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# THE HISTORY OF DRURY LANE

By AUSTIN BRERETON

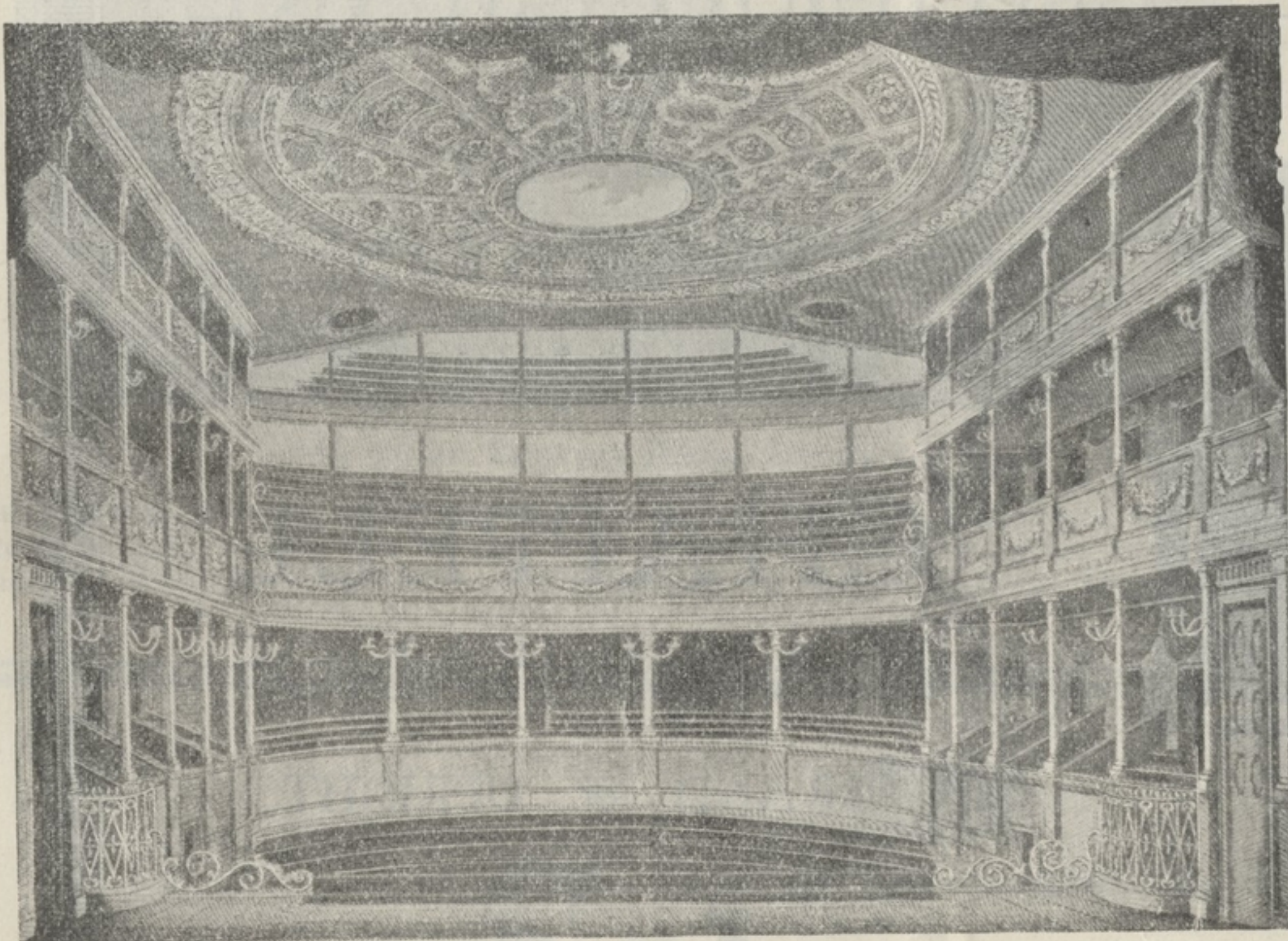
## CHAPTER VI.

## ITALIAN AND OTHER OPERA



King Charles II.,  
who granted the Royal Patent to Thomas Killigrew.

occasion, the great John Philip Kemble in Paris in 1784. It was translated by General Burgoyne and adapted to the English stage by Mrs. Sheridan. One evening in March, 1787, a visitor from Paris, with the piece fresh in mind, was taken to Drury Lane to witness the play. "Just as we entered the boxes," he related, "Richard was singing the romance from his prison, most loudly accompanied from behind the scenes by two French horns. I was astonished to hear an accompaniment so



THE SECOND THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE.

As it appeared in 1791

for three years, 1783-86. He appeared in opera at Drury Lane for eleven years, 1787-1808. The Storace mentioned by him, was Stephen Storace, the musical composer, who was engaged by Linley as composer for Drury Lane in 1787. "The Haunted Tower," produced here on November 24, 1789, has been revived several times. "The Pirate," 1792, and "The Iron Chest," 1796, were very successful. The latter piece was the play by George Colman, the

THE most famous theatre in all London has many distinctions. There are few people, however, who are aware that to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, belongs the credit of the introduction to this country of Italian opera. Yet, more than two centuries ago, the first opera in the Italian style was performed at Old Drury. It was called "Arsinoë, Queen of Cyprus." Produced in the early part of 1705, it met with so much success that a rival house followed suit—and met with failure. The author of "Arsinoë" was a Frenchman, well known in his day, one Peter Anthony Motteux. Born at Rouen in 1660, he came to England in 1685. For two years, 1692-3, he edited the *Gentleman's Journal*. He wrote comedies and masques, was a clerk in the foreign department of the Post-office, 1703-11, and, in 1712, became an East India merchant. He collaborated with the learned Scot, Sir Thomas Urquhart, in a translation of Rabelais, 1693-1708, and, in 1712, published an edition of "Don Quixote." He died in 1718. Not the least of his titles to fame is to be found in the fact that the first opera in the Italian style, with recitatives, seen in England, was his work.

Although not an opera house in the same sense as that applied to the old theatre in the Haymarket, and the comparatively new one in Covent Garden, music has ever found encouragement at Drury Lane, and many singers of great note have been welcomed to these historic boards. To go no further into the past, music held her own during the Sheridan era. This was due, no doubt, to the influence of Sheridan's father-in-law, Thomas Linley, who was the director of the music at Drury Lane for five years, 1776-81. In 1787, there was a notable season of oratorio at Drury Lane under the direction of Linley, Dr. Arnold, and a celebrated singer of her day, Mdme. Mara. On one

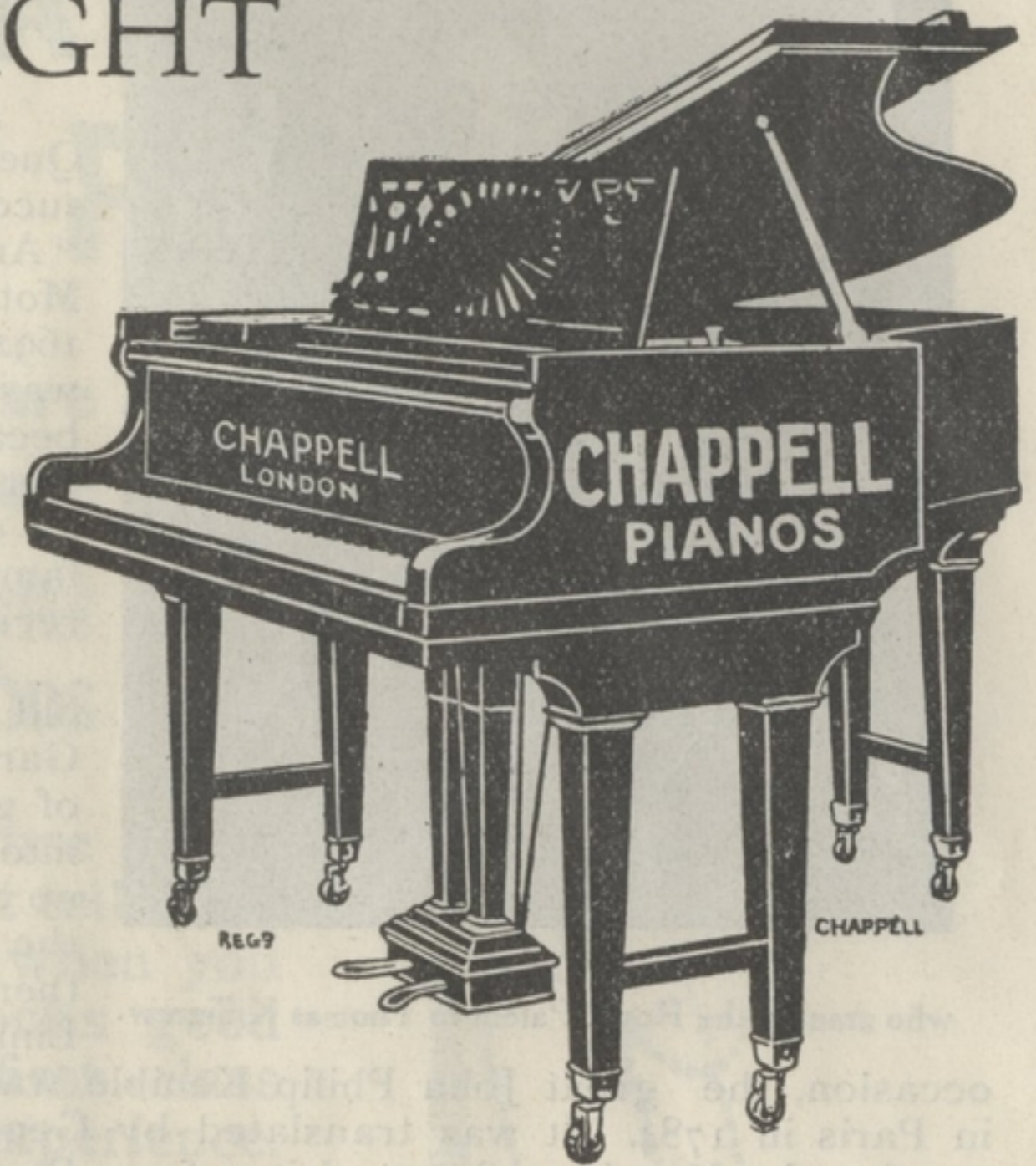
completely at variance with the intention of the composer, and which entirely spoiled the effect of the melody, nor did I think much of the vocal powers of the Royal captive; and turning to Storace, I said, 'If His Majesty is the first and best singer in your theatre, I shall not fear to appear as his competitor for public favour.' Storace laughed, and told me that the gentleman who upon that special occasion was singing was Mr. John Kemble, who, to serve the proprietors, had undertaken to perform the part of Richard, as there was no singer at the theatre capable of representing it." It was during the rehearsals for this performance of "Richard Cœur de Lion" that the leader of the band called out from the orchestra, "Mr. Kemble, my dear Mr. Kemble, you are murdering time." To which Kemble, quite undisturbed, calmly taking a pinch of snuff, replied, "My dear Sir, it is better for me to murder time at once than be continually beating him, as you do."

Michael Kelly, who was the visitor in question, was the principal tenor in Italian opera at Vienna

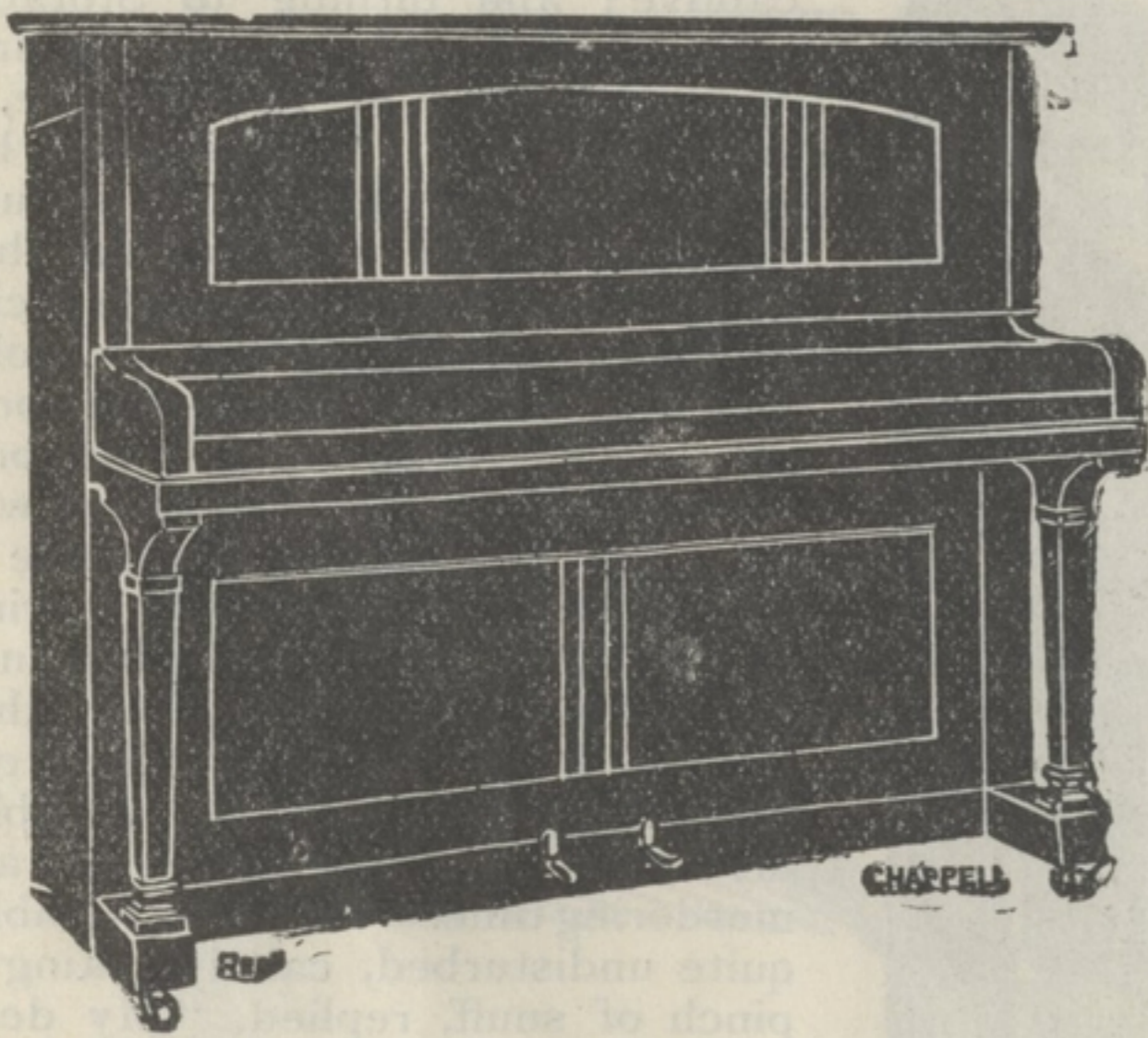
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THE THIRD THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE.

opera "was warmly applauded by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who honoured the theatre with his presence, and was in the house," it is gravely recorded, "before the commencement of the opera. Amongst the audience were the late Duke of Cumberland (in the pit) and the Duchess (in her box) with the present Marquis of

younger, founded on Godwin's "Caleb Williams." Born in 1763, Storace died in the year of the "Iron Chest." His sister, Anna, three years his junior, sang with great success at Florence in 1780 and at Milan in 1782. She was the original Susanna in "Le Nozze di Figaro," Kelly being the first Basilio. She was also the original Margareta in "No Song, no Supper," for which her brother composed the music. Produced at Drury Lane on April 16, 1790, it had a long period of prosperity.

Michael Kelly made his first appearance at Drury Lane on April 20, 1787, as Lionel in "Lionel and Clarissa." This was a well-known opera of the time, by Isaac Bickerstaff. His next part here was Young Meadows, in "Love in a Village," by the same author. According to the fashion of the time, in addition to the original songs, he introduced one by Gluck, for which Mrs. Sheridan wrote the English words called "Love, thou maddening power." During the interval between his appearance as Lionel and Young Meadows, he witnessed the debut of Signora Storace. The opera was Paisiello's "Schiavi par Amore." The opening of the



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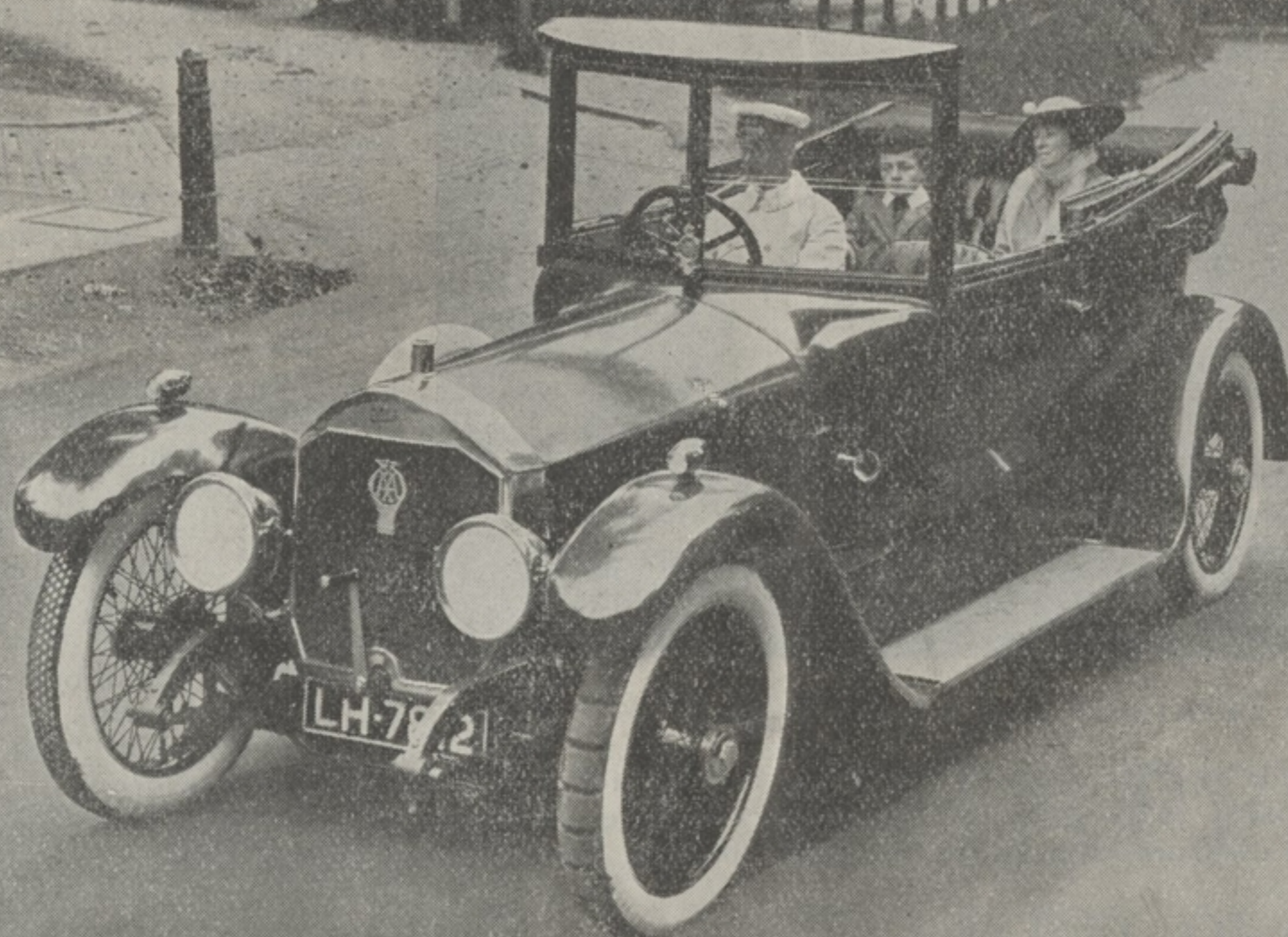
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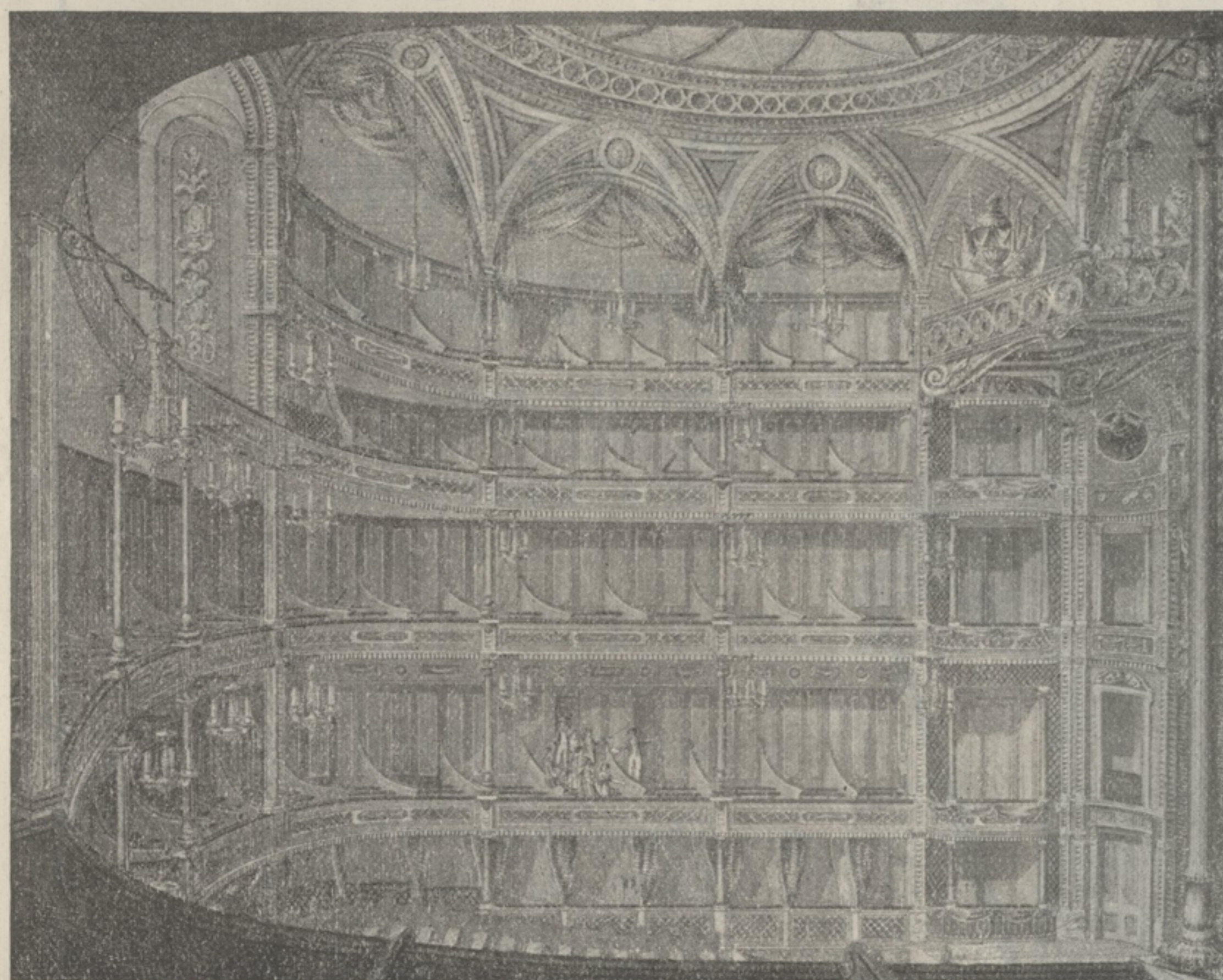
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# Cavalleria Rusticana

Music by  
**P. MASCAGNI**

(Born 1863)

Libretto by G. TAGGIONI-TOZZETTI and G. MENASCI.

It may be pointed out that the first performance of this Opera in England took place at the Shaftesbury Theatre on October 19th, 1891. The story is told in one act, and is founded on the story by G. Verga. The first performance was given in Rome on May 20th, 1890. The English version is by Frederick Weatherly.

## CAST.

Santuzza	( <i>a Peasant Girl</i> )	...	ROSINA BUCKMAN
Turiddu	( <i>a young Peasant</i> )	...	MAURICE D'OISLY
Lucia	( <i>his Mother</i> )	...	EDITH CLEGG
Alfio	( <i>a Carrier</i> )	...	HERBERT LANGLEY
Lola	( <i>his Wife</i> )	...	LENA MAITLAND

Scene ... .. A Village in Sicily.

Conductor - EUGENE GOOSSENS, Jun.

# Il Pagliacci

Music and Libretto by

**R. LEONCAVALLO**

(Born 1858)

This Opera was first produced in Milan on May 21st, 1892, and for the first time in England at Covent Garden in the following year as "The Strollers." English version by Frederick Weatherly.

## CAST.

Nedda	( <i>in the Play, Columbine</i> )	...	JEANNE BROLA
Canio	( <i>her Husband, in the Play, Punchinello</i> )	...	FRANK MULLINGS
Tonio	( <i>a Clown, in the Play, Taddeo</i> )	...	ROBERT PARKER
Beppo	( <i>in the Play Harlequin</i> )	...	KENNETH STERNE
Silvio	( <i>a young Farmer</i> )	...	WILLIAM MICHAEL

Prologue

Act I. ... .. A Village in Calabria  
Act II. ... .. The same (Evening)

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## SYNOPSIS.

### CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA (Rustic Chivalry).

#### SCENE : A Village Square in Sicily.

**T**URIDDU, a villager, has been in love with Lola, but during his absence at the wars she has broken her promise to him, and married Alfio, a carter. With a view to concealing his disappointment, he has turned his attention to another maiden of the village, Santuzza, whom he succeeds in robbing of her honour as well as her heart. Turiddu's association with Santuzza has aroused Lola's jealousy, and the fickle woman determines to regain her late lover's affection. Turiddu, still in love with Lola, eagerly responds to her invitation to resume their old attachment. Santuzza, now deserted, sets out with the object of inducing her betrayer to return to her, and learning that he has been seen near Alfio's house, determines to consult Turiddu's mother. This is the position when the curtain rises on a peaceful Easter morning scene.

Santuzza meets Lucia outside her cottage, and explains the position to her. Just then Alfio, the carter, appears and asks for a draught of wine. Hearing Turiddu's name mentioned he tells Lucia that her son has been near his cottage recently. When Alfio departs, Lucia comforts the stricken girl. She then enters the church, leaving Santuzza outside. Presently Turiddu enters, looking for Lola, and Santuzza makes a vain appeal. During the scene Lola appears, and seeing the two together, becomes jealous and leaves them. Turiddu roughly spurns Santuzza who, seeing Alfio approach, tells him the whole story of his wife's infidelity to gain revenge. Alfio is furious when he hears the story. The people now come out of church. Turiddu picks up a goblet of wine and drinks the health of his lover, who responds. Alfio angrily breaks in upon the scene and addresses Turiddu scornfully. The latter challenges Alfio to fight, in the customary Sicilian fashion, by biting his left ear. They retire to fight in a garden close by, and after a short pause there is a cry of "Turiddu is killed!"

### I PAGLIACCI (The Players).

Before the curtain rises, Tonio, an actor, appears and sings the prologue, which indicates the keynote of the opera.

#### ACT I. A Village in Calabria.

**T**HE scene is a fair ground which is crowded with merrymakers. Canio, a travelling showman, invites the public to see the performance in the evening, and when he is assured that the entertainment will be well patronised, he adjourns to a local tavern to get refreshment. His wife, Nedda, is now approached by Tonio, the hunchback clown of the troupe, who declares his love. Nedda, however, strikes him with her whip and, enraged at this treatment, he retires, vowing vengeance. On his return he finds that Silvio, a rich farmer, is making a greater impression on Nedda's heart, and that the pair are planning to elope after the evening performance. Seeing a means of revenge, he departs to

inform Canio of his wife's infidelity. The husband arrives as Silvio is departing, but he has seen sufficient to convince him of his wife's faithlessness. He threatens to kill his wife, but is temporarily pacified by the other members of the troupe.

**ACT II. The Show Ground.**

The audience is assembling and Nedda collects the money. Silvio is present and whispers a reminder of their appointment into Nedda's ear. The play, by a coincidence, strongly resembles the incidents of the first act. Columbine (Nedda) is expecting her lover (Beppo), in the absence of her husband. The servant (Tonio) enters with refreshments and makes a declaration of love, but is scornfully rejected. The lover then enters, but is surprised by the Pagliaccio (Canio), who, hearing his wife using the same words as she addressed to Silvio when making her appointment, forgets his part and furiously demands the name of her lover. She endeavours to save the situation, but her husband informs her that he is no longer an actor but a deceived husband. In a frenzy he kills her with his dagger. Silvio now rushes on to the stage, realising that a tragedy is occurring, and Canio, recognising him as his wife's lover, stabs him also, announcing, "The Comedy is ended!"

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which the lady replied, "There is nobody here to send; and yet if I knew where to get something for you to drink, I would go myself." The gallant and mercurial Irishman came to the rescue. "Madame," he said, addressing her in German. "I should be sorry for you to have that trouble and I sit lazy by; I will, with great pleasure, go and



THE FOURTH THEATRE ROYAL DRURY LANE.  
As it appeared in 1814.

get Monsieur Ponté some porter." No sooner said than done. A foaming pot arrived in the nick of time. The fear of the thirsty musician was set at rest, his parched lips were moistened, and Madame Mara was so grateful that the future of Kelly at Drury Lane was assured. Indeed, the Queen of Song of her day emerged from her retirement and sang for Kelly on his benefit night, the result being that the receipts were "the greatest ever known at the house, as the whole pit, with the exception of two benches, was railed into boxes." "So much," says Kelly, in his Reminiscences, "for a little German proficiency, a little common civility, and a pot of porter!" The opera was the "Artaxerxes" of Glück. Madame Mara was the Mandane, Mrs. Crouch, Arbaces, Kelly the Artabanus.

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ful of the operatic pieces produced at Drury Lane during this period was "The Haunted Tower," for which, as already mentioned, the music was composed by Stephen Storace. The author was one James Cobb, a clerk in the office of the East India Company by day and a dramatist in his leisure moments, which must have been many, for, during 1779-1809, he wrote some two dozen pieces, including "The Humorist" and "The First Floor," farcical plays which brought much grist to the mills of Old Drury. "The Haunted Tower" was first performed on November 24, 1789. Storace's sister, Anna, made her first appearance in English opera, and many other performers of note, including Mrs. Crouch, Baddeley, Moody, and Kelly were in the cast. During the first season, the opera—the plot of which was taken from an Italian intermezzo opera—had fifty representations. Its success in subsequent seasons was very considerable.

Another opera which made a great hit with the public during this period was "The Siege of Belgrade," the "book" by Cobb, the music by Storace. In the free and easy fashion of those times, the plot was taken from the Italian piece, "La Cosa Rara." First represented on January 1, 1791, it was performed for sixty nights. Then came one of the most important events in the history of Drury Lane. The old house—the second theatre on the same site, built by Sir Christopher Wren and opened on March 26, 1674—had become so dilapidated that its demolition was inevitable. Accordingly, on June 4, 1791, the old house saw its last entertainment. The bill of the play consisted of "The Country Girl" and "No Song, no Supper." At the end of the performance, John Palmer—who was unexcelled as Joseph Surface—addressed the audience: "Ladies and Gentlemen," he said, "on the part of the proprietors, manager, and performers, I have to express their gratitude for the unprecedented support with which you have favoured them during the past season; when next we have the honour to appear before you on this spot, we trust it will be in a theatre better calculated for your accommodation, more deserving Royal countenance and the patronage of this great metropolis." The following amusing obituary notice appeared in a newspaper of the following Monday, June 6:—  
 "Died, on Saturday night, of a gradual decay, in the hundred and seventeenth year of her age, old Madame Drury, who lived in six reigns, and saw many generations pass in review before her. She remembered Betterton in age, lived in intimacy with Wilks, Booth, and Cibber, and knew old Macklin when he was a stripling; her hospitality exceeded that of the English character, even in its earliest days of festivity, having almost through the whole of her life entertained from one to two thousand persons of both sexes six nights out of seven in the week; she was an excellent poetess, could be gay and grave by turns, and yet sometimes catching disorder from intrusive guests, could be dull enough in all conscience; her memory was excellent, and her singing kept in such a gradual state of improvement, that it was allowed, her voice was better the three or four last years of her life than when she was in her prime. At the latter end of the last century, she had a rout of near two thousand people at her house the very night of her death; and the old lady felt herself in such spirits that she said she would give them no supper without a song, which being complied with, she fell gently back in her chair, and expired without a groan. Dr. Palmer, one of her family physicians, attended her in her last moments and announced her dissolution to the company."

Thus ended the second Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, the house wherein David Garrick had won such triumphs. As will be seen from our illustration, that house was not a large one, its utmost holding capacity being two thousand

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people. Its stage brought the actor in almost personal contact with the spectators. An accurate description of it is furnished by Colley Cibber. In his "Apology," published in 1740, he states that "the area and platform of the old stage projected about four foot forwarder, in a semi-oval figure, parallel to the benches of the pit; the former lower doors of entrance for the actors were brought down between the two foremost (and then only) Pilasters, in the place of which doors, now the two stage-boxes are fixt; where the doors of entrance now are, there formerly stood two additional side-wings, in front to a full set of scenes, which had then almost a double effect, in their loftiness and magnificence. By this original form, the usual station of the actors, in almost every scene, was advanced at least ten foot nearer to the audience than they now can be." In 1700, this projecting stage was curtailed somewhat, but, even in 1791, as may be noticed from a glance at our engraving, the stage was in close proximity to the spectators.

The new house—the third theatre on the same site—was built by Henry Holland, and opened on March 12, 1794, with (it being the first day in Lent) a selection from Handel's oratorios and the Coronation March, the stage being set to resemble a Gothic cathedral. The dramatic season began on April 21, with "Macbeth"—John Philip Kemble as Macbeth, Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth. Charles Kemble, as Malcolm, then made his first appearance in London. The third Drury Lane had a holding capacity of 3,611 people as follows: pit 800, boxes 1,828, two-shilling gallery, 675, shilling gallery, 308; money, £1,771. It was a beautiful building, but too large for sight or hearing. It was burned down on the night of February 24, 1809.

The Illustrations to these articles are from engravings in the collection of Mr. George Suckling 13, Garrick Street, W.C.



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