

**Robert W. Jones**

## **COMPETITION AND COMMUNITY: MARY TICKELL AND THE MANAGEMENT OF SHERIDAN'S DRURY LANE**

Despite considerable advances in scholarship—achievements on which this essay builds—our knowledge of how eighteenth-century theatres were run remains worryingly thin. The managerial enterprise of theatre production, especially its daily practicalities, is largely obscure, though the facts of performance history are well documented. Knowledge of practice is not our only lacuna. Accounts of the interfaces among performances, institutional theatre practices, and the wider culture of the eighteenth century are too few, though wonderful work has been produced by Jane Moody, Felicity Nussbaum, and Gillian Russell, among others.<sup>1</sup> This meager situation has arisen in part, as Robert D. Hume has argued, because scholars have yet to fully engage with those sources that have survived, although problems of missing evidence are serious and sometimes insurmountable.<sup>2</sup> A related problem is that theatre historians are often averse to conceptualizing what they discover, as if analysis and certain modes of theoretical interpretation were the responsibility or more distinctly the failing of literary critics. But the discovery or reappraisal of an archive will only advance scholarship so far. New

---

*Robert W. Jones is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Leeds. He is most recently the author of Literature, Gender and Politics in Britain during the War for America, 1770–1785 (Cambridge UP, 2011). He has previously written a book-length study on conceptions of taste and beauty in the eighteenth century and several essays and articles. He is currently working on a book provisionally entitled The Theatre of Richard Brinsley Sheridan: Politics and Performance at Drury Lane.*

Research for this essay was made possible by the award of a short-term fellowship at the Folger Shakespeare Library, which I took during the summer of 2010, and by a British Academy Small Grant. I am grateful to both institutions for their generosity. I would also like to thank Georgianna Ziegler and Carol Brobeck for their patient guidance while I was at the Folger. An early version of the paper was presented at the Spaces of Work conference at the University of Warwick in April 2012. Richard de Ritter was kind enough to read a late draft and offer valuable suggestions.

information about rehearsals, performances, finances, or contracts is vital, but it does not explain the motives or institutional momentum that animated theatre production. We need to know why some actors were favored by management while others seem to have been less well supported. It would also be useful to understand more precisely why some plays were performed repeatedly whereas others appeared only sporadically. The information contained in the *London Stage* should be crucial for theatre history, yet the repertoire of the patent theatres remains understudied. The impetus it gave to managers is too often ignored, while its political significance is barely understood, prompting justified complaint from Daniel O'Quinn.<sup>3</sup> Great care will be necessary when addressing these issues. Overly general or prescriptive claims are probably best avoided; there are simply too many local factors. We should also recollect that theatrical production is necessarily a collective endeavor, a process in which many voices might be heard. Yet patterns and purposes can be found, even when what is most apparent is what Michel de Certeau terms the “‘polytheism’ of scattered practices.”<sup>4</sup>

To appreciate the diversity and contingency of theatrical life during the eighteenth century requires a more subtle and never simply empirical analysis of what was at stake in theatre production. Why certain productions went forward and how they did so merit further study. The *what* and the *why* of managerial choices must be seen in a perpetually awkward helix, one shaping the other, rarely straightforwardly. Profit and loss must also be allowed their proper place. Georgian theatre production was an unavoidably commercial activity, even if its finances were frequently chaotic. The allocation of roles to particular performers (especially actresses) ought to be understood in relation to contracts, welfare, and celebrity. Equally the agency of performers must be seen in relation to that of the managers. The repertoire is as much a response to these needs as to the demands of the audience. For much of the period, established plays were generally a better bet than new works, which were regarded as risky. The task, therefore, is to come to some understanding of the dynamic circumstances and constrained choices that animated the performance of stock plays. Taking a Geertzian turn, Joseph Roach suggests that “historians ought to attend to the ‘deep play’ in the stock plays.”<sup>5</sup> This essay will respond to this insightful suggestion by examining an archive of letters from Mary Tickell (née Linley, 1758–87) to her sister Elizabeth Sheridan (1754–92) (Figure 1). Her letters provide detailed insights into the operation of Drury Lane during the mid-1780s. The letters do not, of course, provide direct access to Drury Lane. Rather, they mediate it, transforming it into a set of textual maneuvers that seek to establish particular competences and perspectives. There is no wish in these pages to return criticism to that pious theoretical perspective that regards the archive as another form of text—though the textual model, at least in the form articulated by de Certeau and (rather differently) by Clifford Geertz, offers a useful way to think about how significance is established in the archive as well as at Drury Lane.

#### THE TICKELL ARCHIVE

Mary Tickell had a short but distinguished career after first appearing at Covent Garden in George Colman's comedy *Man and Wife* in 1769. She



**Figure 1.**

Thomas Gainsborough, *The Linley Sisters*, 1772 (oil on canvas, 200.4 × 153 cm). Dulwich Picture Gallery, London. By permission of the Trustees of Dulwich Picture Gallery. Tickell mentions the painting enthusiastically, writing: “Our picture came home from Gainsbro’s very much improv’d.” Her parents, she recalls, were pleased with the work: “Mother was quite in Raptures with it – indeed this is my opinion, the best & handsomest of you that I have ever seen.” Mary Tickell to Elizabeth Sheridan, “Saturday Morning” [29 October 1785], Folger MS Y.d.35, f. 179 (underlines in original).

subsequently sang in oratorio, generally performing with her sister Elizabeth. Mary and Elizabeth were the daughters of the composer Thomas Linley, and it was often under his direction and certainly at his behest that they sang in public.<sup>6</sup> However, it is as an observer and recorder of life at Drury Lane that Tickell merits attention, for she is an exemplary witness to the daily managerial operation of a major theatre. A collection of nearly a hundred of her letters is held at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. The letters were written to her sister between December 1783 and a few months before her death from tuberculosis in July 1787. The surviving letters were once part of a larger collection, one that was much cherished, as evidenced by Elizabeth Sheridan's thoughtful placement of them in marbled folders marked "Vol. 5<sup>th</sup>," "Vol. 6<sup>th</sup>," and "Vol 7<sup>th</sup> & Last." In a poignant addendum to the final folder, she writes of her sister's last months, her early death, and her burial in Wells Cathedral.<sup>7</sup> Despite Elizabeth Sheridan's efforts, the archive has been divided, and I have not discovered the whereabouts of folders one through four. It has also become muddled. Part of the Folger's collection, principally letters describing a vacation in Norfolk, has been placed out of sequence. Part of the work involved with preparing this publication involved determining the correct order and dates for the collection. Tickell dated her letters only sporadically. Most record only the day of the week. Others are not dated at all. Fortunately, references to Christmas, a balloon ride, and a "Michaelmas goose" date some letters unequivocally, but most had to be dated using the theatrical evidence they contain.<sup>8</sup> Tickell records the plays and actors she saw when visiting the theatre as well as the theatre's receipts, making correlation with the *London Stage* possible. There are not many Thursdays on which Drury Lane staged James Thomson's *Tancred and Sigismunda* with receipts in excess of £300.<sup>9</sup> Tickell's letters were also compared to the relevant Drury Lane journals (also at the Folger), as well as with other firsthand accounts of the period, notably *Betsy Sheridan's Journal*.<sup>10</sup>

Despite her lack of dates, an often difficult hand and wayward orthography, Tickell provides a detailed, passionate and sometimes wry account of Drury Lane at work. She is a lively mixture of the enthusiastic and the skeptical, the keen and the exasperated (something evidenced by her frequent recourse to emphatic and sometimes amused underlining). She is not new to theatres, rehearsals, or productions—she knows how they could and should work. She complains when actors seem not to know their lines or singers how to sing. She is confident of her opinions, but as she writes to her sister, what is most striking is her *involved* perspective and consequent immersion in the quotidian life of the theatre. There are few such rich accounts of the minutiae of a theatre's life from the late century. Of a production of John Home's *Douglas* in May 1785, she writes: "Mrs Siddons is as much the Rage as when she first appear'd," adding that her recent illness has "given an amazing fillip to peoples curiosity to see her—& indeed I think she plays better than she ever did—twas Lady Randolph last night and she exerted herself beyond anything I ever saw." Praise is mixed here with a canny sense of what it might be worth: "curiosity" pays bills.<sup>11</sup> Tickell displays similar shrewdness when she describes the progress of rehearsals or details managerial concerns, ranging from the order of the repertoire to the financial implications of staff sickness.

The exits and entrances of stage personnel are duly chronicled, including that of Dorothy Jordan, whose manner she dissects.<sup>12</sup>

Tickell was exceptionally well placed to provide such a closely observed account. Her relationship to Drury Lane was intimate and unquestionable. Her father was coproprietor, director of music, and sometime acting manager. Her mother, also Mary, was the theatre's indefatigable wardrobe mistress. Her sister's marriage provided another connection, as Sheridan was also co-owner and occasional guiding light of the venture. Her own marriage to Richard Tickell, one of Sheridan's closest collaborators, deepened her involvement again. Tickell was rarely shy about exploiting this privileged access to the theatre. She saw performances regularly but also attended rehearsals and staff meetings, offering her opinions readily.<sup>13</sup> Firsthand accounts of how theatres were run are rare. James Boaden's biographies of Jordan (1831) or Siddons (1827) concentrate on celebrated performances, not management, whereas Tate Wilkinson's *Memoirs of His Own Life* (1790) offer a necessarily retrospective account of his experiences as a theatre manager.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, Tickell is self-consciously *writing to the moment*, keen to "play up the Character of a faithful Historian." Promising her sister "never [to] miss a Day," she keeps her sister informed of what was occurring at the theatre: which plays make money, which merely run up expenses; which actors are proving popular, and who is causing problems.<sup>15</sup>

In a significant gesture that reveals her highly personal relationship to the theatre, Tickell records the impromptu meetings at which decisions were taken about scripts, staging, casting, and repertoire. These meetings were not restricted to holders of official posts at Drury Lane. Tickell refers to a select group—"the Cabinet"—who direct the theatre.<sup>16</sup> This group includes her parents; their immediate staff such as Thomas Fosbrook and the prompter, Ralph Harwood; and leading actors such as William Smith and John Palmer. The group is coincident with both her family and her social circle. Tickell is consequently able to record her own presence and that of her husband and other members of Sheridan's entourage. Nor do these meetings take place solely at the theatre; some of them take place across the dinner tables of several family homes. Theatre is accordingly produced in a social and familial way. Tickell's letters are arguably another ad hoc meeting, as they are intended to spark debate as well as to record it. Her interventions are thus indicative of the interchange between public and private worlds that feminist historiography has uncovered.<sup>17</sup> When writing to her sister, Tickell aims not just to recount events but also to intervene in them, hoping to use contact with Elizabeth as a means of influencing Sheridan. Tickell never deviates from the assumption that, contrary to his well-recorded protestations, Sheridan had direct and perhaps daily knowledge of the theatre. It is not difficult therefore to find references to what Sheridan must already know, allusions to what he ought to know, and encouragement for him to act on the information. "I suppose S— gets the Accounts" she writes in one letter, as if stating a fact (but goading him too). In another, she wonders why he has been so stupid as to let the actors have their way.<sup>18</sup>

Tickell is protective of her family's interests and seeks to explain precisely what is occurring at the theatre with which they are so intimately connected. With some poignancy, her letters chronicle the labor, much of it unhappy, of her father,

who is regularly presented as working rather thanklessly on Drury Lane projects. Tickell also wants to display her own continuing involvement in the theatre. Her singing career had ended on her sister's marriage, as Sheridan's gentlemanly ambitions demanded that neither sister perform in public. Their correspondence seems to have made possible the continuance, albeit in a different guise, of that vital creative life. She certainly pays particular attention to music and singing, elements of theatrical life in which she and Elizabeth were undoubtedly expert and about which they could offer counsel. There are several accounts in her letters of their active role in prompting and guiding their father in relation to the theatre's musical concerns.<sup>19</sup> With such a close relationship to what she describes, Tickell's perspective is frequently affectionate and familiar, but it is also ironic and exasperated. Sheridan clearly frustrated her, especially his timekeeping: "Sheridans Days are generally Weeks," she laments. She is similarly waspish in her treatment of other stage personnel, becoming angry when they let the theatre down, but she never diverts from her loyalty to her father or her desire to tell her sister all she discovers. Her letters are thus at once a record of the theatre and a strange continuance of her own abandoned career.<sup>20</sup>

As this sisterly and daughterly activity suggests, facilitating the operation of a large public enterprise such as Drury Lane theatre took a lot of private, essentially unpaid effort. Tickell's letters enact what David Worrall has termed the microcultures of the Georgian theatrical world. It is also a domestic world in the expanded sense that Michael McKeon has employed: a domestic sphere that is a place of distinctive and often collective labor in which women occupy a particular, sometimes subordinate, position.<sup>21</sup> Our understanding of how women participated in the production of literature and theatre (often alongside their domestic duties) has been expanded in recent years. Catherine Gallagher, Jennie Batchelor, and Betty Schellenberg have explained how women played decisive roles in the creation of literary and theatrical works as well as in the formation of their own public personae.<sup>22</sup> Tickell differs from the public women described in these studies. She did not write or create her own published works. Her role was more discreet; she did not promote herself or her views outside of her family. But her family—which included the Linleys, the Sheridans, and the Tickells—was coincident with the ownership and management of the theatre. Membership of this "family compact" (to employ a phrase used against them in a hostile review) gave her significant license to intervene and record.<sup>23</sup> With both guile and charm, Tickell exploits her unofficial but undeniable position as the daughter and sister-in-law of the proprietors. But such interference means that her letters reveal the daily practical management of the theatre while enacting and participating in the largely private social life of Drury Lane theatre.

#### FINANCE, REHEARSAL, AND THE PANTOMIME

Tickell's insider knowledge of the theatre as a space of both work and entertainment is seen throughout the collection. In a letter that can be dated to early January 1784, she writes: "Yesterday was a usual Day with me—at 12 or near it—we sallied forth in a Hack for the Rehearsal." On arriving at the theatre, she

discovers various staff members in Fosbrook's rooms, including the "Mr and Mrs Manager" (by which she means her parents) eating roast chicken and drinking punch—too much punch in her mother's case, as she is later reported as looking "rosy."<sup>24</sup> What follows is a candid account of a rehearsal for a new pantomime, *Harlequin Junior*. The plot of this piece, which Tickell does not give, was simple. Harlequin woos and then loses the Miller's daughter. To redeem himself, "he is sent to the siege of Gibraltar; where after fighting gallantly in defence of his country, he is at length forgiven." This patriotic plot demanded new scenes representing Paris and, more topically, "the repulse of the Spaniards before the ROCK of GIBRALTAR."<sup>25</sup> Tickell regards these developments favorably. Of the final tableau, she writes that the "Rock scene will have a very good effect now that I have charged Butler to put some lights in the different Breaches." She is also confident that "the red hot Balls too will have their effect." Tickell is especially pleased that changes her husband has suggested have been accepted (though she doubts that he will get the credit). Despite this progress, the mood at the theatre is depressed. The rehearsal does not quite convince, especially as Richard Collett Staunton, playing the Magician, "grumbles out the speaking part dreadfully." The management seems sullen, introverted. She writes: "My poor father sat all the time with his Prime Minister enveloped in his great Coat—but no more like a Manager than I to Hercules." We get a glimpse here of Drury Lane staff and management at work, including Staunton but also Philip Butler, the theatre's carpenter. It is not clear who Linley's sidekick might be, though this is less important than the image created of limited, defeated government and of work infected by the pressure to succeed.<sup>26</sup>

Tickell's account of the rehearsals for *Harlequin Junior* sheds helpful light on the nature of preproduction at Drury Lane. Although Tiffany Stern's work has enriched our understanding of the extent of rehearsals in the eighteenth century, it is still commonly assumed that preparations were scanty, especially where lead actors were concerned.<sup>27</sup> What Tickell records a significant and perhaps elaborate investment in time and resources. Her description of the scenes reveals that the rehearsal must have taken place on the stage, with Tickell viewing the backdrops of Paris and Gibraltar when they were in position. There was nowhere else to rehearse in this fashion. While this is not perhaps unusual, it is striking that the theatre could use the stage for a play other than that intended for the evening's performance. Tickell dates her letter only "Tuesday." If the day in question is 6 January (the day before the first performance), then Drury Lane was due to play *Hamlet* and *Too Civil by Half* that night, both of which required scenic elements. If she wrote a week earlier, the theatre would have been prepared for *Edward the Black Prince* and *All the World's a Stage*, about which similar assumptions can be made. Her account indicates that some care was taken when bringing forward complex productions such as *Harlequin Junior*. It also makes clear that the stage had enough grooves to accommodate Paris and Gibraltar alongside Elsinore's battlements and staterooms. By enabling the reader to register these details, Tickell's commentary discloses some of the effort required to perform and rehearse at Drury Lane. We get a sense of the fluid everyday dynamics—de Certeau's tactical "ways of operating"—that underwrote theatrical production

in the eighteenth century.<sup>28</sup> Small adjustments were required from practitioners to make the production work—some extra lights and better diction in this case. Yet anxiety remains.

Tickell attended the pantomime's first night on 7 January 1784, writing to her sister shortly afterward. Her fears appear to have been misplaced, and she writes positively about the performance. She reports, for example, that she had "never heard anything so prais'd as it was in the Lobby" and that "everybody said they never saw the first night . . . go so smoothly and so well." After such a successful night there was inevitably celebration: "We had a cold Fowl & some sallad in Fosbrook's Rooms after—the whole Cabinet are in great spirits."<sup>29</sup> These homely and engaging details confirm Tickell as an enthusiastic observer of theatrical life. In fact, observer is not the right term: she is a participant, equally at work. She cheerfully tells her sister that despite the success of the first night she has given further directions to Thomas Greenwood (the scene painter) about the design of the set, after complaining that it did not answer her expectations.<sup>30</sup> Her epistolary efforts transform the merely anecdotal into something more dynamic. Tickell's account of how Drury Lane works reconstructs the architectural place of the playhouse into more discreet space in which distinct efforts are unfolded.<sup>31</sup> When she describes the performance, Tickell enacts a survey of the inhabited geography of the playhouse, highlighting key locations. She mentions the rooms belonging to Fosbrook, the box office keeper. As well as "keeping" the boxes reserved for elite patrons, Fosbrook was responsible for the theatre's nightly accounts. His rooms, sometimes called his house or office (the terms were often interchangeable in the period), were located on the Russell Street side of the theatre near the stage door, and it was there that money was counted each night. Tickell's letter indicates that these rooms were also used as a dining space and as the location for postperformance congratulation—at least for the group she calls "the Cabinet." Such gatherings seem to have been habitual. The point recurs later in the year, when after a disappointing performance of the pantomime *Hurly Burly*, Tickell writes that she did not "stay to congratulate in Fosbrook's rooms," as if she were bucking a convention.<sup>32</sup>

On Richard Leacroft's conjectural plan of Drury Lane, the "Box Book Keeper's House" is allocated a single room. Tickell, who always refers to Fosbrook's rooms in the plural, may have had in mind the housekeeper's apartment, which Leacroft grants two rooms. In the early 1780s, these rooms were also taken by Fosbrook and his wife.<sup>33</sup> It is also possible that the Fosbrooks had more than one story at their disposal. The size and precise location matters less than the ways that Tickell familiarizes Drury Lane as a domesticated space: Fosbrook's rooms are used for celebration and for eating chicken (with salad) as well as for reckoning the night's take. The detail of the food is tiny yet beguiling. Elizabeth Sheridan would have known the taverns where such victuals might be obtained in the vicinity of the theatre. Tickell does not map the space(s) of Drury Lane as much as conduct her reader through them, marking some locations as significant.<sup>34</sup> Her "tour" of the theatre on the first night of *Harlequin Junior* includes the exclusive box lobby, which she describes as a place where positive comments are overheard. She presents, as she narrates that evening, a crucial triangulation among the parts of the



theatre where drama is staged, the spaces where its success might be ascertained, and the rooms where the proceeds are collected. Tickell's emphasis on the relationship among performance, audience response, and financial accumulation indicates the interlocking efforts of theatre staff, some on the stage and others behind it. But perhaps most palpable is Tickell's sense of the importance of the pantomime. Pantomimes were expected to garner revenue during the most lucrative part of the season. They were also expensive because they generally required spectacular and costly new scenes.<sup>35</sup> Tickell understands, as she expects her sister to understand, that the pantomime is crucial to the theatre's finances. She therefore concludes her letter by giving the takings: £260.<sup>36</sup> This is clear-cut, accurate information: the *London Stage* gives the receipts on 7 January 1784, when *Harlequin Junior* first appeared after *The Conscious Lovers*, as £261.5s.6d.

Forthcoming work by Hume and Judith Milhous on theatre finances will provide more precise ways of understanding these receipts, but prior to that we can glean something extra. Tickell provides a vivid sense of what £260 *means*: success, underwritten by relief. There is more at stake here than simply revenue. The real issue is the achievement of status and success within the pressing context of the theatrical duopoly. Drury Lane operated in permanent artistic and financial rivalry with Covent Garden. If the duopoly gave clarity to the competition between the patent theatres, it also rendered it intense and its consequences serious. Tickell is exultant because the other theatre seems beaten. This overplus of value, created by the risky investment in an expensive new work—itsself a kind of wasteful or “sacrificial expenditure” (in Roach's terms)—marks the intense nature of Drury Lane's competition with Covent Garden. This is what Geertz means by “deep play”: success, represented by money (but not confined to it), confers status and legitimizes expressions of pride. It is this latter quality or feeling (and the threats to it) that animates Tickell's account.<sup>37</sup> With some clarity, she documents the pressures on the management under these circumstances, when the failure of productions or the sickness of performers was critical. *Harlequin Junior* was troubled in precisely this way when its star, the clown Giuseppe Grimaldi, fell ill. This was a particularly heavy blow because Sarah Siddons, Drury Lane's leading tragic actress, was already poorly. Apparently aware of its rival's weakness, Covent Garden advertised John O'Keefe's *The Agreeable Surprise*, hoping to lure patrons away. The advert in the *Morning Post* was distinctly aggressive, announcing that the piece was brought back at “the request of several persons of distinction” for a temptingly limited run.<sup>38</sup> Although Tickell conceded that O'Keefe's work had been successfully revived, Covent Garden did not triumph: *Harlequin Junior* did not founder, and receipts continued to be very high. Tickell reports to her sister: “I assure you the pantomime has been of such service to the Theatre—coming so opportunely in the time of Mrs Siddons's illness, that there is no estimating its worth—she still continues indispos'd but they are trying to coax her to play against Mrs Abington Friday.”<sup>39</sup> Without a more precise date for the letter, it is hard to know if Siddons was successfully coaxed. She did not act on Friday, 23 January, when Abington appeared for the first time that season in *The Careless Husband*. On the next two occasions when both theatres were open on a Friday (6 and 13 February 1784), Siddons appeared as Rowe's Jane Shore and as Mrs Beverley in *The Gamester*. This is deep play indeed:

Siddons pitching heavyweight tragic roles in opposition to Abington's mischievous performances as Lady Betty Modish and the Capricious Lady (*The Careless Husband* and *The Capricious Lady*, respectively). Competition appears to have been intense and personal, but equally important is Tickell's sense of the collective, even communal effort of staff and performers, all working to secure the theatre, its revenues, and its prestige.

#### ACTRESSES, RIVALRY, AND THE DUOPOLY

Tickell's account of the pantomime makes plain what we might have suspected. The patent theatres warred with each other, altering their programs in the hope of beating each other, while performers sought changes to the repertoire in order to compete with rivals. Tickell's account of the 1785–6 season, when Tom King was manager, contains several instances of such aggressive tactics (though she favors occasions when Drury Lane appears wronged). She reports how in October 1785 Abington changed the play in which she was to appear merely to vex a performance by a younger rival, Elizabeth Farren. While Tickell's commentary is trenchant, it also illustrates the interconnections between familial and theatrical life ("T-" is her husband; "N: Street" her parents' home in Norfolk Street):

T- came down yesterday at six o'clock to Dinner for w:ch I gave a good scolding—he says he slept in N: Street Friday night & left them all very well; they dined at the Siddons that Day with King & Kemble they were talking of the illnature of Mrs Abington changing her Play of the Way to Keep him to Always in the Wrong, merely to forestall poor Farren's who was to play in it, the day following, and what a triumph she w:d have in having only poor Mrs Crouch to oppose in the Maid of the Mill (for it was by agreement that both houses play on the Monday)—Mrs Siddons said if the Managers thought it would be worth while, she w:d play Desdemona against her—so Madam Abington, will be finely taken in, & I think quite rightly served.<sup>40</sup>

There is a great weight of feeling in the use of "against," which while it could mean "in anticipation of" more obviously discloses a contemplation of revenge. They mean to ambush her, and Siddons is more than happy to help. The *London Stage* confirms much of this account (though not the venom). Covent Garden staged *All in the Wrong* with Abington as Belinda on 10 October 1785. Drury Lane performed *Othello* with Siddons in response. Farren's appearance in *All in the Wrong* was delayed until 26 October. It is clear from Tickell's letters that established rivalries were fomented between the theatres and their leading actresses. The women have agency in the contest, and their personal competition also mediates the larger jealousy between their employers. Newspapers understood this too, publishing articles at the start of the season that heralded the resumption of the rivalry between Siddons and Abington. And here lay Drury Lane's problem.<sup>41</sup> Although Farren had taken over many of Abington's roles after she left Drury Lane in 1782, notably Lady Teazle, she did not yet challenge her predecessor. Drury Lane was consequently dependent

on Siddons's terrific stage presence. Their reliance on "the Siddons" was not without its problems, as private concerns could not always be accommodated within the professional and collective structures of theatrical employment. Siddons might be ill, or she might row with a fellow performer. Boaden largely ignores these problems, preferring (borrowing from Tom Davies) to see Siddons's career as a "resistless torrent [that] has borne down all before her."<sup>42</sup> But they merit discussion, not least because they complicate Nussbaum's account of the "practice[s] of the self" by which an actress "joined the virtual body of the character she represented with her actual body" in order to create a marketable and in some senses impervious image.<sup>43</sup>

Although Siddons, as Judith Pascoe has argued, maintained a careful distinction between her public and private life, she could not do so when incapacity prevented her from performing.<sup>44</sup> Vulnerable to age, simple exhaustion, disease, and pregnancy, the actress's body is at once an asset and a liability. It was with this vulnerability very much in view that Tickell wrote to her sister in late September 1785 to report that her husband had visited her parents and found them surprisingly cheerful: "Never saw my Father in better spirits or ever passed a merrier evening—I am afraid they will all vanish with Mrs Siddons's Confinement, for I dread the Management then."<sup>45</sup> Tickell is manifestly anxious about the consequences of Siddons's pregnancy, especially so near to the start of the season. Siddons's commanding performances were enormously popular, making her departure a source of real concern, even if it was only temporary. Tickell's fears were briefly assuaged when, despite her condition, Siddons continued to perform her tragic roles. After seeing her play in *Tancred and Sigismunda*, Tickell wrote: "Mrs Siddons contrives to make herself look wonderfully well from our Box, but in front they say she looks very big—she exerts herself amazingly indeed I think rather to give one pain."<sup>46</sup> Such emphatic playing was to prove intermittent. A few days later Tickell told her sister that "I see from the papers that Mrs Siddons is indispos'd, & that C. Garden—has taken the ill natur'd Advantage—& put up Miss Abington by *Desire*—this seems a downright hostility." The London papers again confirm Tickell's information. With Siddons unable to play in *The Carmelite*, Drury Lane changed their play to *The Beggar's Opera*, a kind of default offering, while Covent Garden promoted Abington in a revival of Cumberland's *The West Indian*.<sup>47</sup> Tickell's commentary on these maneuvers underlines the spiteful competition between the two theatres. As the season began, both houses were jostling for position and adjusting their performances to take advantage of whatever circumstances offered. They were also deploying their actresses as if they were their heaviest weapons. Nussbaum represents the careers of actresses such as Abington as self-consciously gendered performances conducted through a playful dialogue with the audience. Tickell's letters provide a starker view: the actress as capital asset and deployed as such.<sup>48</sup>

Tickell creates the impression in her letters from October and November 1785 that Drury Lane was exposed when its star actress could not be relied upon. By late November, Tickell reported that her "time of confinement draws on a pace & she has declar'd that she cannot with safety play her Tragedy Characters." She would, however, play Constance in *King John* one last time.<sup>49</sup>

Tickell does not record what discussion took place after this announcement, but there was clearly some negotiation as Siddons was switched to less demanding roles, including that of Mrs Lovemore in Arthur Murphy's *The Way to Keep Him*. Although Drury Lane had produced the play as recently as the previous season, it was an unfamiliar role for Siddons, who rarely appeared in comedy. To bolster the production a fine cast was assembled, including Siddons, King, and Farren.<sup>50</sup> While this seems a good practical response (and a direct attack on Abington, who regarded *The Way to Keep Him* as a vehicle for her talents), the theatre's troubles multiplied as other actors proved difficult.<sup>51</sup> King, Tickell writes, "thinks he shall not be able to play in the Way to Keep him—my Mother is in an agony about it as there has been a great deal of expense about Dresses, w:ch are already to put on." The solution to Siddons's need for less demanding roles had bred its own problems: new costumes made the performance of a stock play costly. Nonetheless, Tickell remains convinced that the play should go ahead, not least because there had already been many inquiries for boxes. Indeed, she argues that "before she lies in," Drury Lane needs to get a "dozen thumping Houses" out of Siddons. She therefore makes the tactical suggestion that a new work then in preparation—James Cobb's *The Strangers at Home*—should wait until Mrs. Siddons's confinement before it appears. The logic is easily seen: leave the new play in reserve until it can offset the loss of their star performer.<sup>52</sup> Tickell's account of the tension and urgencies of these days is corroborated by other sources. Advertisements for *The Way to Keep Him* in November both confess and exploit the coming loss of the theatre's star, noting that her performances would be the "last Time till after Christmas." However, some puffing paragraphs in the *Morning Chronicle* (doubtless written by a Drury Lane insider) express a more confident attempt to promote the production and commend Siddons for her natural style of playing, a compliment intended to provoke comparison with Abington.<sup>53</sup>

Despite these careful efforts, the season continued to be a troubled one. Problems with cast members abounded. In December, Tickell told her sister that William Smith "absolutely refused to play with Miss Kemble in Zara or indeed with any body but Mrs Siddons, tho' Mr. King went to him himself and beg'd it as a personal favour to him and for old Acquaintance sake, . . . that he w:d not distress them by a refusal, however, he did, & poor Kemble stepped into the part directly & play'd it charmingly."<sup>54</sup> Smith's unhelpful attitude is indicative of the problems of managing a large group whose opinions and aspirations might be hard to reconcile. Obstinacy was not the only problem the management encountered. When the season opened Tickell wrote to her sister that "I take it for granted you get the Papers—& have seen the bad account they give of poor [William] Brereton—it is quite impossible he sh:d ever set his Foot on the Stage again for he is quite out of his mind." To this she adds Priscilla Brereton's fears that that he might attempt to forcibly "kiss the Ladies w:ch is a turn she says his Madness very often takes—poor Man I declare it is very shocking." Despite these warnings, Brereton continued to perform in *The Clandestine Marriage* and the ill-fated *The Way to Keep Him* in ways that were increasingly terrifying to his colleagues. His erratic behavior eventually caused Siddons to refuse to perform with him anymore. Finally there comes a sad account of

Brereton's demented performance as Macduff. Tickell notes half in amusement that she "trembled for the fighting Scene with Macbeth for it seems he avowed the most violent Hatred for both Smith and Kemble." Wisely, Smith, who played Macbeth, died quickly, simply to get out of the madman's way.<sup>55</sup>

Tickell's carefully crafted stories, written at least partly to entertain, grant a perspective on Drury Lane that represents the theatre as lurching from calamity to disaster. It is a deliberately compelling image. Although she also shows how crises are responded to and some problems are met, often creatively, her main purpose is perhaps to encourage Sheridan to take a more active role: to act on knowledge he possesses, partly as a result of her efforts. This agenda can be unmistakable. In early January 1786, Tickell wrote a serial letter in which she documents with particular ferocity and exasperation the illness and incompetence she discovers at the theatre:

I find they are all at sixes and sevens at D:L—King seized suddenly with a fit of the gout, & Parsons ill—the Country Girl is chang'd to Twelfth Night & The Romp, which is the best chance for preventing the Boxes being given up—surely it was injudicious not to have anybody understudied in Kings Part in the Strangers at home which is the only thing that has brought a House all the Xmas week—as S- must have seen by the Accounts—the Fact is, between ourselves that the Pantomime totally fail'd—that is, so far fail'd in never bringing a good House, which I take it, is of worse consequence to the Treasury tho' perhaps not so disgraceful as if it had been fairly d-mned the first Night.<sup>56</sup>

Tickell creates a picture of regular and extensive chaos. There is no leadership, no authority. No care has been taken to secure the repertoire, still less the "Treasury." In a section written the next day, Tickell provides an additional account based on her husband's efforts behind the scenes:

he says he was of some use in a Consultation held in Fosbrook's Rooms about a Play for tonight—Parsons & King both laid up & Tragedy out of the Question. Mr Powell (who was principal advisor, as Harwood had had a Fit; and was in his Bed—& my Father at home poorly)—he had proposed Love in a Village with Fawcett as Justice Woodcock—T- advised the West Indian, and Romp w:ch to be sure will be much more creditable Performance.<sup>57</sup>

The vocabulary is stark, the insight clear. The performances that matter, the ones that are "creditabile," make their case on the balance sheet. Debates in Fosbrook's rooms respond to the calamities of the green room, but it is in the ledgers that success is truly measured.

Tickell represents King as not quite grasping these essential facts; indeed, she defines his management as little more than a set of largely inept attempts to offset temporary disasters. But there were motives, if not quite principles, behind the switch to *Twelfth Night* and *The Romp*, and these are worth attending to. It is

equally important to understand why Richard Tickell thought *The West Indian* and T. A. Lloyd's farce *The Romp* would make a "more creditable Performance" than the alternative. Casting is almost certainly critical, though not to the exclusion of genre. It is worth recalling in this context Roach's wise reflection that casting decisions offer a "revealing glimpse behind the scenes into the orature of stage production."<sup>58</sup> Although several experienced actors were out of commission, Drury Lane insiders, such as Richard Tickell, knew that they had a new actress in reserve: Dorothy Jordan. Tickell, who saw her perform on several occasions, was instantly struck by her talent and, crucially, by her capacity to attract large audiences. Of her debut, she writes: "I went last night to see our new Country Girl—and I can assure you, if you have any Reliance on my judgement—she has more Genius in her little Finger than Miss Brunton in her whole Body." More praise follows:

this little actress, for little she is, yet not insignificant in her Figure which tho' short, has a certain roundness & embonpoint that is very pretty & Graceful—her Voice is harmony itself in level quiet speaking . . . and it has certain little breaks & undescrivable tones in w:ch in simple Archness, have a wonderful Effect—and I think . . . she has the most distinct Delivery of any Actor or Actress I ever heard.<sup>59</sup>

Her appearance in "Boys Cloathes" left Tickell's husband "quite in Raptures" (as it did Betsy Sheridan). In what is a long passage Tickell creates a full as well as vivid portrait of Jordan's performance. She describes Jordan's beauty and technique minutely, presenting them for Elizabeth's judgment in ways that rely on shared professional knowledge and sisterly intimacy.<sup>60</sup> Tickell comments on Jordan's other performances, notably her Shakespearean roles as Viola and Imogen, in ways that are not wholly positive. However, Jordan's performance as Priscilla Tomboy in *The Romp* confirms her as a comic star in Tickell's eyes. As she describes each performance, Tickell stresses its financial implications and the audience's response (which is generally more favorable than her own and, she admits, more significant). With Jordan succeeding in a number of roles (especially when she cross-dresses), money pours in, but more important, high-status patrons are intrigued. Fosbrook, she reports, "says he thinks Mrs Jordan bids fair to equal Mrs Siddons in the Enquiries for places—I see she is to play Miss Hoyden Monday, every place in the House is taken & c:d have been let six times over." With the audience applauding enthusiastically, Tickell welcomes the high revenues that such a star might yield, calling Jordan a "treasure to us." The phrase is telling, not least because Tickell means it literally.<sup>61</sup>

These hopeful commentaries require a proper context. A key part of the work of the theatre's management was to maximize revenues and secure good reviews while adjusting the repertoire in ways that ensured as much staff harmony as possible. New stars also needed to be found roles that granted them prestige in their own status disputes. These imperatives could be achieved by bringing forward successful new works but were mainly gained by maintaining existing productions, as when Jordan acquired Miss Hoyden, a role Abington had first created. King seems not to have always succeeded in these interrelated endeavors: Tickell

complains that he does not hurry productions along, that he makes bad choices, and, most damagingly, that he fails to adequately exploit either the repertoire or the cast from the point of view of revenue. Faced with competition from Covent Garden and a wayward, even sick, company, King's response (agreed with his staff and performers) was defensive and not obviously successful. Examination of the Drury Lane repertoire against the offerings of Covent Garden reveals the calculations that influenced this aspect of the theatre's work. When Siddons was available early in the season, Drury Lane tended to oppose her tragic powers to Abington's comedies. Direct confrontation was essayed, and the public was given a real choice. Once Siddons was confined to comedy, the theatre largely forsook tragedy. Drury Lane's new emphasis on comedy allowed Covent Garden to bring forward their new actress, Anne Brunton, whom Tickell habitually disparaged.<sup>62</sup> Without Siddons to challenge her, Brunton attempted Juliet and other tragic roles, while Drury Lane offered Jordan in *The Romp*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Cymbeline*. Other comedies at Drury Lane were led by the more experienced Farren. Tickell's low opinion of Brunton does not prevent her from complaining when King's negligence meant that Jordan was risked in direct competition with "the Brunton." Jordan ought to be protected, Tickell argues, because she is the salvation of Drury Lane's season, at least until Siddons returns.<sup>63</sup>

#### FEMALE OBSERVATIONS: COMPETITION AND COMMUNITY ON THE PAGE AND STAGE

Tickell's letters mediate opportunities and backstage crises as they weigh upon both the theatre and the bodies of its female stars. Pregnant actresses and fledgling talents require protection but are also sources of both triumph and anxiety. These possibilities are brought together when Tickell reports on a meeting in Fosbrook's rooms with Siddons. Siddons is said to be "delighted" with Jordan, information that might reassure her sister, but Tickell cannot help reporting that Siddons "is a monstrous size off the stage," even if "contriving to look very well on."<sup>64</sup> By late December Tickell reported the good news that both "Mrs Siddons and Drury Lane are out of danger," meaning that she had given birth successfully.<sup>65</sup> However, a later letter is notably ambivalent. The child, it seems, was born with only a "poor woman" in attendance, and Mrs. Siddons "suckles it herself." Tickell reports that Siddons intends to bring the child to work, and Tickell hopes that the Theatre will not lose by this "æconomical plan of hers."<sup>66</sup> Spiky in tone and suggesting a suspicion of other women, these statements indicate little in the way of female solidarity, although they raise the interesting question of where at Drury Lane Siddons nursed her child. (Perhaps we should reimagine some of the spaces on Leacroft's plan.) Tickell is equally unflinching a year later when she warns her sister that Mrs. Mills (Jordan's dresser) has made "some curious female observations on that lady for these last 10 or 12 weeks."<sup>67</sup> A Jordan pregnancy (and there would be many) was not something the management could afford to ignore. What is most striking, of course, is the invasive intimacy, the closed-off smallness of the theatrical world, that gives

Tickell access, once enlightened by her spy, to such personal information. The account of theatrical life Tickell's correspondence produces is markedly different from that derived from Boaden's *Memoirs of Mrs Jordan*. Boaden seeks to eliminate (or at least downplay) aspects of Jordan's private life. There is no scandal in his fond retrospect. What he does capture superbly is the excitement of great talent and achievement, all the while allowing the reader opportunities to recreate their favorite roles via quotation from playtexts and reviews. His account proceeds as a form of annual progress. Tickell offers a daily and more chaotic account. The details she provides—some intimate, others poignant—exhibit the domestic life of the theatre and its opportunities, grievances, and competitors without much reassuring gloss. They also indicate a perhaps unwelcome tension between what Tickell (and her sister) regarded as reasonable and appropriate and life as it was experienced by the less securely middle-class theatre employees whose failings, both professional and personal, she describes.

Based on gossip, anecdote, and clinically delivered insider information, it is hard to know exactly what to make of Tickell's version of Drury Lane—for version it is, one that complicates and confuses any notion of stately progress or managerial certainty at almost every step. Her insights appear to confirm de Certeau's suggestion that some forms of knowledge, principally artisanal techniques, are inaccessible to theoretical discourse: the details, which are critical, militate against any broader pronouncement. In Tickell's account, Drury Lane's daily operations appear circumstantial, a matter of "on the hoof" judgments and decisions taken in the face of pressing, albeit only temporary exigencies. For de Certeau this is the inevitable "bricolage" and "savoir faire" necessary for everyday enterprise. Analysis, he claims, must focus on the stories that enunciate these practices.<sup>68</sup> De Certeau's method corresponds well to what appears, at least from Tickell's perspective, to be the predicament of Drury Lane: tactics are manufactured on an almost nightly basis because strategy seems impossible. Whether under Linley, King, or the still more inattentive Sheridan, Drury Lane lacks a central authority that is capable of uniting its scattered parts. All the real work of management takes place in Fosbrook's rooms or over dinner. This relocation of the space of work has many consequences. The most critical, however, concerns the role it gives to Tickell herself, creating for her an ambiguous platform from which to intervene. The movement of work into the home life of theatre managers and their staff ensures that its practice is made available to Tickell's eye and subsequently to her pen. In one particularly detailed letter, Tickell describes a tedious day spent watching her father compose music in a room made frigid by her mother's refusal to light the fire. She nonetheless reassures her sister that work is getting done.<sup>69</sup> This eccentric scene is testimony to Tickell's access to the creative processes she narrates. Her account of her father's efforts—and her mother's parsimony—does not *break down* the alleged distinction between public and domestic worlds as much as ignore the possibility that such a separation might meaningfully exist. In common with their more illustrious contemporaries in the Bluestocking circle, Tickell and Sheridan exploit a convergence of public and private worlds that makes possible their own privileged intervention.<sup>70</sup>



Theatrical life did not operate solely within this specifically melded domestic-public realm. The much-publicized competition with Covent Garden and the need to secure revenue from audiences was clearly critical in shaping events. As Tickell explains, theatre staff organized their efforts in response to these dual demands. When they failed, Tickell wrote immediately to her sister, suggesting that something ought to be done. When efforts were made to challenge Covent Garden and the repertoire was changed, actresses were willingly enlisted in the competition as they also pursued their own professional agendas. Value was financial, but it was also personal. One of the more underused insights Geertz offered is his claim that the Balinese enjoyed cockfights because they offered a way of imagining social relations not “how things literally are” but as *worse* than they are.<sup>71</sup> This was arguably true at the patent theatres, especially when staff seem to have engaged in the business as if it were a no-holds-barred contest. Tickell’s account certainly stresses how competition was essayed and perhaps enjoyed as a particularly stark form of combat. Siddons and Jordan sally forth against the demonized Abington, an exaggeration surely. To achieve this effect, Tickell’s letters minimize, even ignore, the cartellike ways that the duopoly otherwise operated. In practice the two theatres occasionally “shared” performers, and they often collaborated to avoid competition. They certainly ganged up to crush all challenges to their duopolistic preeminence, for example John Palmer’s Royalty Theatre in 1787. Yet this rivalry (and its attendant uncertainties) is the one of the most significant insights offered, and it is this image that Tickell’s letters deliberately fashion. This is the compelling story that Tickell seeks to tell her sister, but it is also a narrative that enacts much of the complex hidden labor of the theatres and their triumphs and disasters. Tickell’s Drury Lane is a dynamic space of work, one in which women compete but also command. They intervene, but they also inform against and irritate one another. Her letters reveal how the work of Drury Lane was social, moving outward from the theatre into other spaces and relying upon various kinds of association and kinship. It is also domesticated, taking place in the home in ways that facilitate women’s unofficial but significant contribution while also placing them under particular pressure as producers of culture and correspondence. For this reason, and for many others, Mary Tickell is a “treasure to us.”

### ENDNOTES

1. See Jane Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance, and the Eighteenth-Century British Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010); and Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

2. Robert D. Hume, “Theatre History, 1660–1800: Aims, Materials, Methodology,” in *Players, Playwrights, Playhouses: Investigating Performance, 1660–1800*, ed. Michael Corder and Peter Holland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 9–44.

3. Daniel O’Quinn, *Entertaining Crisis in the Atlantic Imperium, 1770–1790* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 16.

4. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 48. Italics in original.
5. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 153.
6. See Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers, & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800*, 16 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973–93), 9: 307–10. See also Margot Bor and Lamond Clelland, *Still the Lark: A Biography of Elizabeth Linley* (London: Merlin Press, 1962); and Giles Waterfield and Nicola Kalinsky, eds., *A Nest of Nightingales: Thomas Gainsborough, the Linley Sisters*, exh. cat. (London: Dulwich Picture Gallery, 1988).
7. Elizabeth Sheridan, note added to letters from her sister, 24 August 1791, Letters from Mary Tickell to Her Sister Elizabeth Ann Sheridan, ca. 1785–1787, Folger MS Y.d.35, f. 347, Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, DC. The letters were acquired from Sotheby's on 17 June 1957. The catalog describes them as "an intimate series, constituting a spontaneous and detailed chronicle of the writer's daily life, with much lively theatrical, social and political gossip"; *Catalogue of Valuable Printed Books Music, Drawing, Autograph Letters* (London: Sotheby & Co., 1957), 49–50.
8. Tickell to Sheridan, "Friday" [31 December 1785], Y.d.35, f. 222; Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morning" [26 July 1785], Y.d.35, f. 34; Tickell to Sheridan, "Friday" [29 September 1786], Y.d.35, f. 250.
9. Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday Morning" [8 October 1786], Y.d.35, ff. 253–4. Tickell wrote that the performance took in £300. The most reliable recent figure for a performance of *Tancred and Sigismunda* is £319 on 5 October 1786. See Charles Beecher Hogan, ed., *The London Stage, 1660–1800: A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments & Afterpieces*, Part 5, 1776–1800, 3 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), 2: 925.
10. See Drury Lane Journals (for 1783–6), W.b. 286–9, Folger Shakespeare Library; and Betsy Sheridan, *Betsy Sheridan's Journal: Letters from Sheridan's Sister 1784–1786 & 1788–1790*, ed. William Le Fanu (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1960).
11. Tickell to Sheridan, "Wednesday" [5 May 1785], Y.d.35, f. 49.
12. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morning, N: Street" [25 October 1785], Y.d.35 ff. 170–1.
13. Tickell to Sheridan, "Monday" [mid-March 1784], Y.d.35, f. 47.
14. James Boaden, *The Life of Mrs. Jordan; including Original Private Correspondence, and Numerous Anecdotes of Her Contemporaries*, 2 vols. (London: E. Bull, 1831); Tate Wilkinson, *Memoirs of His Own Life*, 4 vols. (York: Wilson, Spence, & Mawman, 1790). For Boaden's *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons*, see note 42.
15. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday 3:d" [January 1786], Y.d.35, f. 224.
16. Tickell to Sheridan, [after 7 January 1784], Y.d.35, f. 7.
17. See Mary A. Favret, *Romantic Correspondence: Women, Politics, and the Fiction of Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning Patriotism, 1750–1810* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 2000); Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009).
18. Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday Morning" [8 October 1786], Y.d. 35, ff. 253–4; Tickell to Sheridan, "Jan.: the 4:th" [1786], Y.d.35, f. 226.
19. See Tickell to Sheridan, "Wednesday" [early November, 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 189–93; Tickell to Sheridan, "Wednesday Norfolk Street" and "Friday Morning" [6 and 8 October 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 146, 148; and Tickell to Sheridan, "Monday the 23rd" [October 1786], Y.d.35, ff. 277–9.
20. Tickell to Sheridan, [late September 1786], Y.d.35, f. 243. Tickell's account of Sheridan's efforts can be contrasted with the account in David Francis Taylor, *Theatres of Opposition: Empire, Revolution, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

21. David Worrall, *Theatric Revolution: Drama, Censorship, and Romantic Period Subcultures 1773–1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
22. See Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Jennie Batchelor, *Women's Work: Labour, Gender, Authorship, 1750–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); and Betty A. Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
23. [Review of Burgoyne's *Richard Coeur de Lion*], *The Devil: Containing a Review and Investigation of All Public Subjects Whatever* 5 [1786], 75. A similarly unflattering portrayal of the Linley–Tickell–Sheridan circle is glimpsed in Sheridan, *Betsy Sheridan's Journal*, 25–7.
24. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday" [30 December 1783 or 6 January 1784], Y.d.35, f. 3. Underlines here and throughout are per the original.
25. *Airs and Chorusses in the Pantomime of Harlequin Junior* (London: N.p., 1784), 7; and *Public Advertiser*, 6 January 1784.
26. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday" [30 December 1783 or 6 January 1784], Y.d.35, ff. 3–4.
27. Tiffany Stern, *Rehearsal from Shakespeare to Sheridan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).
28. De Certeau, xi.
29. Tickell to Sheridan, [after 7 January 1784], Y.d.35, f. 7. Reviews were favorable; see *Public Advertiser*, 8 January 1784.
30. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday" [30 December 1783 or 6 January 1784], f. 3; and Tickell to Sheridan, [after 7 January 1784], f. 7.
31. De Certeau, 29–30, 124–30. See also Marvin Carlson, *Places of Performance: The Semiotics of Theatre Architecture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).
32. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday" [27 December 1784], Y.d.35, f. 66.
33. Richard Leacroft, *The Development of the English Playhouse* (London: Methuen, 1988), 121–3.
34. De Certeau, 29, 119–22.
35. See John O'Brien, *Harlequin Britain: Pantomime and Entertainment, 1690–1760* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); and Moody, *Illegitimate Theatre*.
36. Tickell to Sheridan, Y.d.35, ff. 5–7.
37. See Roach, 41, 123–31; and Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 436–7, 446.
38. *Morning Post*, 13 January 1784.
39. Tickell to Sheridan, [late January 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 15, 19; Tickell to Sheridan, [early February 1785], Y.d.35, f. 21.
40. Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday Morning" [9 October 1785], Y.d.35, f. 152.
41. See *London Chronicle*, 8 October 1785; *Morning Post*, 10 October 1785; *Morning Herald*, 11 October 1785; and *Public Advertiser*, 11 October 1785.
42. James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons: Interspersed with Anecdotes of Authors and Characters* ([1827] London: Gibbings, 1896), 274.
43. Nussbaum, 18, 44.
44. Judith Pascoe, *Romantic Theatricality: Gender, Poetry, and Spectatorship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997), 20–1, 23–5. See also essays in Robyn Asleson, ed., *Notorious Muse: The Actress in British Art and Culture, 1776–1812* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
45. Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday Morning" [mid-September 1785], Y.d.35, f. 133.
46. Tickell to Sheridan, "Friday Morning" [7 October 1785], Y.d.35, f. 148.
47. Tickell to Sheridan [early October 1785], Y.d.35, f. 158. The news of Siddons's "indisposition" and Abington's rival performances appear in *Morning Chronicle*, 10 October 1785; *Morning Chronicle*, 13 October 1785; and *Public Advertiser*, 13 October 1785.
48. Nussbaum, 44–9.

49. Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday Morning" [20 November 1785], Y.d.35, f. 202. Siddons appeared in *King John* on 22 November 1785. Boaden notes the need to preserve Siddons's health but is more discrete as to the motive. See Boaden, 343–5.

50. *The Way to Keep Him* appeared on 26 November. Siddons succeeded in the role. See reviews in *Public Advertiser*, 28 November 1785; and *Morning Chronicle*, 28 November 1785.

51. Nussbaum, 231, 244–6.

52. Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday Morning" [20 November 1785], Y.d.35, f. 202.

53. See *Public Advertiser*, 30 November 1785; *Morning Chronicle*, 30 November 1785; and *Morning Chronicle*, 28 November 1785.

54. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday" [27 December 1785], Y.d.35, f. 66.

55. Tickell to Sheridan, [late September 1785], Y.d.35, f. 134; Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morning, N: Street" [26 October 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 171–2; Tickell to Sheridan, "Sunday" [30 October 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 178–9.

56. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday the 3:d" [January 1786], Y.d.35, f. 225. Newspapers confirm that Drury Lane's program was changed "in consequence of poor King and his gout"; *Morning Chronicle*, 5 January 1786.

57. Tickell to Sheridan, "Jan.: the 4:th" [1786], Y.d.35, ff. 226–7.

58. Roach, 157.

59. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morning, N: Street" [25 October 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 170–1. Jordan appeared in *The Country Girl* on 18 October 1785. Tickell wrote after her second performance on 24 October.

60. *Ibid.*, ff. 170–1. Jordan appeared in *The Country Girl* on 18 October 1785. Tickell wrote after her second performance on 24 October. See also Sheridan, *Betsy Sheridan's Journal*, 77–8.

61. Tickell to Sheridan [16 November 1785], Y.d.35, ff. 197–8; Tickell to Sheridan [30 November 1785], Y.d.35, f. 206; Tickell to Sheridan, "Friday Morning" [6 January 1785], Y.d.35, f. 230; Tickell to Sheridan, "Monday Morning" [21 November 1785], Y.d.35, f. 203. See also Claire Tomalin, *Mrs Jordan's Profession: The Story of a Great Actress and a Future King* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995); and Gill Perry, *Spectacular Flirtations: Viewing the Actress in British Art and Theatre, 1768–1820* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

62. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morning" [late July 1785], Y.d.35, f. 104.

63. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morn" [25 October 1785], Y.d.35, f. 170; Tickell to Sheridan, "Wednesday" [26 October 1785], Y.d.35, f. 173.

64. Tickell to Sheridan [30 November 1785], Y.d.35, f. 206.

65. Tickell to Sheridan, "Wednesday" [28 December 1785], Y.d.35, f. 67.

66. Tickell to Sheridan, "Thursday" [5 January 1786], Y.d.35, f. 228.

67. Tickell to Sheridan, "Tuesday Morn" [16 January 1787], Y.d.35, f. 339.

68. De Certeau, 68–9, 80–91.

69. Tickell to Sheridan, "Wednesday Norfolk Street" [6 October 1785], Y.d.35 ff. 146, 148.

70. See Elizabeth Eger, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 60–3.

71. Geertz, 446.