it cast Master Menage as Beaufidelle, 'a monkey of the island', to Joe Grimaldi's Quarll.²⁶ In a later production with the Wells Company at the Dublin Amphitheatre in 1805, Beaufidelle was played by Master Humphries with Grimaldi again as Quarll.²⁷

The play was revived (under several title variations) up to about 1861, the aptly named Signor Simiani being one of the last artists playing the monkey (Britannia, 1861).²⁸ Other performers included: Master Aris (Coburg, 1819); Master Wieland (*Philip Quarl; or, the Island Monkey*, Coburg, 1822); Master Frampton (Coburg, 1825); the 'Young German' (*Philip Quarl and the Young German Monkey*, Olympic, 1825);²⁹ Arthur Mathison

(Birmingham TR, 1827); Gouffe (Leicester, 1827); Edwin Blanchard (*Philip Quarl the English Hermit; or, the Shipwrecked Mariner and the Monkey*, Victoria, 1840);³⁰ Mitchinson (Sadler's Wells, 1841), and Signor (Frederick) Martini (*Philip Quarl, and his Monkey, Queen's*, 1852).³¹ In the 'Grand, Serious Pantomime', *Philip Quarll; or, the Dog, the Bear, and the Monkey* (Sadler's Wells, 1822), it is probable that live animals were used.³²

Pitcairn's Island; or, the Mutineers of the Bounty

A 'Romantic, Operatic, Ballet Spectacle' written by T. J. Dibdin, first performed at Drury Lane on 17 April 1816,³³ *Pitcairn's Island* is another example of a play loosely based on historical events. It originally introduced savages but with no apparent explicit simian role.³⁴ The basis for this and subsequent pieces was the independent colony known to have been formed on Pitcairn's Island in the Pacific Ocean (of which John Adams was the last Governor) by the mutineers of the *Bounty* under Captain Bligh.³⁵

A monkey, enacted by Gouffe was introduced in a later production in 1831 at the Coburg,³⁶ but there were two earlier productions on this theme. The first was the melodrama *John Adams, the Mutineer of The Bounty* (Astley's Royal Amphitheatre, 1821),³⁷ the second, a 'ballet pantomime', *John Adams; or, Pitcairn's Island* (Davis's Royal Amphitheatre, 1822).³⁸ In the former, the artists are unknown, but in the latter the so-called 'Venetian Voltigeur' (tumbler/rope-dancer) known as Il Diavolo Antonio appeared.³⁹ Saxon's book on Ducrow does not list either of these pieces, however, so it is probable that Antonio was the monkey, at least by association. (He was in fact performing earlier at the Coburg in 1822 as the Ape in the 'Grandmimic Harlequinade', *The Genii of Palmoguan; or, Harlequin the Sagacious Ape*.)⁴⁰

Gouffe played the monkey in at least six variations of *Pitcairn's Island* between 1827 and 1842, the first being the melodrama *John Adams; or, the Mutineer and the Monkey* (Coburg, 1827), the last, *John Adams; or, the Monkey of Pitcairn's Island* (Clonmel, Tipper-

ary, 1842).⁴¹ The alternative title of *John Adams* was *Jack Adams*, and Gouffe appeared in at least five versions of the latter, the first being *Jack Adams, and the Mutineers of the Bounty* (Exeter TR, 1838), the last *Jack Adams; or, the Mariners of Pitcairn's Island* (Gravesend TR, 1845).⁴² To what extent these similarly titled productions differed as regards actual performative content is impossible to say.

Clearly though, Gouffe's contribution to this particular piece was significant, if not unique – and to the genre as a whole immense.⁴³ During his active period (from 1825 to 1845) Gouffe performed in nearly fifty individual pieces based on my survey, a number far exceeding any other artist of any period. His standing as the foremost illegitimate celebrity man-monkey is reflected in numerous – often hyperbolic – advertisements announcing his various acts, some offering clues as to how he performed. Apart from running and jumping round the gallery or climbing up and down poles or ropes, a feature of many man-monkey acts, Gouffe's speciality was hanging from a rope by the neck, and/or holding other objects while suspended. For example, at Exeter in *Jack Adams* (1838):

He will walk the Ceiling, head downwards, at the same time chasing a Butterfly; and hang by his neck in full swing, with another Monkey in his arms. And in the course of the evening, Mons. Gouffe will descend from the Gallery to the Stage, supported only by his three fingers, and return again, hung by the neck, and waving two flags at the same time.⁴⁴

While myth, misinformation, and speculation abound over Gouffe's identity, what is indisputable is that he died on Tuesday 10 February 1846 at Charing Cross Hospital.⁴⁵

Jocko in the 1820s

This period witnessed four further influential monkey dramas: *Jocko* (1825), *Peter Wilkins* (1827), *The Dumb Savoyard* (1828), and *Jack Robinson* (1828). *Jocko* (sometimes *Jacko*), which most probably represents the apotheosis of the genre with its famous 'dying scene', exists in numerous versions. As the selfless, anthropomorphized hero of the

piece, the character of Jocko attained strange and enduring celebrity. The role demanded considerable dramatic skill, while the courageous rescue of a drowning child, and death (through mistaken identity) at the hands of the child's father, evoked pathos rarely witnessed in scenes of animal impersonation.

In its original form, *Jocko* was symbolic of the notion of the 'Noble Savage', a beast which evoked empathy – a universal and highly influential theme inherited from earlier times. In this respect, the monkey drama in general, but specifically through its representation of *Jocko* in its original form, relates strongly to current debates about animal nature and man–beast relations at that time. Jane Goodall, for example, in her groundbreaking study of the ways in which evolutionary themes influenced the performing arts in the nineteenth century during Darwin's lifetime, argues that Jocko

emphasizes a fundamental equivalence between ape and human . . . [highlighting] physical and behavioural similarity. . . . Jocko has replaced Adam as the missing link . . . and is now situated in the natural world between animal and man.⁴⁶

Diana Snigurowicz also suggests that Jocko could be 'metaphorically equated to the figures of the "Good Savage" and "Good Servant"'.⁴⁷ Modern intellectual interpretations and Darwinian perspectives, however, were not wholly foreshadowed in nineteenth-century entertainments more fixated on spectacle or sentimentality for its own sake. It is nonetheless unsurprising that Jocko inspired creative interpretation by artists as far afield as America, the Antipodes, Europe, and Britain. However when Jocko's characterization was degraded to mere unrefined comicality, it often evoked ridicule, a tendency common in the music-hall context where a more generic Jocko, later rebranded as Pongo, prevailed.

Among the first productions in Britain was *Jocko; or, the Ape of Brazil* (Sadler's Wells, 1825), a burletta in two acts by T. J. Dibdin, with J. S. Grimaldi as the monkey.⁴⁸ A simultaneous performance was *Jocko; or, the Ourang Outang of Brazil* when a Mr Simon

enacted the role at the Surrey.⁴⁹ Following an injury to Simon, the role was taken by a Mr Kirby who also sustained injury resulting in Gouffe's first appearance in *Jocko* at the Surrey on 21 November 1825,⁵⁰ his last, at Landport in 1845 prior to departing for America.

Gouffe remained the principal performer in the role up to his death, no doubt helped with claims that his 'dying scene' in *Jocko* was the 'finest effort of Dramatic Genius ever attempted', equal to the likes of Kean or Garrick.⁵¹ Gouffe's ubiquity made him an easy target for detractors of this form of illegitimate entertainment, at a time when 'at a Theatre Royal, the man who successfully imitates a Monkey on the stage, is more attractive than he who embodies the finest conceptions of a Shakespeare or a Sheridan'.⁵² This narrative of malcontent is well exemplified by a critic's response to Gouffe's performance in *Jocko* at Bury in November 1828:

how is he [a critic] to describe the twirls and rolls and leaps and postures of an animal in a hairy skin, and who wanted only the tail and a little difference in the head, to be a perfect ape? . . . This is a sad degradation of the stage. . . . Surely, the genuine talent of a first-rate actor (Macready for instance) would . . . attract a more adequate audience than such buffoonery.⁵³

The original *Jocko* however was of French origin. Adapted by Gabriel and Rochefort from Pougens's novella of 1824, *Jocko, ou le Singe du Brésil* was first depicted by the great French posture-master Charles-Francois Mazurier at the theatre of Porte Saint-Martin in Paris on 16 March 1825.⁵⁴ His first performance on the English stage was in the melodrama *Jocko, the Brazilian Monkey* (Covent Garden, 1825) by J. R. Planche⁵⁵ (Figure 2, over page), and thus in direct competition with Gouffe, drawing inevitable interpretative comparisons as a result.⁵⁶

Mazurier's early simian interpretations, like those of Gouffe, did not escape critical comment, but they perhaps more importantly allude once again to the performance standards for simian mimicry that were established by the early attitudinarians. The *Theatrical Observer*, for example, commented:

'Mons. Mazurier is clever . . . in reference to the *lowest possible* species of human merit – that of contorting the limbs. The piece was received with partial hisses and applause.'⁵⁷ The *Literary Gazette*, while acknowledging Mazurier as 'singularly light and bounding . . . agile . . . mischievous . . . and as ugly as a monkey', nevertheless considered the piece to have degraded the stage, being 'beneath contempt, badly written, and clumsily contrived'.⁵⁸

The *Morning Post*, however, gives an almost diametrically opposed view of Mazurier's performance, commenting, 'The imitations of the appearance, movements, and habits of the animal is so complete as to create as perfect an illustration as can be supposed upon the stage. . . . When the faithful creature is shot in the act of saving the child . . . the interest is absolutely painful'.⁵⁹ Although this view of Mazurier's Jocko was further supported by the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* as a 'unique specimen of grotesque dancing [probably exceeding] all his predecessors in the science of contortion', it is revealing that such artistry was seen as early as 1711 at the Duke of Marlborough's Head in Fleet Street, where the 'famous Posture Master of Europe'

Extends his body into all deformed shapes, makes hip and shoulder bones meet together, lays his head upon the ground, and turns his body twice or thrice, without stirring his face . . . stands upon one leg, and extends the other in a perpendicular line above his head, and extends his body from a table with his head a foot below his heels, having nothing to balance his body but his feet, with several other postures too tedious to mention.⁶⁰

Following Mazurier's death in February 1828, it was Klischnig's 'flexibility of limb and dexterity of action' as Asgard in *The Lord of the Maelstrom; or, The Elfin Sprite of the Norwegian Seas* (Coburg, 1829) that was to 'render him, beyond dispute, the very first professor of the art of posturing of the present day',⁶¹ an opinion that might have been disputed by any number of elite artists at this time such as Gouffe, Ravel, or even Ducrow.

Up to mid-century, actors of Jocko include Hill (Royalty, 1825); Ducrow (Astley's, 1826);

Signor Hervio Nano (*Jocko; or, the Ape of the Brazils*, Coburg, 1829);⁶² Signor Garcia (Brighton, 1829); Wells (*Jacko, the Ape of the Brazils; or, the Grateful Monkey*, Cooke's Circus, Dublin, 1835); Klischnig (Dublin TR, 1836); Herr Hiram Sugna (*The Brazilian Ape*, Royal Albert Saloon, 1845); Martini (Royal Liver, 1848); Plimmeri (Maidstone, 1848); Montero (Amphitheatre, Liverpool, 1848); and Teasdale (Bradford TR, 1848).

Plimmeri's later performance as the ape Ringtailino in the extravaganza *Noureddin and the Fair Persian* (Princess's, 1849) offers a slender clue as to the nature of his monkey act:

The principal character is the ape, who although he says nothing, performs very cleverly, and makes himself perfectly intelligible. His face is curiously made up, and his antics, and grimaces, and restlessness, and manner of going about and busying himself . . . are well and naturally sustained. A monkey never imitated a man better than Mr Plimmeri imitates a monkey.⁶³

Jocko from the 1850s

From mid-century the list of performers include Monsieur Macarte (Alhambra, Edinburgh, 1863); Willikind Molino (City of London, 1866); Blondin (Canterbury Hall, 1868);⁶⁴ and Kitchen (Prince's, Portsmouth, 1877). But from this point onwards, the Jocko brand is (mis)appropriated in a multitude of musical farces, absurdities, and comic acts that stray significantly from its pathos-laden origins.⁶⁵

However Paul Martinetti, the great American pantomimist, clown, and ape delineator faithfully preserved the original spirit of Jocko in England, at least up to about 1886. Already established as a skilled mimic in America (though not the earliest) as part of the Martinetti-Ravel troupe,⁶⁶ his first performance in London was *Jocko; or, the Brazilian Ape* (Princess's, 1876).⁶⁷ His other roles include *Pongo, the Ape of Brazil* (Manchester TR, 1878); the gorilla in the 'Brazilian Ballet' *Mongo* (Lusby's Music Hall, 1879); Jacopongo the monkey in the pantomime *Harlequin Cock Robin and the Children in the Wood* (Crystal Palace, 1881);⁶⁸ and as the

monkey in a memorable *tour-de-force* opposite the great Charles Lauri Jnr's donkey in *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* (Drury Lane, 1886).⁶⁹

Martinetti's art as a man-monkey further exemplifies what set the supreme mimic apart. Writing in 1899, Scotson-Clark considered him 'the finest pantomimist of his day. . . . His work at best rises above mere agility. He is magnetic and versatile. Without help of writing, assisted only by music, he can move his audience to volleys of laughter and floods of tears.' This is perhaps less surprising when one learns that he was the favourite pupil of the great Gabriel Ravel, who left 'the legacy of his art, showing how all the resources of expression may be contained in the face, the fingers, and well-trained pantomimic expression'.⁷⁰

Peter Wilkins; or, the Flying Indians

The stage productions of *Peter Wilkins*, a popular fictional character, were loosely based on Robert Paltock's novel, *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins, a Cornish Man*, published in 1751.⁷¹ The earliest is the pantomime *Peter Wilkins; or, Harlequin and the Flying World* (Sadler's Wells, 1800), written by Charles Dibdin Jnr.⁷² Although Dibdin's production did not explicitly introduce a simian, it nevertheless served as an early template for later versions. These however did not appear for some two decades or more until *Peter Wilkins; or, the Flying Indians* (Covent Garden, 1827), a 'Melo-dramatic, Romantic Spectacle' in two acts.⁷³

While adhering to the original 'Shipwreck on the Loadstone Rock in the Pacific Ocean' story, with its 'Glums' ('Flying Men') and 'Gawries' ('Flying Women') from the 'Land of Flight', some additional roles were added. One was the Nondescript or 'Wild Man of the Island' of the posture-master E. J. Parsloe, who continued in *Peter Wilkins* at a number of provincial theatres (Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield) before returning to Covent Garden in 1828, by which time he had completed 170 performances, remaining there until 1829.⁷⁴

Other artists during this period include Bradbury (Royal Minor, Manchester, 1827);

Theatre Royal, Covent Garden.

This Evening, the Opera of

Rob Roy Macgregor.

Sir Frederick Vernon, Mr EGERTON,
Rashleigh Osbaldistone. Mr POWER,
Francis Osbaldistone, Mr DURUSET,
Owen, Mr BLANCHARD,
Captain Thornton. Mr CONNOR,
Rob Roy Macgregor Campbell. . . . Mr WARDE,
Hamish & Robert, (his sons) Mess. Parsloe, & Hayes,
Major Galbraith, Mr J. ISAACS,
Dougal, Mr RAYNER, Macstuart, Mr MEARS
Baillie Nicol Jarvie, Mr W. FARREN,
Macvittie, Mr ATKINS, Sergeant, Mr GRANT
Lancie, Mr Heath, Saunders Wylie, Mr Claremont,
Diana Vernon, Miss PATON,
Mattie, Mrs Wilson, Hostess, Miss Appleton,
Helen Macgregor, Mrs FAUCIT,
Jane Macalpine, Mrs Hudson, Martha, Miss SCOTT.

To conclude with (2nd time) a Melo-drama, called

JOCKO,

THE BRAZILIAN MONKEY.

Fernandez de Ribra, [a Settler] Mr CONNOR,
Pedro, (Bailiff of his Rice Grounds) Mr MEADOWS,
Dominique, [Pedro's Son] Mr KEELEY,
Juan, [a Child of seven years] Miss GREENER,
Brazilian Planter, Mr EVANS,
Sailors, Mess. HENRY, & C. PARSLOE,
Jocko, [a Brazilian Monkey] Mons. MAZURIER.

In Act I.

An entirely **NEW BALLET,**
Composed by Signor **VENAFRA**, who, assisted by
Mrs **VEDY**, will dance a **BOLERO.**

Donna Inez, Miss **GARDNER**, Cara, Miss **J. SCOTT.**

To-morrow, The Beggars' Opera, with Jocko.

Figure 2: Covent Garden playbill for 9 November 1825 showing Mazurier in his second appearance in *Jocko, the Brazilian Monkey* (*Theatrical Observer* (No. 1226, 10 November 1825).

Cooke (Dublin TR, 1827); Smith (Bristol TR, 1827); Freer (Nottingham TR, 1828); Rae (Cork TR, 1829); William Payne (Royal Pavilion, 1830); and Charles Montague (Sadler's Wells, 1838). Variants appeared in the 1820s. One such production was *The Monkey Island; or, Harlequin and the Loadstone Rock* (English Opera House, 1824), with J. Cooper as the Ourang Outang (the Sovereign of Monkey Island) to J. S. Grimaldi's General Jackoo.⁷⁵

From the 1840s the artists include Mitchenson (*Peter Wilkins; or, the Loadstone Rock and the Flying Indians*, Adelphi, 1846);⁷⁶ Plimmeri (Bristol TR, 1847); Martini (Marylebone, 1852); Teasdale (Queen's, Hull, 1856); Signor Guarrino⁷⁷ (Birmingham TR, 1856); and Nicolo Deulin (Queen's, Dublin, 1860).⁷⁸

Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.
 This Evening, **FRIDAY, October 10, 1828,**
 His Majesty's Servants will perform (10th time) the Comedy of

UPS & DOWNS;

Or, The LADDER OF LIFE.

Earl Delamere, Mr. HOOPER,
 Mr. Mammontton, Mr. COOPER,
 Mr. Felix Mudberry, Mr. LISTON,
 Jack Pointer, Mr. JONES,
 Christopher Higgins, Mr. W. ESTER,
 Walter, Mr. T. BROWN, Lady Delamere's Servant, Mr. END,
 Miss Mammontton's Servant, Mr. HOSIERS, Mr. Mudberry's Servant, Mr. E. YINGING,
 Countess Delamere, Mrs. DAVISON,
 Lady Charlotte, Miss CURTIS, Amelia Mammontton, Miss E. TREE;
 Kitty Cordery, Miss LOVE, Mrs. Cordery, Mrs. C. JONES,

After which, (10th time) a New Farce, in Two Acts, called

THE HAUNTED INN.

Sir Tomkyns Puffin, Mr. W. BENNETT, Captain Levant, Mr. JONES,
 Corporal Toot, (1st time) Mr. HARLEY,
 In which Charley is well introduced

The Comic Song of "A Country Village Fair,"
 Etiquette, Mr. GATTE, Mr. Girdle, Landlord of the Inn, Mr. HUGHES,
 Tommy Tuppole, his Father, Mr. LISTON,
 John, Mr. HOSIERS, Cookman, Mr. DAVISON, Bailiff, Mr. SALTER,
 Annulet, Miss PINTOFF, Mrs. Girdle, Mrs. G. JONES, Jenny Tull, her Sister, Mrs. ORGER.

To conclude with a Melodramatic Entertainment, with New Music, Song, Minstrel, Acrobatic, &c.

Dumb Savoyard,

AND HIS MONKEY.

The Action arranged by Mr. W. HARRYMORE.

Coast Guard Master, Mr. GURDIE, Mrs. LAYE, Warranted, Mr. WESTER,
 Herr Vacker, Mr. B. B. W. E., Puffin, Mr. W. HARRYMORE, Mammontton, Master WIELAND
 Captain, Mr. L. C. JONES, Landlord of the Inn, Mr. HUGHES,
 Raparrot, Mr. HOWLAND, Esquimaux, Mr. BARNES, Esquimaux, Mr. BARTLEY,
 Corral, Corral, Madam, Mr. W. W. ESTER, Fanny Vacker, Mrs. B. NIGHTY.

Miss Mervaud's Tragedy of

RIENZI,

Was last Night received with the most decided and enthusiastic Applause, and will be repeated
To-morrow, Monday, and Wednesday next.

Miss PHILLIPS,
 On her debut, having been most eminently successful, will repeat the part of Ceccora, in the new
 Tragedy, *To-morrow, Monday, and Wednesday next.*

A YOUNG LADY
 Of great Musical promise a pupil of Mr. LANZA, will make her First Appearance on Tuesday next.

Mr. W. F. A. R. H. E. N.
 Is engaged at this Theatre, and will make his First Appearance on *Thursday next.*

To-morrow, The New Tragedy of **Rienzi.**
 Rienzi, Mr. YOUNG G. Miss PHILLIPS,
 With the New DIVERTISEMENT.
 Dominique, Mr. Harley, And PAUL AND VIRGINIA, Paul, Miss Love,
 Virginia, Miss Great.

On Monday, The New Tragedy of **Rienzi.**
 And GIOVANNI IN LONDON. Don Giovanni, Miss Love, Leporello, Mr. Harley.

On Tuesday, The Marriage of Figaro.
 Sumana by A YOUNG LADY, (her First Appearance on any Stage)
 Count Almaviva, Mr. Jones, Figaro, Mr. Harley, Cherubin, Miss Love,
 With DEAF AS A POST, Tristram Shandy, Mr. Liston, And THE HAUNTED INN.

On Wednesday, The New Tragedy of **Rienzi.**
 With the New DIVERTISEMENT.

And other ENTERTAINMENTS.

BOXES, PLACES, and TICKETS, also PRIVATE and FAMILY BOXES can be had of
 Mr. SPRING, at the Rotunda of the Theatre, from Ten till Four.
 VIVAT REG.

Figure 3: Drury Lane playbill for 10 October 1828 showing Master Wieland as Marmozette in *The Dumb Savoyard and His Monkey*. Courtesy of University of Kent Theatre Collections.

The majority of *Peter Wilkins* productions of this period were pantomime variants, and it is not always clear if a simian was necessarily introduced.⁷⁹ Nevertheless, the trend persisted for the remainder of the nineteenth century,⁸⁰ and where such a creature was not evident, scenic and mechanical illusion often compensated.⁸¹

A notable production mid-century was *Harlequin Peter Wilkins and the Flying Indians; or, the Wild Man of the Loadstone Islands* (Grecian, 1857), a burlesque pantomime by Henry Spry and George Conquest. In the latter's debut at the theatre of his father Benjamin Oliver Conquest, he played the role of Pastrano Nonsuch the Nondescript

(based on Julia Pastrana the so-called 'Baboon Lady'), a name he would use in a later, highly controversial production.⁸²

The Dumb Savoyard and his Monkey

A melodrama in one act written by C. Pelham Thompson,⁸³ *The Dumb Savoyard* (Drury Lane, 1828) introduced Master Wieland as Marmozette the monkey (Figure 3, left). In this piece the monkey evokes empathy through innocent playfulness, not selfless heroism, prompting one critic to describe it as 'a mere trifle . . . intended to please youthful holiday-makers', another to applaud the 'excellent monkeyism of young Wieland'.⁸⁴ Less impressed was the critic who remarked:

Our old acquaintance Jocko has left a numerous progeny behind, and we are afraid we shall never see the end of the breed. Why, in the midst of the beautiful and enchanting scenery . . . must we have an artificial monster staring us in the face like an ugly looking-glass the whole time? . . . We have no need of a menagerie in a play-house.⁸⁵

Despite a fall resulting in serious injury in Wieland's second week,⁸⁶ the play was performed fifty-one times at Drury Lane, and remained a popular vehicle for many artists up to about 1869, with Wieland regularly in the role (Coburg, 1830; Pavilion, 1830; Sadler's Wells, 1835; Drury Lane, 1838, 1842). Other artists include Martini (Birmingham TR, 1831); E. J. Parsloe (Norwich and Ipswich TRs, 1831); Master Parry (Abbey Street, Dublin, 1837); Gouffe (Dublin TR, 1838); Signor Antonio Bernaschina (Birmingham TR, 1842),⁸⁷ Teasdale (Adelphi, Edinburgh, 1848); Signor (William) Shentini (Clitheroe TR, 1849); Signor Eduard (Queen's, Dublin, 1853); Richard Flexmore (Surrey, 1857),⁸⁸ Molino (Rosherville Gardens, Gravesend, 1860); Harry Endersohn (Norwich, 1862),⁸⁹ Master Lismore (Prince of Wales, Dublin, 1864); and Nicolo Deulin Jnr (Greenock TR, 1867).

Jack Robinson and His Monkey

As famous as *Jocko* is in the history of monkey dramas, neither it nor any other

production compares with the popularity of *Jack Robinson*, nor for the number of different performers who impersonated the monkey. A melodrama in two acts by C. Pelham Thompson, *Jack Robinson and His Monkey* (Surrey, 1828), saw E. J. Parsloe in the role of Mushapug.⁹⁰ (Figure 4, right). Another Parsloe first played Mushapug at the Royal Minor (Manchester) in October 1828,⁹¹ and in December 1828 at the Edinburgh Theatre Royal in the variant *The Fatal Rock; or, Jack Robinson and the Ourang-Outang*.⁹² The artist in these roles was C. T. Parsloe, who like E. J. Parsloe, was born in England, but migrated to America in late 1830, where he remained up to his death in 1870.⁹³ Of the latter's performance in Edinburgh, a critic commented:

This caricature of humanity is personated by Mr Parsloe of Covent Garden Theatre, who displays great agility and address in his various gambols; but to us the exhibition of apes, bears, and all quadrupeds which quit their prone posture to mimic the bearing and 'sublime port' of man, are always offensive. Those, however, and they are many, who have no scruples on this point, may find a good deal of amusement in *The Fatal Rock*.⁹⁴

The long list of impersonators in *Jack Robinson* includes many already noted in the key productions listed earlier, with hostility to such performances persisting into the 1860s. Thus, following a week of the comedian E. A. Sothorn in some of his most famous roles at York, Shentini's performance in *Jack Robinson* drew the following comment:

A piece of tom-foolery was produced in which the principal character was a gorilla, impersonated by a Herr Shentini. After the brilliant acting of Mr Sothorn this was too bitter a pill to swallow, and we were gratified to see that the judicious manager did not allow the gorilla a second appearance.⁹⁵

Other artists include Master William Blanchard (Abbey Street, Dublin, 1834),⁹⁶ Edwin Blanchard (Queen's, Manchester, 1840); Monsieur Rochery (Cooke's Circus, Edinburgh, 1843); Signor Venoni (Greenock, 1846); Master Eugene Cony (Queen's, Dublin, 1847); Wolfe (Wexford TR, 1850); James Huline⁹⁷ (Amphitheatre, Liverpool, 1852); Signor Blitz (Wrexham TR, 1856); Ricketts

THEATRE ROYAL, BIRMINGHAM.

THURSDAY, FRIDAY, & SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 25, 26, and 27.

Will be revived the Grand Melo Dramatic Romance, with entire new Scenery, Dresses, and Decorations, entitled the

Wood Daemon
OR, THE CLOCK HAS STRUCK.

The Scenery painted by Mr. SOAZN.—The Properties by Mr. BURTON.—The Dresses by Mr. SUTHERLAND.
The Machinery by Mr. FRANCIS.

Hardykute (Count of Holstein) Mr. BRUNTON.
Leolyn, Miss MIDDLETON. Gualpha, Mr. BELLAMY,
Willkaid, Mr. GARDNER. Garry, Mr. HENRY. Roff, Mr. DOBBS,
Sangrida (the Wood Daemon) Mr. C. JONES.
Lady Clotilda, Miss JERVIS. Una, Miss HUDDART. Paulina, Mrs. ASHTON. Auriol, Miss HENRY.

THE SEASONS.
Spring, Miss MIDDLETON. Summer, Miss DOBBS. Autumn, Miss HONEY. Winter, Mr. JONAS.

NEW SCENERY.
ACT I.—Scene 1. RUINS BY MOONLIGHT.

Scene 2. A GERMAN VILLAGE.
Scene 3. An Apartment in the Castle of Holstein.
Scene 4. Court Yard of the Castle of Holstein, with a

GRAND PROCESSION
And the TRIUMPHAL ENTRY of HARDYKUTE after his conquering the Giant Hacko

ACT II.
Scene 1. UNA'S DREAM.
APPEARANCE OF AURIOL, the Guardian Genius of the House of Holstein—the whole Stage enveloped in CLOUDS, which disperse, and discover the Shades of Hardykute's Victims.—The Vision vanishes, and displays

SCENE II.
Magnificent GARDENS
OF HOLSTEIN.

Scene 3. An Apartment in the Castle.—Scene 4. Grand Banqueting Hall.
BALLET OF THE SEASONS.
Mysterious Appearance of the WOOD DEMON !!!
ACT III.
Scene 1. STATE BED CHAMBER—Hardykute's Secret Pass and Magic Bed.
Scene 2. AN APARTMENT IN THE PALACE.
Scene 3. Necromantic Cavern of the Wood Daemon.
GIGANTIC FIGURE, bearing aloft the ENCHANTED DIAL.
The Miraculous Escape of LEOLYN, and
Destruction of HARDYKUTE at the ALTAR
of the DEMON of the FOREST.
Last Scene. LEOLYN acknowledged the RIGHTFUL HEIR of HOLSTEIN.
TABLEAU.

The whole to conclude with the last new Melo Drama of

JACK ROBINSON
AND HIS MONKEY

Jack Robinson, Mr. BRUNTON,
MUSHAPUG, Mr. E. J. PARSLÖE,
Jose Rimerio, Mr. SELBY, Muley, Mr. STUART, Diego, Mr. HOOPER,
Schastin, Mr. RICHARDS, Jean, Master DOBBS, Thomas, Mr. F. WILTON,
Sailors, Messrs. CHEW and BURTON.
Emmeline, Miss JERVIS. Footlers, Miss HONEY.

On Monday, Sept. 25, Mr. PARSLÖE'S BENEFIT, and the last night of his appearance.

Figure 4. Birmingham Theatre Royal playbill for 25–27 September 1828 showing E. J. Parsloe as Mushapug in *Jack Robinson and His Monkey*. Courtesy of University of Kent Theatre Collections.

(Marylebone, 1858); Herr Bologna (Leicester TR, 1861); William English (Brighton TR, 1863); Gabriel Devani (Belfast TR, 1864); Monsieur Sylvester (City of London, 1866); Master Lismore (Prince of Wales, Dublin, 1867); Alfred Kellino (Queen's, Dublin, 1868); James Belverstone⁹⁸ (Dundee TR, 1870); Monsieur Gaspardo (Preston TR and Opera House, 1871); Little Emile (Oldham TR, 1873); Ted Lauri⁹⁹ (Bradford TR, 1876); and Herr Schielman (Farnworth TR, 1877).

Although continuing into the 1930s, after the 1880s many artists have not been identified because their performances took place in music halls or variety theatres, venues not well served by critical comment. Variations

on the *Jack Robinson* theme include *Jack Robinson, the Shipwrecked Sailor, and His Faithful Monkey* (Huline: Hull TR, 1855); *Jack Robinson and His Monkey; or, The Desolate Island* (Addison: Queen's, Hull, 1858); and *Jack Robinson and His Monkey; or, the Mulateers of the Spanish Maine* (Eugene Cony: Prince of Wales, Dublin, 1868). W. F. Wallett, the renowned 'Queen's Jester', also recounted his role as the monkey in *Jack Robinson* when at Bradford, but the details are unclear from his autobiography.¹⁰⁰

INTO THE MODERN PERIOD

The Later Nineteenth Century

The period up to the mid-nineteenth century might justifiably be considered the golden age of the supreme posture-masters and ape impersonators. The following two or three decades however, which witnessed the rise of the music hall, are somewhat in contrast. Thus, from this point until about the late 1870s, significant monkey dramas are fewer. Instead what emerged was a plethora of 'monkey acts' and 'ballets' offered by a veritable army of solo (e.g. Ching Lau Lauro,¹⁰¹ James Dubois,¹⁰² Kotaki¹⁰³); duo acts (e.g. Coco and Volta¹⁰⁴); and troupe artists (e.g. Brothers Lupino,¹⁰⁵ Brothers Lomas¹⁰⁶).

Also prevalent from the 1860s onwards is the almost inevitable appearance of the 'stock' monkey act in pantomime; *Robinson Crusoe*, in its numerous interpretations and variations, proved the most popular of such vehicles,¹⁰⁷ though *Sinbad the Sailor*, *Sleeping Beauty*, and others feature also, to a lesser extent.¹⁰⁸ Aside from Paul Martinetti, the genre was particularly fortunate to have possessed two other pre-eminent artists in George Conquest and Charles Lauri Jnr.

George Conquest

Notwithstanding his debut in 1857 as Pastrano Nonsuch, referred to earlier, and his extraordinary pantomimic feats,¹⁰⁹ Conquest's defining simian role was arguably his portrayal of Zacky Pastrana, the Nondescript of a fairground menagerie, in the seven-act

drama *For Ever* (Surrey, 1882), co-authored with Paul Meritt.¹¹⁰ (It was this production that prompted E. L. Blanchard's reminiscences on 'The Monkey Drama', referred to earlier.) Possibly the most controversial simian study ever witnessed on the British stage, redolent of the *Beauty and the Beast* theme, the plot is grounded on a man-monkey's love for a girl whom he subsequently marries and eventually murders (Figure 5, opposite page).

Initial reviews were almost unanimously hostile, the London critic of a provincial paper providing a flavour typical of most:

The deepest depth of the sensation drama has been reached in *For Ever*. . . . In despair of finding any novelty of depravity in human villainy, the dramatist has inverted monster and put a 'man-monkey' on the stage. Nothing more flagitious or revolting was ever done in public in the days of the vilest corruption of the Roman Empire. . . . Instead of shuddering at the man-monkey, the Surrey audiences laugh at him. What was meant as tragedy is taken as comedy, and the audience are pleased with a pantomime instead of nauseated with a beastly romance.¹¹¹

In contrast to this rhetoric is one surprisingly pragmatic assessment:

The drama *For Ever* . . . is made up of appetising material. . . . The part of Zacky is played by Mr George Conquest, whose powers as an athlete is most serviceable to him in depicting a creature of the man-monkey stamp. . . . *For Ever* is possessed of those features which will help to attract profitable audiences to the Surrey.¹¹²

For Ever was revived in 1884, by which time critics and audiences alike were more receptive to Conquest's 'singular and admirably constructed melo-drama', and his 'curious, but undeniably powerful, picture of the love, the cunning, and the fearful passion of the strange being he represents'.¹¹³

Zacky's legacy proved considerable. A burlesque of *For Ever* entitled *More Than Ever*, a 'concentrated tragedy in one horror' by Arthur Mathison (Gaiety, 1882), introduced Kangy the man-kangaroo; an obvious parody of Conquest's man-monkey.¹¹⁴ The comedian Witty Watty Walton brought out a music-hall version of Zacky (Metropolitan,

1886),¹¹⁵ following which came a revival of *For Ever* with Matthews Monck as Zacky (Sadler's Wells, 1892),¹¹⁶ and a further revival (on tour) in 1896 with Harry Pleon.¹¹⁷

Charles Lauri Jnr

Although Lauri imitated many animals in pantomime, the monkey was his favourite subject.¹¹⁸ His non-pantomime pieces of particular interest include the 'lyrical, serio-comic spectacle', *Hap; or, the Monkey of the Nile* (Crystal Palace, 1882); *As in a Glass; or, His Double* (Opera Comique, 1887), a farcical comedy in two acts and three scenes, co-authored with G. H. Rodwell,¹¹⁹ and *The Sioux* (Alhambra, 1891), an 'Indian pantomime ballet' by Lauri himself.

Hap is a simple story with a familiar theme: a gorilla befriends a group of castaways wrecked on an Egyptian shore and is eventually killed in their defence. Although Lauri's performance was considered 'extraordinary . . . a delight to the younger portion of the audience especially', the plot was nevertheless considered 'very thin'.¹²⁰

As in a Glass, adapted from W. H. Oxberry's comic extravaganza, *The Ourang-Outang; or, His Double* (Adelphi, 1842), sees Lauri as Chadi the monkey. This proved a rare failure, however, the *Era* considering it to be more of a 'pantomimic ballet with dialogue, and dialogue of a very contemptible character'.¹²¹ The plot in brief involves a Normandy mayor who goes masquerading as a monkey to a local ball at the moment when a baboon has escaped from a travelling menagerie. The mayor is arrested for the monkey, while Chadi, the 'real' monkey, romps around the village causing havoc. One critic commented: 'One could laugh at and enjoy a brief, brisk sketch between real and imitation apes, but to sit through a play in which baboons' antics are carried on for an hour and a half is almost beyond the limits of ordinary human endurance.'¹²²

The Sioux, by contrast, in which Lauri recycles the name Chadi, was an instant success, being a simple yet effective reformulation of the 'Noble Savage' theme of old. In this redeeming piece, Chadi, after being



Figure 5: George Conquest as Zacky Pastrana in *For Ever* at the Surrey Theatre, by 'Our Captious Critic' (*Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 7 October 1882, p. 21). © Illustrated London News.

wounded by marauding Indians, dies after heroically rescuing a settler's daughter from the family's burning hut (Figure 6, over page). Lauri's portrayal gained universal praise, his performance at the South London Palace, for example, being considered

a wonderful piece of work. . . . A gymnastic and acrobatic achievement of a high order. . . . The death of Chadi is one the most pathetic things ever seen on the stage; the dying agonies of the man-monkey are so intensely real, and yet so essentially simian. It is the essence of dumb tragedy.¹²³



Figure 6: Charles Lauri as Chadi the monkey in scenes from the Indian pantomime ballet, *The Sioux*, produced at The Alhambra (*The Sketch*, 3 October 1894, p. 526). © Illustrated London News.

The Sioux was revived at intervals up to 1902, and was enacted for the last time at the Middlesex Music Hall¹²⁴ less than one year before Lauri's death.

The New Century: 1900–1925

The deaths of Conquest and Lauri at the very beginning of the twentieth century occurred at a time when simian-based productions fell dramatically by two-thirds as compared with the prior decade, and with a corresponding attenuation in the pool of eminent artists. Numbers alone however do not tell the

whole story, and are misleading because they fail to reflect proportional shifts in the nature of pieces over time.

Thus, if pantomimes with simian roles are used as an example, then from my survey it is evident that, as a percentage of the total of new pieces identified in each decade, pantomime's contribution increased rapidly from 5 per cent in the 1850s, through 45 per cent in the 1870s, to a peak of 63 per cent in the 1880s, reducing to 54 per cent in the 1890s. Between 1900 and 1925 however, it fell sharply to 20 per cent, with a concomitant increase in alternative types of entertain-



Figure 7. Jacques Lerner as Jacko with Betty Ross Clarke as Dora Lavender in a scene from *The Monkey Talks* (adapted from René Fauchois' *Le Singe qui Parle* by Rowland Leigh) at the Little Theatre (*Illustrated London News*, 26 September 1925, p. 30). © Illustrated London News.¹²⁸

ment. The picture for simian pieces in this period (excluding pantomimes) is summarized in Table 1, overleaf.

It should be noted that Lauri's mantle was subsequently borne by Leon Dubois, considered by some the finest animal impersonator since the former's demise,¹²⁵ although Edward Sillward was also prominent.

Summary and Conclusions

For a genre whose strange spectacles are only fleetingly referenced in the historiog-

raphy of British theatre, this survey of simian mimicry has revealed surprising complexity, being characterized by diverse artistry from myriad artists. Clearly evident was the appetite for such exhibitions, especially over the first half of the nineteenth century when the genre became embedded in the visual experience of the time. However, although inevitable changes occurred later in form and content, the basic ingredients of successful simian portrayals remained largely unchanged. But it was only the elite that could effectively hide all notion of their humanity,

the question 'Is this a man imitating a monkey, or a monkey imitating a man?', being their ultimate challenge to reality.

In a broader context, beyond the mere spectacle, study of this illegitimate genre offers fertile ground for exploring other aspects of the long nineteenth-century theatre. Thus in contesting the space traditionally reserved for the legitimate drama, it is unsurprising that critics more aligned to the artistic mainstream considered man-monkey acts degrading or obnoxious, suited for the circus arena only. Such portrayals not only exemplify the battle between theatrical legitimacy and illegitimacy, but also offer potential for further exploration of illegitimate celebrity *per se*. Simian mimicry moreover feeds into contemporary discourses and theorizing about evolution, animal nature, and popular visual culture, as represented in performance, and within Victorian studies in general.

Notes and References

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16. A. H. Saxon, *The Life and Art of Andrew Ducrow and the Romantic Age of the English Circus* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1978), p. 57–8, 60.
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18. Charles Francis Morelli (1800–1882), actor, pantomimist and scene-painter (*Era*, 15 July 1882, p. 5).
19. John C. Greene, *Theatre in Dublin, 1745–1820: a Calendar of Performances*, Vol. VI (Bethlehem, Maryland: Lehigh University Press, 2011), p. 4004.
20. Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, Vol. X (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 189–95.
21. Klischnig's other monkey roles include *The Siege of Gibraltar*; or, *the Spanish Monkey* (Coburg, 1829); *Monkeyana* (Coburg, 1829); *Jack in the Box*; or, *Harlequin and the Princess of the Hidden Island* (Drury Lane, 1829), for which see Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 484, 629; *The Monkey Servant* (Dublin Theatre Royal, 1838); *The King of the Hills*; or, *The Frog, the Tortoise, and the Sapajou* (Surrey, 1838); and *The Monkey and the Bridegroom* (Victoria, Cork, 1838). See also Alan Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys: From Regency Pantomime to King Kong* (Ashford, Kent: Vesper Hawk, 2017), p. 92–7.
22. Harvey Teasdale, *The Life and Adventures of Harvey Teasdale: the Converted Clown and Man Monkey, with His Remarkable Conversion in Wakefield Prison, Written by Himself* (Sheffield: General Printing and Publishing Company, 1875). A musical of his autobiography, 'Teasdale's Follies', was staged at the Sheffield Playhouse in 1970 (*The Stage*, 17 December 1970, p. 40). He died at Sheffield in 1904 (*Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 6 June 1904, p. 7). See also Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys*, p. 120–9.
23. *Examiner*, 13 October 1822, p. 656.
24. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 526.
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29. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 550. The 'Young German', possibly Klischnig, also played in the pantomime *Noomahie and Walooka*; or, *the Ape of the Island* (Olympic, 1825). See *The Times*, 28 November 1825, p. 2.

Table 1. Simian-based entertainments (excluding pantomimes) produced in Britain, 1900–1925

Date ^a	Title	Type ^b	Author(s)	Venue	Artist(s)	Reference (Nicoll, <i>Modern Drama</i>)
15 Sep. 1900	<i>Troubles of a Tramp</i>	c. sk.		Empire (Hull)	'The Marsellos'	
16 Apr. 1906	<i>A Freak's Revenge</i>	d. sk.	Fred Conquest/ Tom Craven	Bow Palace	Fred Conquest/ ^f Leon Dubois	
25 Jun. 1906	<i>The Gorilla's Revenge</i>	d. sk.	Charles M. Daly	Avenue (Sunderland)	Charles M. Daly	p. 589
31 May 1909	<i>The Love of an Ape</i>	d. sk.	Arthur Shirley	Hippodrome (Colchester)	George Conquest Jnr ^g	p. 948
30 Jun. 1910	<i>An Ape's Devotion</i>	d. sk.		Barnard's Palace (Chatham)	Leon Dubois	
20 Sep. 1910	<i>The Man from the Sea</i>	pl.	W. J. Locke	Queen's	Jules Shaw	p. 791
16 Dec. 1912	<i>Pebbles on the Beach</i> ^c	c. sk.	Seymour Hicks	Coliseum	Edward Sillward ¹²⁶	p. 721
4 Oct. 1920	<i>Tarzan of the Apes</i>	md.	E. R. Burroughs	Brixton	E. Sillward/L. Dubois	
22 Jun. 1925	<i>The Gorilla</i> ^d	pl.	Ralph Spence	Court (Liverpool)	Edward Sillward	p. 960
9 Sep. 1925	<i>The Monkey Talks</i> ^e	c.	Rowland Leigh	Little Theatre	Jacques Lerner	p. 780

a First performance;

b See Nicoll, *Modern Drama*, p. 462–3.

c Title later changed to *Washed Up*.

d Toured in 1926 with Leon Dubois as the gorilla.

e See Figure 7.

f Second son of George Conquest.

g Eldest son of George Conquest.¹²⁷

30. Edwin Blanchard, with Barkham Cony (the so-called 'Dog Star') are better known for their dog dramas, for which see, for example, Jan Bondeson, *Amazing Dogs: a Cabinet of Canine Curiosities* (Stroud: Amberley, 2011), p. 77–82. In the afterpieces to their dog dramas it was Blanchard who played the monkey roles as in *The Mayor's Clerk; or, the Runaway Monkey*, and *The Ourang Outang and his Double; or, the Monkey who has Seen the World* (Belfast, 1839); *The Monkey and His Double* (Royal Colosseum Saloon, 1840); and *The Cherokee Chief; or, the Shipwrecked Sailor and His Dogs* (Victoria, 1840). Cony's son Eugene also played monkey roles in Britain. These included *The Ourang Outang; or, the Runaway Monkey* (Queen's, Dublin, 1849), and *The Three Thieves; or, the Bohemian and the Monkey of Frankfort* (Victoria, 1851).

31. Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys*, p. 112–19.

32. *Morning Advertiser*, 5 August 1822, p. 2.

33. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 300.

34. *London Courier and Evening Gazette*, 18 April 1816, p. 2. Nicoll (*History*, IV, p. 486) lists *John Adams; or, The Mutineers of the High Seas* enacted at the East London Theatre in September 1816, but no further information has been found.

35. *Caledonian Mercury*, 27 October 1817, p. 2.

36. *The Times*, 29 June 1831, p. 2.

37. *Morning Chronicle*, 30 July 1821, p. 3.

38. *Morning Advertiser*, 19 August 1822, p. 2.

39. Saxon, *Life and Art*, p. 75. In endnote 73 (p. 425) Saxon identifies Il Diavolo Antonio as 'Antonio Blitz', noting that the Blitz name was appropriated by different artists.

40. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 466; *Morning Advertiser*, 4 March 1822, p. 2.

41. *Morning Advertiser*, 17 September 1827, p. 2; *Tipperary Free Press*, 17 September 1842, p. 3.

42. *Western Times*, 4 August 1838, p. 2; *Kentish Independent*, 8 November 1845, p. 1.

43. W. G. Knight, *A Major London 'Minor': the Surrey Theatre 1805–1865* (London: Society for Theatre Research, 1997), p. 46, 146–7; Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys*, p. 64–91.

44. *Western Times*, 4 August 1838, p. 2.

45. *Era*, 15 February 1846, p. 6; *The Lancet*, XLIX, No. 1233 (17 April 1847), p. 403–5. Gouffe, twice married and with a son, was born John Finchett Hornshaw 7 November 1795, baptised 6 June 1797, the second son of William and Sarah Hornshaw (Parish Registers of St George in the East, Stepney, London).

46. Jane R. Goodall, *Performance and Evolution in the Age of Darwin: Out of the Natural Order* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 50.

47. Snigurowicz, 'Sex, Simians, and Spectacle', p. 54.

48. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 304; *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, 12 June 1825, p. 6.

49. *Morning Advertiser*, 6 June 1825, p. 2.

50. *Morning Post*, 15 June 1825, p. 3; *Morning Advertiser*, 19 November 1825, p. 2. Gouffe also played *The Island Ape* first enacted the previous August at the Surrey.

51. *Leeds Times*, 28 October 1843, p. 5.

52. *Globe*, 25 November 1825, p. 1.

53. *Bury and Norwich Post*, 5 November 1828, p. 2.

54. Saxon, *Life and Art*, p. 101–3; Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys*, p. 17–24.

55. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 378; *Public Ledger*, 8 November 1825, p. 1.
56. See, for example, *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 23 January 1830, p. 3.
57. *Theatrical Observer*, No. 1225 (8 November 1825).
58. *Literary Gazette*, IX, No. 460 (12 November 1825), p. 733.
59. *Morning Post*, 9 November 1825, p. 2.
60. *Belfast Commercial Chronicle*, 30 November 1825, p. 2.
61. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 495; *Morning Advertiser*, 10 June 1829, p. 3; *The Times*, 2 July 1829, p. 2.
62. Harvey Leach (his real name) was of American birth, and a dwarf in stature. Numerous sources exist, for example, William L. Slout, *Olympians of the Sawdust Circle: a Biographical Dictionary of the Nineteenth-Century American Circus* (California: Borge Press, 1998), p. 169, and Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys*, p. 98–111. Leach died 1847 aged 46 (*Globe*, 18 March 1847, p. 1).
63. *Era*, 15 April 1849, p. 12.
64. Blondin (Jean Francois Gravelet), the 'Hero of Niagara', played in several pieces including *Jack Robinson* (Hanley, 1861), but most famously, *The Child of the Wreck*; or, *the Faithful Ape* (Crystal Palace, 1861). Blondin's daughter Adèle played the role of the male child saved from drowning by a benevolent ape who delivers her safely to her father but is fatally shot in error before the good deed is done (*Illustrated London News*, 11 January 1862, p. 56). With his wife he also played in the comic sketch *Apartments to Let*; or, *Jacko the Monkey* (Macollum's Circus, Exeter, 1871). See G. Linnaeus Banks, *Blondin: His Life and Performances* (London: Routledge, Warne, 1862.), p. 104–8.
65. For example, Tiny Tim (of the Queen's Minstrels troupe) as Jacko in the 'Screaming Comic Act', *The Commercial in Difficulties*; or, *the Monkey at the Roadside Inn* (Colston Hall, Bristol, 1871); and Harry Rogerson as the gorilla in the 'Musical Absurdity' *Jacko* (Grand, Stalybridge, 1898), a title later changed to *Jacko*; or, *Comical Complications* (Royal, Stratford, 1901).
66. The Ravels were a family of rope-dancers and gymnasts of French origin. See Frank Cullen, Florence Hackman, and Donald McNeilly, *Vaudeville Old and New: an Encyclopedia of Variety Performers in America*, I (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), p. 916–18. Jérôme Ravel played in *Pongo! Or, the Brazilian Ape* (Portsmouth and Portsea, 1836).
67. *Morning Post*, 27 December 1876, p. 2.
68. Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 508; *Morning Post*, 27 December 1881, p. 2.
69. Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 265; *The Times*, 28 December 1886, p. 5.
70. G. F. Scotson-Clark, *The 'Halls'* (London: Fisher-Unwin, 1899), p. 16; *Era*, 27 May 1882, p. 5. Martinetti died 1924 at Algiers aged 73 (*Stage*, 1 January 1925, p. 20).
71. Jeffrey Richards, *The Golden Age of Pantomime: Slapstick, Spectacle, and Subversion in Victorian England* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2015), p. 236–8; *Examiner*, 22 April 1827, p. 6–7.
72. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 290; *The Times*, 28 April 1800, p. 1.
73. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 519; *Morning Advertiser*, 17 April 1827, p. 2.
74. *Morning Post*, 10 December 1829, p. 2.
75. *The Times*, 5 July 1824, p. 3.
76. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 250; *Illustrated London News*, 18 April 1846, p. 10.
77. American operatic dancer who died in Birmingham in 1876 (*Era*, 12 March 1876, p. 5).
78. Deulin (Isaac Dowling), dancer and pantomimist, died 1860 (*North London News*, 22 December 1860). A Nicolo Deulin played the gorilla in the 'pantomimic divertissement', *The Laundress*; or, *the Runaway Monkey* (Sinclair's Music Hall, 1869).
79. For example, *Harlequin Peter Wilkins*; or, *the King of the Air and the Flying Indians* (Victoria, 1841); *Harlequin Peter Wilkins and the Flying Indians of Shingawn Valley* (Glasgow TR, 1864); and *Harlequin Peter Wilkins and His Adventures among the Flying Indians*; or, *the Wreck, the Rock, and the Loadstone Island* (Newcastle-on-Tyne TR, 1872).
80. For example, *Peter Wilkins*; or, *Harlequin Harlokin and the Flying Islanders* (Town Hall, Dover, 1884), with Harry Malcolm as the Nondescript (*Stage*, 11 January 1884, p. 4).
81. For example, *Peter Wilkins*; or, *Harlequin and the Flying Women of the Loadstone Island* (Drury Lane, 1860), for which see Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 263.
82. Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 732; *Morning Chronicle*, 25 December 1857, p. 5; Frances Fleetwood and Betty Conquest, *Conquest: the Story of a Theatrical Family* (London: W. H. Allen, 1913), p. 81.
83. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 413.
84. *Globe*, 8 April 1828, p. 2.
85. *Examiner*, 13 April 1828, p. 244–5.
86. *The Times*, 16 April 1828, p. 3.
87. Antonio Marie Francesco Bernaschina, Italian ballet master, was head of a family of singers, musicians, and dancers. His other roles include *Pongo*; or, *The Marriage of Tivoli* (Queen's, Manchester, 1839); *Satyr Tivolian*; or, *the Disappointed Lovers and the Mischievous Monkey* (Albert Saloon, 1843); and *Il Pongo* (Eagle, 1843). He died at Oldham, Lancashire, in 1876 aged 62 (*Era*, 27 February 1876, p. 3).
88. Richard Flexmore Geatter, the celebrated pantomimist and comic dancer, died 1860. His other monkey roles include Asmodeus in *The Alhambra*; or, *the Three Moorish Princesses* (Princess's, 1851), for which see Nicoll *History*, V, p. 572; and Mushapug in *Pipino the Dumb Boy, and Pug his Monkey* (Adelphi, 1853), a balletic version of *The Dumb Savoyard*, with his wife Madame (Francisca Christophosa) Auriol.
89. Endersohn later played the monkey in the melodrama *Pericho; A Woman's Devotion* (Royal Alexandria, Glasgow, 1870).
90. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 413; *Morning Advertiser*, 14 July 1828, p. 2. E. J. Parsloe died 1832 at New York (*Morning Post*, 10 April 1832, p. 2). His other notable role was as Pongo in *The Monkey That Has Seen The World* (New City, 1831). See also Stockwell, *Man-Monkeys*, p. 25–40.
91. *Manchester Times*, 24 October 1828, p. 13; *Aberdeen Journal*, 11 March 1829, p. 2.
92. Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 459, 625; *Caledonian Mercury*, 8 January 1829, p. 1; Dibdin, *Annals*, p. 325.
93. Jacqueline L. Romeo, 'Comic Coolie: Charles T. Parsloe and Nineteenth-Century Frontier Melodrama', unpublished PhD thesis (Tufts University, 2008), p. 57–70. Prior to his departure for America, C. T. Parsloe Snr also appeared as Man Friday in *Robinson Crusoe and His Man Friday* (Covent Garden; Adelphi, Dublin, 1830). Stockwell (*Man-Monkeys*, p. 41–3) claims C. T. Parsloe was the younger brother of E. J. Parsloe.
94. *Scotsman*, 31 December 1828, p. 5.

95. *Yorkshire Gazette*, 27 August 1864, p. 9.
96. A Master Blanchard enacted the Ape in the melodrama *Brazilian Jack; or, the Life of an Ape* (Sadler's Wells, 1834), for which see Nicoll, *History*, IV, p. 435.
97. The 'Great Little Huline', pantomimist, clown, and father of the 'Brothers Huline', died in 1890 aged 74 (*Era*, 8 February 1890, p. 19). Huline (William Samuel Dickens) made his debut as a man-monkey at the Royal Colosseum, Manchester (*Era*, 3 March 1850, p. 12). See also John Turner, *Victorian Arena, the Performers: a Dictionary of British Circus Biography*, Vol. I (Formby, Liverpool: Lingdales Press, 1995), p. 72.
98. James Ignatius John Belverstone, actor and pantomimist, died at Bristol aged 92 (*Western Daily Press*, 20 May 1921, p. 6). Belverstone achieved minor notoriety with his sketch *The Monkey Lodger* (Royal Albert, Landport, 1870) which was withdrawn due to its 'objectionable character', the monkey dressing up as a woman (*Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, 14 May 1870, p. 5).
99. Clown, pantomimist, and uncle of Charles Lauri Jnr, he died at Leeds (*Era*, 4 March 1893, p. 16). Referred to as 'the little lump of fun', he played Jip the monkey in the 'Comic Indian Ballet' *Ki-Ki-Ko-Ko-Oh-Ki-Key*, written by himself and his brother Henry Lauri (Alhambra, Dundee, 1866), and the monkey in *Robinson Crusoe* (Covent Garden, 1876).
100. John Luntley, ed., *The Public Life of W. F. Wallett, the Queen's Jester: an Autobiography* (London: Bemrose and Sons, 1870), p. 18–19; Slout, *Olympians*, p. 314–5.
101. Lauro frequently used the Jocko name in his solo performances (*Bury and Norwich Post*, 18 June 1834, p. 1). He died at London, his true identity unknown (*Cambridge Independent Press*, 1 February 1840, p. 3).
102. Gymnast and animal impersonator, who as 'Pongo', claimed to be 'The Original Man Monkey' (*Era*, 17 August 1889, p. 22). He played the monkey in *Sinbad the Sailor* (Burnley TR, 1889); Pongo in Harry Pleon's farce *Muldoon's Picnic* (Stockport TR, 1892); and Jocko in *Dick Whittington* (Coronet, 1900). He died at Oldham aged 37 (*London and Provincial Entr'acte*, 28 February 1907, p. 13).
103. Originally of a Japanese troupe of gymnasts who first appeared in London in 1867, his act was called *Pongo Redivivus* (e.g. Alexandra Palace, 1879).
104. *The Ape at Home* (People's Palace, Wakefield, 1885).
105. *The Sailor and the Ape* (Empire, Newcastle, 1896).
106. *A Traveller's Troubles in Monkeyland* (Empire, Sheffield, 1896), and *Larks in a Goods Van* (Grand, Stockton, 1899).
107. For example, Baxter (Oriental, 1872); John Martinette (Manchester TR, 1876); Frank Marrayat (York TR, 1882); George Denvers Jnr (Croydon TR, 1893); Charles Lauri (Lyceum, 1895); Bob Almonte (Shakespeare, Clapham, 1898); James Fletch (Grand, 1900); and Leon Dubois (Plymouth TR, 1909; Cheltenham Opera House, 1912).
108. *Sinbad the Sailor*: Master Charles Lauri (Covent Garden, 1879); James Dubois (Burnley TR, 1889); and Will Crackles/Leon Dubois (Standard, 1897). *Sleeping Beauty*: George Bigwood (National Standard, 1861); Fred Johnson (Crystal Palace, 1877); and Leon Dubois (Parkhurst, 1892). Impersonators in other pantomimes include John Cowper (*Little Bo-Peep*, Elephant and Castle, 1881); Willie Edmunds (*Jack and Jill*, Surrey, 1883); Jack Horner (*Little Bo-Peep*, Lyceum, Edinburgh, 1893); and Leon Dubois (*Mother Goose*, Standard, 1896).
109. Fleetwood, *Conquest*, p. 80–96, 243–4.
110. Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 322; Fleetwood, *Conquest*, p. 148–51.
111. *Lichfield Mercury*, 27 October 1882, p. 7.
112. *London and Provincial Entr'acte*, 7 October 1882, p. 6.
113. *Sheffield Independent*, 16 September 1884, p. 2; *Era*, 15 November 1884, p. 15.
114. Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 481; *Graphic*, 4 November 1882, p. 475.
115. *Era*, 8 May 1886, p. 10.
116. *Era*, 6 August 1892, p. 7.
117. *Stage*, 19 December 1895, p. 19.
118. *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1 February 1889, p. 3; *Shields Daily Gazette*, 7 May 1894, p. 4; *Strand Magazine*, Vol. X (July–December, 1895), p. 781–5; *Era*, 26 February 1898, p. 4.
119. Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 449, 548.
120. *London Evening Standard*, 11 April 1882, p. 2.
121. *Era*, 22 October 1887, p. 14.
122. *Morning Post*, 19 October 1887, p. 5.
123. *Era*, 30 April 1892, p. 16.
124. *London and Provincial Entr'acte*, 10 May 1902, p. 7.
125. *Gloucestershire Echo*, 24 December 1912, p. 4.
126. Sillward's prior simian roles include the three-act farcical comedy *Naughty Rosina* (Brixton, 1898), and the dramatic sketch *Satan* (Bedford Music Hall, 1899). See Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 491, 389. Edward Millidge Stretton, his real name, died in 1930 (National Probate Calendar).
127. George played Young Mischief the monkey in *Herne the Hunter; or, Harlequin, the Demon's Oak, the Maid, the Monarch, and Young Mischief* (Grecian, 1870), for which see Nicoll, *History*, V, p. 320. Of his two younger brothers, Fred played Demonio the monkey in *The Fair One with the Locks of Gold; or, Harlequin Gorilla, the King, the Giant, and the Gloomy Grotto* (Grecian, 1891), for which see Nicoll (*History*, V, p. 322), while the youngest, Arthur, later famous as Daphne the Chimpanzee, was the monkey in *Little Goody Two Shoes* (Surrey, 1899).
128. Later filmed by William Fox in 1927 with Lerner in his original role. See Michelle Vogel, *Olive Borden: the Life and Films of Hollywood's 'Joy Girl'* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1972), p. 64 *et seq.*