

Georgianna Ziegler

THE GARRICK COLLECTION AT THE FOLGER SHAKESPEARE LIBRARY: NEW INITIATIVES

David Garrick might be considered the Elvis of his age. His image appeared everywhere, not only in paintings, statues, and engravings, but on jugs, tiles, matchboxes, watch fobs, textiles, loving-cups—almost anything to which an image could be attached. If the eighteenth century had worn T-shirts, undoubtedly he would have been depicted there as well. A theatrical impresario and popularizer of Shakespeare, Garrick seems to have known everyone in the artistic and literary circles of the time, and to have been recognized by thousands more. One might say that he single-handedly created the Shakespeare “industry.” He produced twenty-four of the plays, acted in nineteen Shakespearean roles, and orchestrated the great Shakespeare Jubilee at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769, the first event that made that sleepy country town a tourist mecca. Today scholars who want to work on Garrick make their pilgrimage to the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., site of the largest collection in the world of Garrick manuscripts and related items, including a ticket for the Jubilee Oratorio, signed by George Garrick, the actor’s brother (Fig. 1), and the intricately carved Rococo chair made for Garrick’s Temple of Shakespeare around 1756.

Henry Clay and Emily Jordan Folger acquired a number of Garrick items, including most of the paintings, as they amassed the collection of Shakespeariana that opened to scholars in 1932 as the Folger Shakespeare Library. Over the years, the Garrick collection has continued to grow, most recently with acquisitions of manuscripts once belonging to Garrick’s wife, Eva Maria Garrick, and with porcelains and related items from the collection of Babette Craven of New York. Mrs. Garrick’s papers, acquired in 1992 and as yet uncatalogued, include correspondence with family members, and with Lady Amherst, actress Dorothy Jordan, and writer Hannah More. In addition, there are drafts of letters by Mrs. Garrick written on the backs of old playbills, and her journal covering the period 31 July to 17 December 1768. This last item complements other diaries of hers already at the Folger. The Craven Collection includes some playbills and other printed material in addition to the porcelains. Much of this collection has been made accessible through an in-house searchable database.

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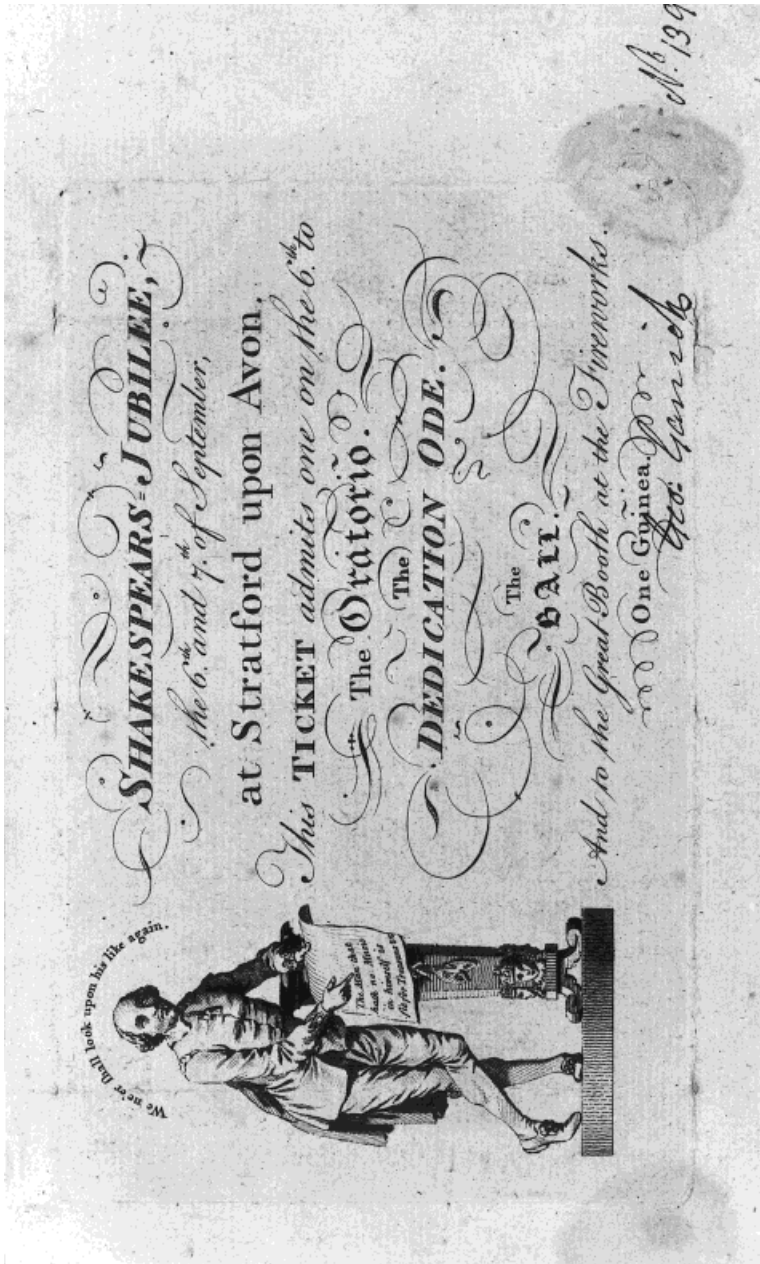


Figure 1. George Garrick's ticket for the Shakespeare Jubilee, 1769. By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



Figure 2.
Mrs. Clive in the Character of the Fine Lady in Lethe.
Engraved by C[harles] Mosley, 1750.
By Permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

The Folger has fostered major scholarly projects involving Garrick and his times, including the multi-volume monumental reference tools, *The London Stage 1660–1800*, edited by Emmett L. Avery *et alia*, and *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, and Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, edited by Philip Highfill, Jr., Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, as well as the edition of *The Letters of David Garrick* and major biographies by George Winchester Stone and George M. Kahrl, and Ian McIntyre. In spite of such extensive use, however, the Garrick materials at the Folger, because of their size and varied formats, have never been completely catalogued.

In April 2000, the Folger Library received a \$75,000 grant from the Delmas Foundation to help fund a two-year project called “Raising the Curtain: David Garrick at the Folger.” This amount, supplemented by other funds, has enabled the library to hire theater historians Kalman A. Burnim and Joseph W. Donohue as consultants to review the Garrick collection and advise on the best ways to make it accessible to scholars. The various collections—manuscripts, playbills, porcelains, scrapbooks, and artwork—will be catalogued in the Folger’s online catalogue, available over the Web, where important items will be highlighted by individual entries. About 250 such items—many of them fragile and difficult to handle—will also be photographed to create digital images that can be linked to the records in the online catalogue and to an encoded searchable finding-aid for the entire collection.

This project will also enable the Folger to bring together materials that are in the library but that have not been necessarily identified with Garrick, in particular: the earlier volumes from the 182 volume set of Records of Drury Lane Theatre (1766–1880); playbills from the very large collection of those from Drury Lane; and extra-illustrated volumes in the Art Collection that have not previously been inventoried. In all the collections, treasures are there for the finding: a playbill documenting one of Garrick’s earliest performances under the pseudonym Lyddall at the Tankard Street Theatre in Ipswich; music for a dance performed by Mademoiselle Violette, his future wife, on her first appearance at Drury Lane; an engraving of Mrs. Clive in *Lethe*, complete with lapdog under her arm (Fig. 2); Garrick’s letters and manuscript versions of prologues and epilogues to various plays; the agreement signed by him with Mrs. Abington for three seasons at Drury Lane, dated 5 May 1744; and even his personal silverware to complete the picture of the man. The Folger’s collection enables us to do for Garrick what many have wanted to do for his idol, Shakespeare: reconstruct the man and his world in detail from all the mosaic pieces of his archival remains.