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# The Critical Decade for English Music Drama, 1700-1710

Curtis A. Price \*

**D**URING THE FIRST DECADE of the eighteenth century, Italian opera penetrated the defenses of the rational English theatre, practically the last European holdout against the charms of *dramma per musica*, and by 1711 Scarlatti, Bononcini, and Handel had conquered the English audience.<sup>1</sup> The changes that the foreign opera effected in England's native musical theatre, unlike those felt earlier in Paris, Vienna, and Hamburg, were radical and far-reaching. This study will focus on three major revolutions in the London theatres between 1706 and 1709 — politically motivated reorganizations that were largely responsible for the elimination of the Purcellian semi-operatic style and for subverting the emergence of an English baroque operatic tradition.

Yet the invasion of England by Italian opera has been too much blamed for the ills of the early eighteenth-century London theatre. From the beginning of the Restoration period in 1660, the spoken play had been the receptacle into which songs, dances, and masques were poured.<sup>2</sup> By 1700 playwrights rarely took pains to incorporate these

\* This study is an expanded version of a paper read at the national meeting of the American Musicological Society in Washington, D.C., on 5 November 1976. I am grateful to the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Washington University, St. Louis, for grants enabling me to complete the research for this project. The following abbreviations, devised by *Répertoire international des sources musicales*, are used throughout to refer to libraries and archives:

GB Lbm — British Museum (i.e., British Library)

GB Lcm — Royal College of Music

US CAh — Harvard University Library (Theatre Collection)

US NYp — New York Public Library

US Wc — Library of Congress

<sup>1</sup> Only Handel was in London at this time. Giovanni Bononcini declined an invitation to travel to England in 1707 (discussed below), and Alessandro Scarlatti never came to the British Isles, although parts of his operas were performed there.

<sup>2</sup> See Curtis A. Price, "Musical Practices in Restoration Plays," Dissertation, Harvard (1974), pp. [21]-187.

musical elements organically into their plays, and the longer musical scenes in particular could easily be detached from the dramas without doing any damage to their plots. The results were an entertainment which existed on two levels — spoken dialogue and episodes of music and dancing — and a theatrical organization deeply divided into actors and musicians. The infusion of Italian opera into this structure, at first seen by the actors as catastrophic to their interests, paradoxically restored them to their former prominence and saved British drama from further destruction. With the onslaught of the foreign opera, the play no longer had to supply both spoken and music drama. Thespians returned to providing relatively unadorned plays, while the audience's desire for stage music was sufficiently supplied by the new opera. The main victims of this change in theatrical structure were the English semi-opera, or "dramatic opera" as John Dryden called it,<sup>3</sup> and the native composers who contributed the masques for these lavish productions.

To understand why the dramatic opera fell victim to the changes brought about by the introduction of Italian music drama between 1705 and 1710, it is necessary to look briefly at this mutation of the play. The first dramatic operas were little more than musical intensifications of popular Elizabethan and Jacobean plays. The music added to Thomas Shadwell's 1674 adaptation of *The Tempest*,<sup>4</sup> for example, does far less violence to Shakespeare's drama than the adaptor's "improved" poetry; the songs by John Banister, Pelham Humfrey, and Pietro Reggion, as well as Matthew Locke's splendid instrumental music, are essentially incidental to the plot, and their omission would not disrupt the flow of Shakespeare's somewhat transmogrified story. The masters of the semi-operatic form, Henry Purcell and his collaborators, closely followed Shadwell's formula, in that their dramatic operas are reworkings of earlier plays, except for Dryden's *King Arthur*.<sup>5</sup> As regards the dramatic function of music in these works,

<sup>3</sup> See the preface to *King Arthur* (1691).

<sup>4</sup> The incidental music is printed in *The English Opera; or the Vocal Musick in Psyche . . . to which is Adjoynd the Instrumental Musick in the Tempest* (1675). For a discussion of this and the vocal music in the production, see John Buttrey, "The Evolution of English Opera Between 1656 and 1695: A Re-investigation," Dissertation, Cambridge (1967), pp. 96-117.

<sup>5</sup> *King Arthur*, originally planned as the main piece to Dryden and Louis Grabu's allegorical *Albion and Albanus* (1685), was separated from the French-like work and expanded into the dramatic opera, which is not based directly on any earlier play.

they differ little from other musically rich dramas entitled "play" or "tragicomedy," except that dramatic operas usually had a masque or other musical scene in each of the five acts, more lavish scenery than ordinary plays, and an abundance of professionally executed dancing. The musical scenes are almost always accommodated by the play as incantations, victory celebrations, courtly masques, or the fantasies of the main speaking characters, who do not sing. Moments of true music drama — when the plot of the play is advanced by music or when a protagonist gives vent to his emotions through music — are rare in Purcell.<sup>6</sup> The late seventeenth-century English playwrights and theatre composers certainly did not object to people conversing in music, provided that this happened within the greater context of rational, spoken dialogue. The resulting miniature music dramas might be as coherent and as moving as *Dido and Aeneas*,<sup>7</sup> but they could be no more than entertainments for the *dramatis personae*.

#### THE ITALIAN INFILTRATION

Considering the traditional resistance of the English audience to autonomous music drama, the seemingly easy victory of Italian opera in London in the first decade of the eighteenth century might appear difficult to explain. The first opera "after the Italian Manner" was performed in early 1705, but the London audience was well acquainted with all elements of the foreign opera, except *secco* recitative in Italian, by the early 1690s. Several castratti and prima donnas had already made expeditionary forays into the northern country. For example, Giovanni Francesco Grossi (known as Siface) was in England during the reign of James II.<sup>8</sup> It is not known if this famous singer performed on the stage, but "Italian songs" are called for in plays from this period

<sup>6</sup> One of these moments is in III.ii of *The Indian Queen*, an operatic version of Dryden and Sir Robert Howard's 1664 tragedy, produced in the spring of 1695. Queen Zempoalla's conjuror, Ismeron, a minor character who both speaks and sings, refuses in words to predict his queen's future, although Purcell's recitative and aria, "You twice ten hundred Deities," with, for example, its descending chromatic tetrachord in g minor (the most powerful of all the musical emblems of death for the English baroque composer) at the words ". . . what strange Fate must on her dismall Vision wait," foreshadows Zempoalla's death.

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent account of the public debut of this opera, see Eric Walter White, "New Light on 'Dido and Aeneas,'" *Henry Purcell, 1659-1695, Essays on His Music*, ed. Imogen Holst (London, 1959), pp. [14]-34.

<sup>8</sup> See Jack A. Westrup, *Purcell* (New York, 1962), pp. 75, 82, 114-115, 241, and 319.

and even earlier.<sup>9</sup> In the 1690s the Italian invasion quickened and the visiting artists performed at the newly established public concerts. In early 1693 an "Italian Lady" is recorded as singing at the concerts in York Buildings; a contemporary account reveals that her passage to England was paid by another Italian immigrant, Giovanni Battista Draghi, who made certain that the young prima donna was heard by the future queen, Princess Anne of Denmark, during whose reign Italian opera later flourished in London.<sup>10</sup> There is no record that "the Italian Lady" sang on the stage, but a few years later other imported singers certainly did, either before the curtain went up or between the acts of good English plays.<sup>11</sup> Italian instrumental music, too, was ex-

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., Shadwell's *Bury-Fair* (1689), III.i ("They Sing an Italian Song of two parts") and this playwright's earlier comedy, *The Lancashire-Witches* (1682), III.i, where an Italian song is preceded by a discussion of how the English gentry "are so much poysoned with Forreign Vanities . . ."

<sup>10</sup> The singer is generally identified without documentation as Margarita de l'Epine; see, e.g., Michael Tilmouth, "A Calendar of References to Music in Newspapers Published in London and the Provinces (1660-1719)," Royal Musical Association: *R. M. A. Research Chronicle*, No. 1 (1961), 13. However, Margarita is first recorded as singing in London at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1703 (see *The London Stage 1700-1729*, ed. Emmett L. Avery et al. [Carbondale, Illinois, 1960], pp. 37 ff.), having sung in Venice around 1700 (see Ursula Kirkendale, *Antonio Caldara, sein Leben und seine venezianisch-römischen Oratorien* [Graz, 1966], p. 29, n. 3). The 1693 "Italian Lady" is mentioned by John Baynard, an amateur musician, in a letter of 7 January 1693 to William Holder, concerning Baynard's revision of Holder's *Treatise of the Natural Grounds and Principles of Harmony* (1694) (in GB Lbm Sloane 1388, fols. 78-78v):

"We have here arrived very Lately a young Italian Gentlewoman who sings to admiration; as they say; & Sung Last tuesday [*i.e.*, 3 January 1693; not recorded in *The London Stage 1660-1700*] in York buildings at the Musick Meeting, whereby received above 3 score & ten pounds on her account, and might have had as much more if there had been Room. M<sup>r</sup> Baptist [probably Draghi] & his Partner there were at the Charge of bringing her from Italy (with her father & Mother) wch cost them about 150lbs. She was carried to the Princess [Anne] of Denmark last week to sing, by M<sup>r</sup> Baptist; who like[d] her so well that she gave Baptist 20 Guinies to dispose of; which he immediately gave all to her. But as no body can please all, there are some of our English practical musitians, who have endeavoured to lessen her. I am partly promised to hear her within a very little time."

<sup>11</sup> Around 1700, advertisements for foreign singers performing at the playhouses are common. For example, a notice in *The Post Boy* on 15 April 1699 announces that ". . . the Masters of the Theatre Royal have engag'd Signior Clementine, the famous Eunuch, servant to the Elector of Bavaria, to Sing on their publick Stage, for the short time of his stay in England." Evidence that singers performed before plays began is found in a letter dated 18 April 1706 from Nicola Haym to the Vice Chamberlain, in which Haym apologizes that the two singers he had agreed to supply that night are unable to attend before the play ends; he suggests that his

tremely popular in London beginning in the late 1680s, and this new style, more than anything else, prepared the way for all things Italian in the first half of the next century. This music was also heard both in plays<sup>12</sup> and in concert rooms. As if under a secret master plan, the foreign singers were soon joined by opera-wise instrumentalists and impresarios, many of whom could, when necessary, throw together an Italian pasticcio. In 1703, one season before such a pasticcio had its début in London, one of the foreign singers, Margarita de l'Épine, trying very hard to be Italian although her nationality has never been determined, sang at the playhouse an aria from Giovanni Bononcini's *Camilla*, which two years later would be the first enduring Italian opera performed on the London stage.<sup>13</sup> With these "critical masses" of foreign performers and quasi-composers, as well as an audience accustomed to hearing fragments of Italian music drama on their native stage, it is remarkable that an Italian opera was not mounted earlier than January 1705. The distinction of producing the first such opera in London (or perhaps the dubious achievement, when one considers its quality) fell to Christopher Rich, the manager and chief shareholder of the Theatre Royal.

There were two playhouses in London at this time: the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, which had formerly been Henry Purcell's house,

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pupil, the Baroness, "begin with her Songs . . ." (in US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fol. [35], copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fol. 97). See also the proposals submitted to the Lord Chamberlain on 28 January 17[06] regarding Katherine Tofts's fee for singing "each time . . . before the Curtaine is drawn up" (rpt. in Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 3rd. ed., II [Cambridge, England, 1961], 290).

<sup>12</sup> Italian sonatas were frequently performed between the acts of plays (see, e.g., Tilmouth, "Calendar" [note 10 above], p. 52: a performance of John Vanbrugh's comedy, *Aesop* [1697], on 10 November 1703 included during the intervals Visconti performing "some new Sonata's for the Violin lately brought from Rome, Compos'd by the Great Arcangelo Corelli"). Sonatas were also played in the following plays: Colley Cibber, *Love's Last Shift* (1696), in III.ii a group of musicians, including "hautboys," entertain Flareit with "a Trumpet Sonata"; in Will Penkethman, *Love without Interest* (1699), "An Entertainment of Music," including "A Sonato," interrupts the action of II.i; and in Thomas Duffey's *The Old Mode & the New, or, Country Miss with her Furbelee* [1703], II.ii, Frederick and Queenlove's dinner is graced with "Musick playing, a Sonnata . . ."

<sup>13</sup> See Lowell Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny of Dramatic Works Set by Giovanni and His Brother Antonio Maria Bononcini," Dissertation, Harvard (1972), pp. 166-167. The aria was "S'envola il dio d'amore," published in *The Monthly Mask of Vocal Music . . . for December 1703*. I should like to thank Professor Lindgren for his considerable help and advice during the research stages of this study.

and the recently completed Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket, the new home for the troupe of veteran actors who had seceded from Rich and the Theatre Royal in 1695.<sup>14</sup> The Drury Lane company carried a staff of fine singers and dancers and was equipped to perform lavish dramatic operas in the Purcellian tradition. Their manager, Rich, was widely recognized as an opportunistic businessman, who paid high salaries to the imported musicians while starving his actors, and who was willing to bring to the stage any fad, whether musical or not, to ensure packed houses. This theatre was an ideal greenhouse in which to grow an Italian opera in hostile climes. The Haymarket playhouse, on the other hand, had been designed and built by the gallant architect and playwright, Captain John Vanbrugh, and was managed by him and the greatest dramatist of the era, William Congreve. They had hoped to make their new theatre and its troupe of distinguished actors vehicles for their own new plays, works which would return spoken drama to its former prominence.<sup>15</sup> But the enterprising Vanbrugh, whose diverse talents kept him in close contact with some of the most influential aristocrats of the era, would soon compromise his devotion to his native drama and follow the vogue for Italian opera started by the rival theatre.<sup>16</sup>

On 16 January 1705,<sup>17</sup> less than four months before Vanbrugh's new theatre opened, Rich's Drury Lane company presented Thomas Clayton's *Arsinoe, Queen of Cypress*, an Italianate pasticcio with clum-

<sup>14</sup> This group of actors, headed by the great Thomas Betterton, had since the secession occupied a theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. For an account of disputes between Betterton and the Theatre Royal, see Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), I, 336-342, and Shirley Strum Kenny, "Theatrical Warfare, 1695-1710," *Theatre Notebook*, XXVII (1972-73), 130-145.

<sup>15</sup> See Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber, with an Historical View of the Stage during His Own Time* (1740), ed. B. R. S. Fone (Ann Arbor, 1968), p. 172: ". . . when this House [i.e., the Haymarket] was finish'd, Betterton and his Co-partners dissolv'd their own Agreement, and threw themselves under the Direction of Sir John Vanbrugh, and Mr. Congreve; imagining, perhaps, that the Conduct of two such eminent Authors, might give a more prosperous Turn to their Condition; that the Plays, it would, now, be their Interest, to write for them, would soon recover the Town to a true Taste . . ."

<sup>16</sup> For an account of the establishment of this theatre, see Judith Milhous, "New Light on Vanbrugh's Haymarket Theatre Project," *Theatre Survey*, XVII (1976), 143-161. Professor Milhous shows convincingly that from the beginning of the project Vanbrugh intended to accommodate operas and "Entertainments by Musick" in his new theatre.

<sup>17</sup> See *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), p. 85.

sily translated English verse affixed to the notes of diverse (and as yet unidentified) Italian arias.<sup>18</sup> This opera, with its pathetically diminutive plot and antiquated arias — performed, ironically, by an all-English cast — became very popular. Between January 1705 and March 1707, *Arsinoe* was performed 35 times.<sup>19</sup> It is damned by the anonymous author of "A Critical Discourse on Opera's and Musick in England," who calls it "the Hospital of the old Decrepid *Italian Opera's*."<sup>20</sup> But the editor of *The Muses Mercury* for February 1707 (written in March, however) holds *Arsinoe* in a rather higher regard, as he compares it to Clayton's next attempt at an opera, *Rosamond* (performed in March 1707): "The Harmony of the Numbers, and the Beauty of the Sentiments are universally admired. It has been disputed, whether the Musick [of *Rosamond*] is as good as that of *Arsinoe*; but, without entering into Comparisons, it must be confess'd, that the Airs of *Rosamund* are fine, the Passions well touch'd . . ." <sup>21</sup> Regardless of its quality, and it must be admitted to be very poor by any standards, *Arsinoe* is significant because its story is borne completely by music; it is the first work without spoken dialogue to achieve such success on the London stage.<sup>22</sup> But the English audience's acceptance of the operatic convention was not so immediate as the success of this one opera would indicate.

Most of the extant newspaper advertisements and playbills for per-

<sup>18</sup> For a detailed description of this opera, see Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny" (note 13 above), pp. 172-175.

<sup>19</sup> See *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> Appended to François Raguenet's *A Comparison Between the French and Italian Musick and Opera's* (1709, rpt. Farnborough, Hants., 1968), p. 65.

<sup>21</sup> Copy in US We. The wide disagreement between these nearly contemporaneous accounts, while striking, is partly explained by the fact that Nicola Haym, the adaptor of Bononcini's *Camilla* and an occasional enemy of the English musician, is probably the author of "A Critical Discourse on Opera's and Musick in England." This important discovery is made by Lindgren in "Parisian Patronage of Performers from the Royal Academy of Music (1719-28)," *Music & Letters*, LVIII (1977), 7. Cf. Stoddard M. Lincoln's conjecture that John Ernest Galliard penned this work, in "J. E. Galliard and *A Critical Discourse*," *Musical Quarterly*, LIII (1967), 347-352.

<sup>22</sup> Louis Grabu's *Ariane, ou, le Mariage de Bacchus* (1674) was apparently not a great success, nor was this composer's collaboration with Dryden, *Albion and Albanus* (1685), the first full-length English opera. John Evelyn mentions an unidentified "Italian Opera in musique" (*Diary*, 5 January 1674); and a performance of Lully's *Cadmus et Hermione* in London in 1686 is conjectural. See Buttrey, "The Evolution of English Opera" (note 4 above), p. 203, and W. J. Lawrence, "The French Opera in London," *Times Literary Supplement*, 28 March 1936, p. 168.



performances of *Arsinoe* show that it was mounted with fragments of other works, usually acts of plays. For example, on 7 June 1705 it is advertised as being performed with the fifth act of Susanna Centlivre's comedy, *Love's Contrivance, or, Le Medecin malgre Lui* (published in 1703), and on 28 February 1706 with the fourth act of Congreve's fine play, *The Old Batchelor* (published in 1693).<sup>23</sup> As one authority has pointed out, *Arsinoe* is quite short in comparison with other Italianate operas of the period (containing only 37 brief arias compared to the 56 in *Camilla*) and, therefore, probably needed such supplementary attractions to fill out an evening's entertainment;<sup>24</sup> but I would propose that *Arsinoe*'s fellow travelers were not simply padding but the keys to its acceptance on the Drury Lane stage.

One might assume that the acts of the various plays performed with *Arsinoe* were afterpieces to the featured opera, but as one advertisement states, an act of a comedy was "to be perform'd before the Opera begins."<sup>25</sup> A brief examination of one comedy associated with *Arsinoe* will show why the two types were performed together. The fifth act of Centlivre's *Love's Contrivance* is as dramatically inert as any in a Restoration comedy. The central "turn" of the rather simple plot has already occurred in Act IV. The high point of the last act, a humorous scene involving a sham philosopher, has no bearing on the main plot. All that actually happens here is that a cantankerous old father acquiesces to his beautiful daughter's original inclinations to marry and, more important for *Arsinoe*, preparations are made for a musical entertainment to celebrate this happy event. At the end of the play-book, after a command to "let the Diversion begin," is a stage direction for a song to be sung by Richard Leveridge,<sup>26</sup> the premier bass of the

<sup>23</sup> A calendar of the miscellaneous entertainments adjoined to *Arsinoe* follows: 16 January 1705 (its première), singing in Italian and English "before and after the opera"; 25 January, singing and dancing; 19 April, *The Quacks* (a farce); 31 May, *The Quacks*; 7 June, *Love's Contrivance* (Act V only); 10 July, *The Quacks*; 27 October 1705, *The Comical Rivals*; 19 November, before the opera, "some select Scenes taken out of a Comedy"; 30 November, "some select Scenes, taken out of [Vanbrugh's] *Aesop*"; 11 December, one act of *The Old Batchelor*; 18 December, "an Act of a Comedy to be perform'd before the Opera begins"; 21 February 1706, some scenes from *Aesop*; 28 February, Act IV of *The Old Batchelor*; 9 March, *The Young Coquet*, "before the opera"; and 25 June, "with two *Grotesque Dances*." Much of this information is taken from *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above).

<sup>24</sup> Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny" (note 13 above), p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> 18 December 1705. See *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), p. 110.

<sup>26</sup> The song is "Sue to Caelia for the Favor."

Drury Lane company. But for a few performances of this act of Centlivre's play, Leveridge did more than sing a simple song, as he rendered the role of Feraspe, captain of Queen Arsinoe's guards. Thus the function of this act of *Love's Contrivance*, like the fourth act of Congreve's *The Old Batchelor*,<sup>27</sup> was to provide *Arsinoe*, which in Rome or Vienna would have been considered an autonomous music drama, with a rational context in which to exist. Much as the masques of the dramatic operas had been surrounded by loosely related but not usually integral spoken dialogue, England's first Italian opera was introduced by actors, who, once the music began, sat wordless at the side of the stage and watched the masque as did the audience proper.

Vanbrugh and Congreve, the managers of the nearly completed Haymarket theatre, observed Clayton's pathetic opera drawing full houses at Drury Lane, and the two playwrights debated whether or not to follow Rich's lead and to open their house with an Italianate opera. Two months before the opening, Congreve wrote in a 3 February 1705 letter to his friend Joseph Kcally in Dublin that ". . . I know not when the house [*i.e.*, the Haymarket theatre] will open, nor what we shall begin withal; but I believe with no opera. There is nothing settled yet."<sup>28</sup> The continuing success of *Arsinoe* made their decision easier, and on 9 April 1705 the barely completed<sup>29</sup> Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket opened with an Italian pastoral opera, Jakob Greber's *The Loves of Ergasto*. The diminutive opera, probably the first London stage work to be sung completely in Italian, was a costly failure. Roger Fiske believes that *Ergasto* was sung in English by native as well as foreign singers,<sup>30</sup> but the libretto is printed both in Italian (on the verso of an opening) and in English (on the recto), in the manner of the later bilingual pasticcis; and John Downes, the indefatigable prompter, states that it was ". . . Perform'd by a new set of Singers, Arriv'd from Italy; (the worst that e're came from thence) . . . and they being lik'd but indifferently by the Gentry; they in a

<sup>27</sup> This is the only act in any of Congreve's comedies which could conceivably stand alone as a piece of bedroom farce. Its featured characters, Mr. and Mrs. Fondlewife, do not appear in any of the other four acts; it is an interlude of low humor in the middle of Congreve's complex plot.

<sup>28</sup> Rpt. in *William Congreve Letters & Documents*, ed. John C. Hodges (London, 1964), p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> See Milhous, "New Light on Vanbrugh's Haymarket Theatre Project" (note 16 above), p. 156.

<sup>30</sup> *English Theatre Music in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1973), p. 34.

little time marcht back to their own Country."<sup>31</sup> Vanbrugh and Congreve may have imported one or two Italian singers during the frantic preparations for the opening of their theatre,<sup>32</sup> but it is likely that they assembled most of their shabby cast from among the foreigners at the rival Drury Lane theatre. For instance, the "Baroness," who frequently performed at Rich's theatre, probably sang in *The Loves of Ergasto*.<sup>33</sup> If Greber's pastoral was sung completely in Italian, this evidently proved to be a premature move against an audience that would prefer to suffer several years of bilingual concatenations before hearing another opera sung in Italian throughout. Also, the Haymarket's opera, which is much more masque-like than *Arsinoe*, was not provided with a dramaturgical rationale; this undoubtedly contributed to its failure.

The Haymarket company struggled for survival for the rest of the 1704-05 season and for much of the next, while Drury Lane continued to milk *Arsinoe* for large audiences. But on 21 February 1706 the Haymarket finally mounted a successful musical production, not an Italian one, but an English dramatic opera, George Granville's *The British Enchanters*.<sup>34</sup> It had been five years since either theatre had presented a new semi-opera,<sup>35</sup> although the Drury Lane company fre-

<sup>31</sup> *Roscius Anglicanus* (1708), ed. Montague Summers (London [1928]), p. 48. Robert D. Hume, in a review of Fiske's book (*Philological Quarterly*, LIII [1974], 565-567), also doubts that *Ergasto* was sung in English.

<sup>32</sup> See the 25 November-2 December 1704 advertisement in *The Diverting Post*, which states that "Signiora Scorniance, a Famous Italian Singer, who lately came from those Parts . . .," sang at the inaugural concert for the Haymarket, more than four months before the April 1705 opening (rpt. in Milhous, "New Light on Vanbrugh's Haymarket Theatre Project" [note 16 above], pp. 152-153).

<sup>33</sup> Discussed below. Cibber's account of the Haymarket opening is so confused as to be of little help. He writes (*An Apology* [note 15 above], p. 175) that the theatre began "with a Translated Opera, to Italian Musick," but he does not clarify the meaning of "translated" and even forgets the title (calling it *The Triumph of Love*).

<sup>34</sup> The work was announced in *The Diverting Post* on 4 November 1704: "An Opera in French, Set to Musick by Baptista de Lully, and translated into English by the Honorable G. Granville, Esq.; now set to Musick by Mr. Eccles; the Parts are all disposed, and will speedily be perform'd at the New Theatre in Little Lincoln's-Inn-Fields." See Stoddard M. Lincoln, "The Anglicization of *Amadis de Gaul*," *On Stage and Off: Eight Essays in English Literature* (Washington State University Press, 1968), pp. 46-52.

<sup>35</sup> The last new dramatic operas to be mounted were Daniel Purcell and Godfrey Finger's "Alexander the Great," an operatic version of Nathaniel Lee's tragedy, *The Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great* (1677), performed on 20 Feb-

quently mounted revivals of Purcell's famous works even after the initial success of *Arsinoe*. *The British Enchanters* is in the *King Arthur* mold, with heroic spoken dialogue punctuated by grand masques and incantation scenes. Granville used old-fashioned rhymed couplets throughout his drama (thus reverting to Dryden's early Restoration practice), but it "pleas'd the Town as well as any *English Modern Opera*."<sup>36</sup> Its long run of 12 performances between February and May probably prompted the Drury Lane company to revive *King Arthur* on 2 March 1706.<sup>37</sup> The considerable success of *The British Enchanters* in the midst of the foreign onslaught has been overlooked by students of the Italian opera. But the run of this dramatic opera, like the careers of its composers, John Eccles and William Corbett,<sup>38</sup> would soon be curtailed, not simply by an audience clamoring after the new Italian music, but also by politically motivated changes in the organization of the two playhouses.

A month after *The British Enchanters* opened successfully at the Haymarket, Drury Lane mounted its second Italianate opera, Giovanni

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ruary 1701 at Drury Lane, and Finger and Elkanah Settle's *The Virgin Prophetess; or, The Fate of Troy*, performed on 12 May 1701, also at Drury Lane. For more information on "Alexander the Great," see Price, "Eight 'Lost' Restoration Plays 'Found' in Musical Sources," *Music & Letters* (forthcoming 1977).

<sup>36</sup> Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus* (note 31 above), p. 49.

<sup>37</sup> G[iles] J[acob], in *The Poetical Register; or, the Lives and Characters of All the English Poets* (1723), I, 124-125, gives an account of *The British Enchanters*: "My Lord [Granville was later made Lord Lansdowne] had taken an early Dislike to the French and Italian Operas, consisting meerly of Dancing, Singing, and Decorations, without the least Entertainment for any other Sense but the Eye or the Ear. His Lordship therefore in his Attempt, seems to have applied himself to reconcile the Variety and Magnificence essential to Opera, to a more reasonable Model, by introducing something more substantial . . . The Success in the Representation every way answer'd; but all future Entertainments of this kind were at once prevented, by the Division of the Theatre . . ."

<sup>38</sup> Of Eccles' music, only the song in Act III, "Plague us not with idle stories," appears to survive; see Cyrus L. Day and Eleanore Boswell Murrie, *English Song-Books 1651-1702, A Bibliography* (London, 1940), No. 2702. Corbett's complete incidental music is found in *Harmonia Anglicana or The Musick of the English Stage* [1706] (copy in GB Lbm d.24). Cf. Elizabeth Handasyde, *Granville the Polite: The Life of George Granville Lord Lansdowne, 1666-1735* (London, 1933), p. 91: "Unfortunately no record of the music remains, not even the composer's name." Lincoln states ("The Anglicization of *Amadis de Gaul*" [note 34 above], p. 46) that this is the only known collaboration between Granville and Eccles, but see the former's *The She-Gallants* (1696), IV.i, where the song "While Phyliss is drinking" is by Eccles (Day and Murrie, No. 3864).

Bononcini's *Camilla*.<sup>39</sup> This opera is the catalyst which triggered a permanent change in the position of music on the London stage. Performed entirely in English, mostly by a native cast, and with freshly composed English recitatives, *Camilla* was the first full-length, heroic Italian opera mounted in London; it was enormously successful. In *Camilla* the audience found an ideal concoction: the kind of music they most desired, their favorite English singers sharing the stage with a few exotic newcomers, and, perhaps the most important ingredient of all in a theatre in which Congreve and Otway had once woven their stories, a developed, fast-moving, and believable plot, whose absurdities are ameliorated by Bononcini's arias. Unlike *Arsinoe*, *Camilla* is a substantial drama and, therefore, did not need to be prepared by actors playing loose scenes of old comedies, although it was introduced and bade farewell each night by well-known actors who spoke the prologue and epilogue.<sup>40</sup> The actors and playwrights felt more threatened by music than ever, and they bitterly attacked the tastes of the audience and their own managers,<sup>41</sup> particularly Christopher Rich, who was responsible for bringing *Camilla* to the stage.<sup>42</sup> His fellow shareholders in the Drury Lane company complained of his shady financial dealings and apparent disregard for the difficult condition in which his actors now found themselves. In 1706, after *Camilla*'s successful first season, they reported that Rich boasted "Last year that he Lost by his Players what he got by the opera," and that by cooking the books of his "double company" of actors and opera singers, he could conceal the huge profits and thereby avoid paying dividends to the other shareholders.<sup>43</sup> The situation was exacerbated by the singers, who demanded

<sup>39</sup> A full account of this opera is found in Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny" (note 13 above), *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> The prologues and epilogues to *Camilla* are reprinted and discussed in Emmett L. Avery, "Some New Prologues and Epilogues, 1704-1708," *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, V (1965), 461; and in Henry L. Snyder, "The Prologues and Epilogues of Arthur Maynwaring," *Philological Quarterly*, L (1971), 615 and 624-625.

<sup>41</sup> For a selection of these attacks found in prologues, epilogues, and prefaces to contemporary plays, see Price, "Musical Practices in Restoration Plays" (note 2 above), pp. 307-317, and Nicoll, *A History of English Drama* (note 11 above), II, 225-232.

<sup>42</sup> His contract with Nicola Haym for the production is partially printed in Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II [274]-275.

<sup>43</sup> This especially bitter attack on behalf of the shareholders (for a list of them see GB Lbm Add. 20726, fols. 22-23, rpt. in Percy Fitzgerald, *A New History of the English Stage*, I [London, 1882], 271) is in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 59-60.

higher salaries while the actors received lower ones.<sup>44</sup> The first of the three great revolutions of the critical decade was about to happen.

#### THEATRICAL REVOLUTIONS

The history of the next five years of the London theatres is a confused tangle of official orders and counterorders, plots and counterplots. Yet it is essential to know the seemingly prosaic details of the theatrical management in order to understand the ultimate victory of the Italian opera over the English form and the revitalization of spoken drama on the London stage. The most frequently cited account of this period is the autobiography (*Apology*) of Colley Cibber, the actor and playwright — later poet laureate —, who is so brutally satirized by Pope in *The Dunciad*. Cibber's self-serving chronicle, upon which parts of my four diagrams are based, reflects the bias of the beleaguered actors; although his outlines of the three major revolutions are essentially correct, Cibber's explanations of the motivations behind them are naive.

Diagram 1 shows the management of the London playhouses during the 1704–1706 seasons, before the first revolution in the late summer of 1706. At the top of the hierarchy is the Lord Chamberlain, Henry Grey, the Earl of Kent. Endowed with dictatorial powers over the theatres and answerable only to the Queen and her ministers,<sup>45</sup> Kent, a dilatory Chamberlain easily influenced by the rich and powerful, apparently had only a vague understanding of the crises facing his playhouses. Cibber stood in awe of his supposedly Solomon-like orders, but punctuating most of the laureate's facile explanations of the theatrical revolutions discussed below are cautionary remarks indicating that the actors and the lower echelons of management really knew

The undated document states that Rich had been manager for 12 years (since 1693; see Nicoll, *A History* [note 11 above], I, 334–335), and therefore it probably dates from the summer of 1706, when rumors of an imminent change in the organization of the theatres were spreading.

<sup>44</sup> See, e.g., Mrs. Tofts's demands submitted to Rich on 28 January 1706, summarized in Nicoll, *ibid.*, II, 290–291, and discussed in Mollie Sands, "Mrs. Tofts, 1685?–1756," *Theatre Notebook*, XX (1965–66), 105. See also Cibber, *An Apology* (note 15 above), p. 184: ". . . the Patentee of *Drury-Lane* [i.e., Rich] went on in his usual Method of paying extraordinary Prices to Singers, Dancers, and other exotick Performers, which were as constantly deducted out of the sinking Sallaries of his Actors . . ."

<sup>45</sup> For a discussion of the powers of the Lord Chamberlain, see Cibber, *ibid.*, pp. 186–194.

MANAGEMENT OF THE LONDON THEATRES FROM 1704 TO 1710  
1704-1706 Seasons

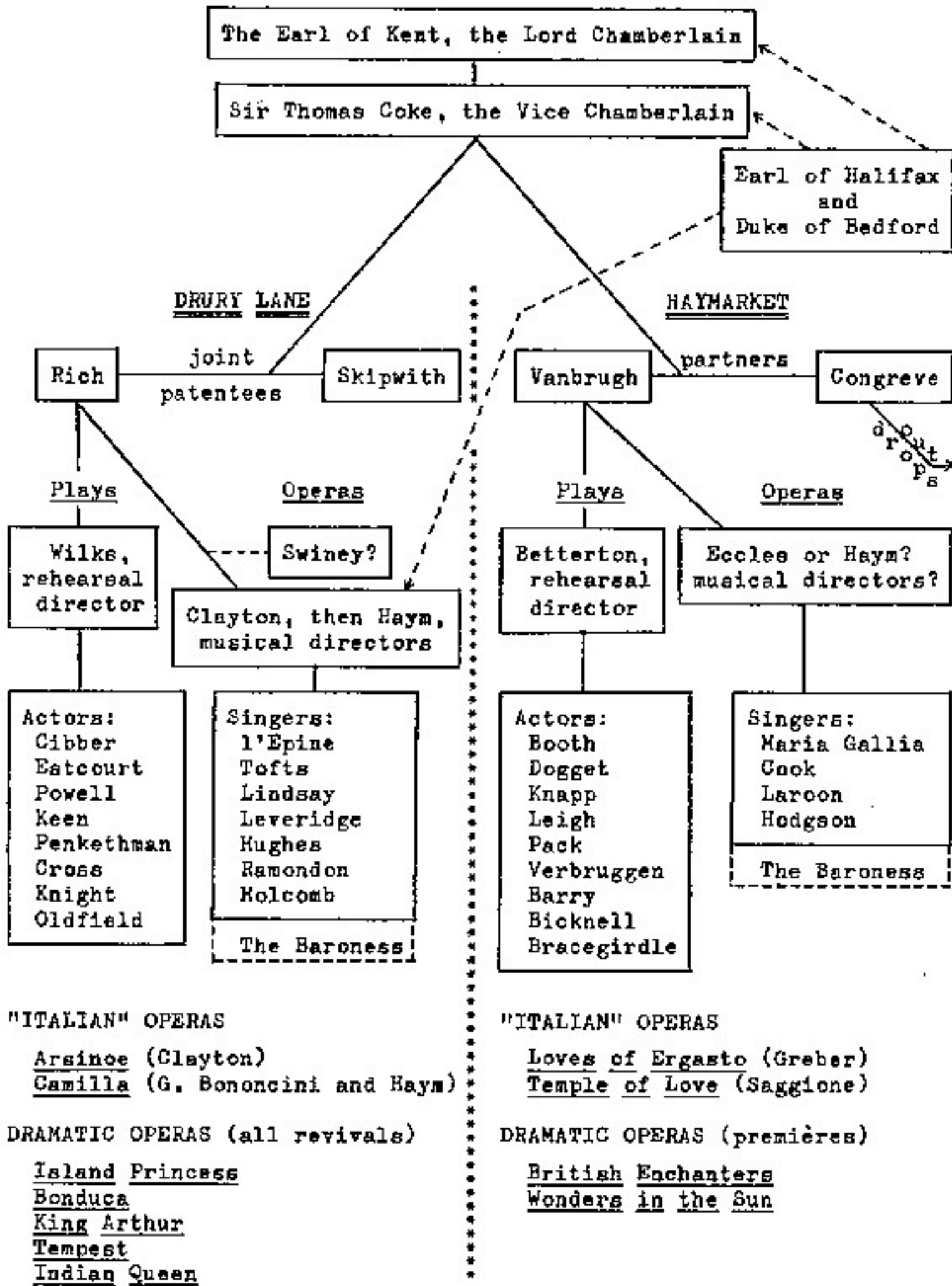


DIAGRAM 1

very little of what took place among the wealthy and powerful to bring about the changes. William Collier, a shareholder in the Drury Lane company, had a more cynical opinion of the orders emanating from the Lord Chamberlain's office; he described them as so confusing and contradictory that one had to violate them in order to learn their meanings.<sup>46</sup> Responsible for the day-to-day running of the theatres and for carrying out the policies of the Earl of Kent was Sir Thomas Coke, the Vice Chamberlain. Vanbrugh described Coke as a "great Lover of Musique and Promoter of Operas" and confided that the Lord Chamberlain left such matters entirely to his assistant.<sup>47</sup> Fortunately, many of Coke's official papers survive, and these documents form the backbone of the following discussion.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>46</sup> See the copy of a 13 September 1709 letter addressed to the actor Barton Booth, in GB Lbm Add. 20726, fol. 33. Booth had inquired whether or not he and his fellow actors should begin acting in defiance of the Lord Chamberlain's order of silence, and Collier replied that the Earl of Kent's secretary had, in fact, refused to give the company permission to act, "but if we did[,] it was agreed . . . that was all we desired & that was the Lord Chamberlains own method, & as I apprehended the only way to satisfie every Body[,] but it's pretty plaine that his [lordship's] methods are not regarded and it is very difficult to knowe who to obey . . ." This letter is appended to a long petition designed to discredit Collier, who replaced Rich as manager of the Drury Lane company in 1709.

<sup>47</sup> In a letter of 11 May 1708, quoted in John Barnard, "Sir John Vanbrugh: Two Unpublished Letters," *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, XXIX (1965-66), 349.

<sup>48</sup> The documents are found principally in four locations: (1) the A. M. Broadley Collection ("The Annals of the Haymarket") in the City of Westminster Public Library, London; see Ronald C. Kern, "Documents Relating to Company Management, 1705-1711," *Theatre Notebook*, XIV (1959-60), 60-65; (2) in Ms. Thr 464.4.15\* of the Harvard Theatre Collection at Houghton Library, Cambridge, Mass.; the largest source of Vice Chamberlain papers, this manuscript, which Sands ("Mrs. Tufts, 1685?-1756" [note 44 above], p. 100) thought to be lost, once belonged to W. H. Cummings, who published selected documents from it in "The Lord Chamberlain and Opera in London, 1700-1740," *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, XL (1913-14), [37]-72; (3) in GB Lbm Add. 38607, "The Winston Theatrical Collection"; this volume, little noticed by musicologists and drama historians, is in an early nineteenth-century hand and contains copies of many of the original documents in both US CAh Thr 464.4.15\* and the Broadley Collection, as well as several pseudo-facsimiles of early eighteenth-century theatrical papers which have not been traced; (4) in US NYP Ms. Drexel 1986, which is similar to GB Lbm Add. 38607, although more corrupt in its readings of the original documents (I am grateful to Professor J. Merrill Knapp for bringing this manuscript to my attention). Professors Robert D. Hume and Judith Milhous are currently preparing an edition of these documents for the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN. I should like to thank them for their many suggestions and criticisms which have improved this study.



As Diagram 1 shows, both the Drury Lane and the Haymarket theatres were in fact double companies, each with a separate troupe for plays and operas, although in practice, of course, the opera singers sang between the acts of plays, while the actors aided the operas with prologues and epilogues and, occasionally, fragments of plays. The Drury Lane company was owned by a group of shareholders, chief among them Christopher Rich, the manager, and Sir Thomas Skipwith, who at this time exerted little of his influence. After the great success of *Camilla* in March 1706, the musical director of this company was probably Nicola Haym, a Roman 'cellist and composer who had adapted Bononcini's opera for the London stage.

It may be misleading to speak of this important musician as a "musical director" in the modern sense, because opera in London was still being produced under the auspices of *playhouses*, not opera companies. But during the 1705-06 season Haym appears to have been in control of the Drury Lane singers and instrumentalists, performers of ever-increasing value. It is not surprising, then, that Haym reported directly to the opera-loving Vice Chamberlain at this time and not to the manager of the theatre, Rich. For example, in a 21 April 1706 letter to Coke, he explains that Margarita de l'Épine cannot sing for the Vice Chamberlain because "she is obliged to Learn ye part of *Camilla* by heart for Tuesday next." He suggests that instead of the soprano he send Johann Pepusch and some "violins."<sup>49</sup> And in a letter written three days earlier, Haym suggests that the Baroness substitute for some indisposed singers at the playhouse that evening.<sup>50</sup> Haym had a special relationship with this mysterious singer, acting as her agent, perhaps even *agent provocateur*. He frequently negotiated her contract at Drury Lane, and even arranged the loan of his prize pupil to Vanbrugh and Congreve for their abortive pastoral opera, *The Loves of Ergasto*. One of the conditions of the momentous *Camilla* contract between Haym and Rich is that, in partial return for adapting Bononcini's opera, the 'cellist be allowed to accompany the Baroness at the rival theatre. Because of the general musical malaise at the Haymarket, Vanbrugh and Congreve could not keep their end of the bargain, and Haym, ever vigilant for managerial shortcomings, issued a stinging complaint to the Lord Chamberlain.<sup>51</sup> The Italian

<sup>49</sup> US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fol. [36] (copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fol. 83).

<sup>50</sup> US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fol. [35] (copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fol. 97).

<sup>51</sup> The complaint, made ostensibly by the Baroness, reveals that the joint managers

musical director was not, however, so protective of his English colleagues, and on the occasion of his having composed an "Ode of discord" for the Vice Chamberlain's private entertainment, he suggests that, since the violin parts are very difficult, his countryman Gasperini should be first, while the usual leader, William Corbett, should play second fiddle.<sup>52</sup> One must not assume that the source of Haym's considerable power was simply a self-professed musical superiority,<sup>53</sup> for he also maintained good English and Italian connections. As the master of the private musical establishment of the powerful Duke of Bedford, Haym obtained many scores and libretti of Italian operas (including those for *Camilla*) for his patron, who played an important role in the Italian victory in London.<sup>54</sup> Bedford and other aristocratic opera-lovers, such as the Earl of Halifax,<sup>55</sup> probably exerted their influence on the malleable Chamberlain as well as on the manager of the Drury Lane theatre. There is proof of such influence for later seasons.

### Revolution I

Diagram 1 reflects an unstable condition. It was financially impossible for the two companies to continue to produce both operas and plays. Congreve had dropped out of the Haymarket partnership by December 1705; he is not forthcoming with details in a 15 December 1705 letter to Keally in Dublin: ". . . so I have nothing to add but only that I have quitted the affair of the Hay-market. You may

had struck an oral bargain with Haym requiring that she sing ten times for 100 guineas "either in the Pastoral [*i.e.*, *The Loves of Ergasto*] with which the house was to be open'd, or in other playes between the Acts . . ." But by the end of the season, the Baroness had sung only five times (the number of times *Ergasto* was performed). Congreve offered to pay the singer 50 guineas for what she had done in order to close the bargain; Haym and his pupil agreed on this sum, but then Congreve backed down, occasioning the 1 March 1706 complaint (printed in Hodges [note 28 above], pp. 113-114).

<sup>52</sup> 6 May 1706; in US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fol. [37].

<sup>53</sup> In a petition submitted by Haym on 12 January 1708, the musician demands that ". . . I have a power to comand all the Musick . . ." and "that I be not considered Less, or made second to any other person of ye Musick, neither as to ye profit, nor any other matter, beliving my self perhaps, not of inferiour merit to any of my Profession now in England, particulary [sic] of ye Foreigners . . ." (US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fol. [38v], copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 98-99).

<sup>54</sup> See Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny" (note 13 above), p. 169, and Gladys Scott Thomson, *The Russells in Bloomsbury, 1669-1771* (London, 1940), pp. 123-128. Haym came to London by 1701.

<sup>55</sup> Halifax also owned a copy of the score of *Camilla*; see Lindgren, *ibid.*

imagine I got nothing by it . . ." <sup>56</sup> Vanbrugh, too, was ready to abandon the project. Rumors of an impending change in the organization of the London playhouses were abroad. Cibber reports that "It was, now, the Town-talk, that nothing but a Union of the two Companies could recover the Stage, to its former Reputation . . ." <sup>57</sup> and Congreve, writing on 30 April 1706, doubts that the Haymarket could survive another season, adding that he has "heard there is to be a Union of the two houses . . ." <sup>58</sup> He may have learned of these efforts from his former colleague Vanbrugh, who during this month was politicking among his aristocratic acquaintances for "an agreement between the two playhouses . . ." <sup>59</sup> The Drury Lane actors were also apparently aware of the proposed reorganization, which they thought would cause them great hardship. In a broadside petition they begged the Lord Chamberlain to stop the plans for uniting the two companies. These players (see Diagram 1) were younger and less experienced than Betterton's distinguished company at the Haymarket and therefore probably feared that when the two troupes were joined, there would be fewer parts for the inexperienced actors. <sup>60</sup> But the

<sup>56</sup> Rpt. in Hodges (note 28 above), p. 38.

<sup>57</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), p. 176.

<sup>58</sup> Hodges (note 28 above), p. 40.

<sup>59</sup> See US NYP Ms. Drexel 1986, fols. 10-10v, a nineteenth-century copy of a 26 April 1706 letter from the Duke of Montague to the Lord Halifax. Montague names the Duchess of Marlborough as his source for this information. I wish to thank Professor Hume for providing me with a transcription of this letter.

<sup>60</sup> The petition is in GB Lbm Burney 938.a.4. There is some question about the date of this important broadside. It is bound in a 1704-05 volume of the Burney newspaper collection, and Fitzgerald (*A New History* [note 43 above], 1, 258-259) implies that it dates from 1708. The list of persons given on the handbill and its subject, however, place it most likely in September 1706. Further advance warning of the Lord Chamberlain's plan is provided by "A Prologue on the propos'd Union of the two Play-Houses," in *The Poetical Courant*, No. 21 (GB Lbm Burney 938.a.4), dated in ink in a contemporary hand, 22 June 1706:

Two different States, Ambitious both, and hold,  
All Free-born Souls, the New House [Haymarket] and  
the Old [Drury Lane],  
Have long contended, and made stout Essays,  
Which shou'd be Monarch, Absolute in Plays.

But now (as busie Heads love something new)  
They wou'd propose an *Union* — Oh! *Mort-dieu*.

If we grow one, then Slavery must ensue

Lord Chamberlain would not be persuaded, and at the end of the long summer vacation in 1706, before the theatres reopened for the season in September, he ordered (or at least condoned) a sweeping reorganization of the theatres. As Diagram 2 shows, most of Rich's principal actors were transferred to the Haymarket, and "for the Future all Operas & other Musicall Entertainm<sup>ts</sup>" could be performed only at Drury Lane. Furthermore, the Lord Chamberlain restricted the Haymarket to plays without musical episodes and dancing and transferred all musicians and dancers in the Haymarket company to Drury Lane, leaving only a small band of instrumentalists to perform the overtures and act tunes for plays.<sup>61</sup>

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To Poets, Players, and, my Friends, to you.  
 For to one House confin'd, you then must Praise  
 Both cursed Actors, and confounded Plays . . ."

<sup>61</sup> The date of the reorganization is ascertained from Congreve's 10 September 1706 letter quoted below. The official Lord Chamberlain order does not survive (if there ever was an "official" order), but an undated, unsigned "Play house Order of Separation" is found in the Vice Chamberlain papers (US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fols. [15-16], with a nineteenth-century copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 45-46); this is perhaps a draft or an office copy, but it clearly pertains to this season. As it has not been reproduced elsewhere, it follows in full:

"Whereas by y<sup>e</sup> division of y<sup>e</sup> Comedians into two distinct Companys it has been found that the players have not sufficient subsistence for their Encouragem<sup>t</sup> & that the Plays are not always acted to y<sup>e</sup> best advantage and whereas the charge of maintaining Comedians & performers of Operas in the Same house is *now* become too great to be continued Therefore for the better regulation & support of y<sup>e</sup> Theatres I do hereby order & require That for the Future all Operas & other Musicall Entertainm<sup>ts</sup> (& dancing) [erased or smudged out] only at the Theatre in Drury lane or Dorsett garden under ye Direction of y<sup>e</sup> Managers thereof w<sup>th</sup> leave to receive & Employ any performers in Musick Dancing &c they shall judge necessary and do hereby strictly charge & forbid y<sup>e</sup> Managers of y<sup>e</sup> said Theatres here after to represent any comedies Tragedies or other Theatrical Entertainm<sup>ts</sup> that are not sett to Musick upon pain of being silenced for breach of this my order

I doe hereby like wise give leave to the Managers of her Majesties Theatre in y<sup>e</sup> Haymarkett to receive admitt & Entertain any Players & Actors of Tragedy or Comedy &c<sup>o</sup> tho they were before Entertaind in y<sup>e</sup> Play house att Drury lane &c<sup>a</sup> att the same time strictly charging & requiring them not to perform any Musicall Entertainments &c<sup>a</sup> upon the Stage or to receive into their Service any dancers or performers in Musick other then such Instrumentall musick as are not Employ'd in ye Operas & are necessary for such Entertainm<sup>ts</sup>, upon y<sup>e</sup> like pain of being silenced for breach of this order. Given under our hand & seal."

Since the Drury Lane company, now the only theatre permitted to produce opera, continued to act plays during the 1706-07 season, the clause forbidding Rich's company "to represent any comedies Tragedies or other Theatrical Entertainm<sup>ts</sup> that are not sett to Musick" might seem to contradict the theatrical records for this

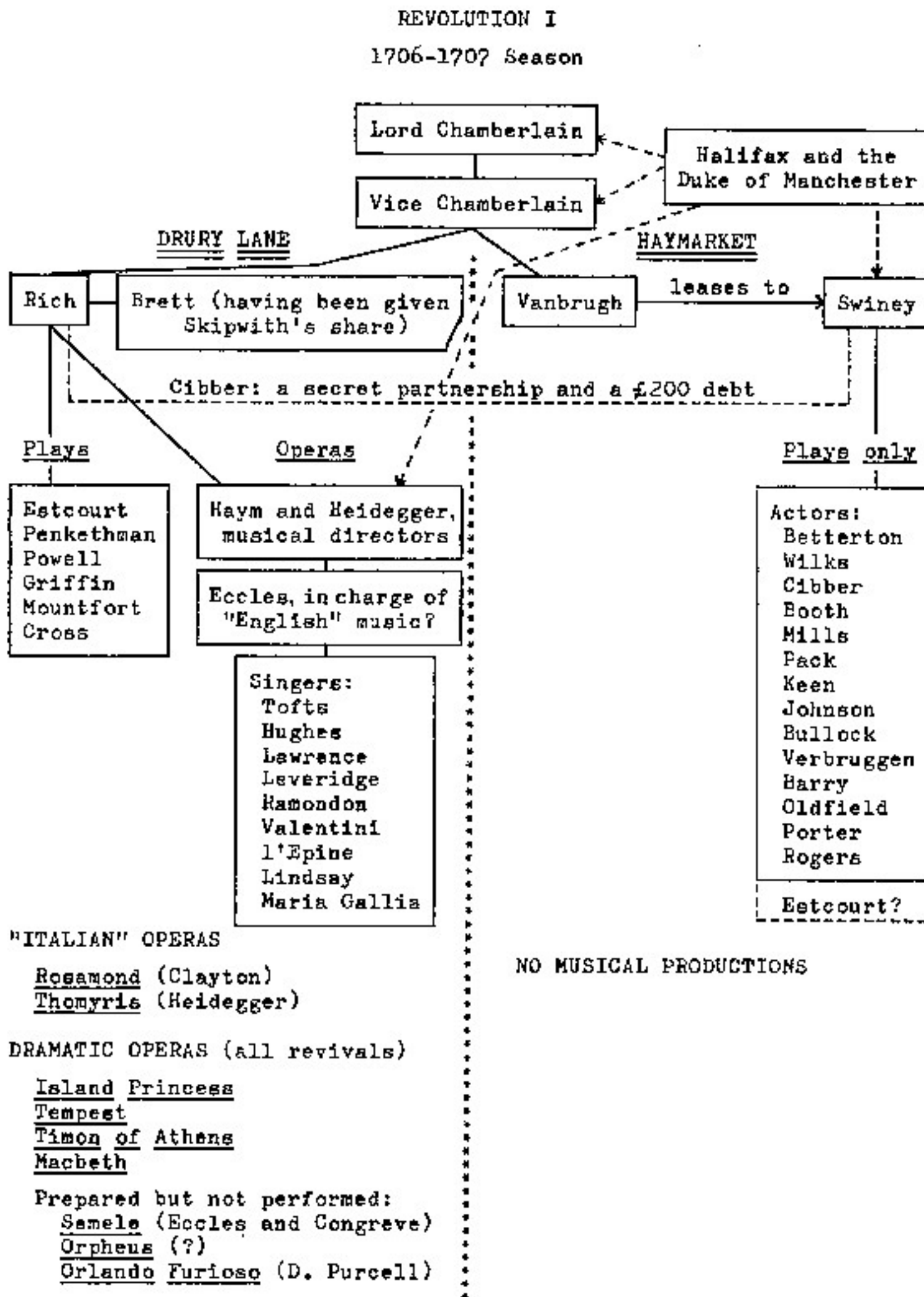


DIAGRAM 2

There are conflicting reports of what precipitated this reorganization. At about this time, Vanbrugh leased the Haymarket theatre to Owen Swiney. Cibber reports that the lease gave Swiney complete control, the new manager being required to pay Vanbrugh only £5 per day of acting.<sup>62</sup> But as is shown below, Vanbrugh remained much involved with the management of his theatre. Cibber was puzzled by this action, because Swiney had been closely associated with Rich at Drury Lane: Swiney probably oversaw the production of *Camilla*, for example.<sup>63</sup> Why would Vanbrugh enter into an agreement with an agent of his arch-enemy Rich? Cibber saw only one explanation: that the entire transfer was a collusion between Swiney and Rich, the protégé apparently owing his master £200.<sup>64</sup> But why would the greedy Rich allow his best actors to be sent to the rival theatre, even if he were allowed to keep the most profitable segment of his company, the opera? Cibber reports that Rich did in fact resist the union at first, because the manager feared that his many creditors and investors would be able to see his large profits more clearly after the company was divided.<sup>65</sup> Cibber's account is corroborated by a document written in support of the other investors in the Drury Lane company, who believed that ". . . if he [Rich] has the Opera Single & entire ye Profit must be so Certain and ye accounts will be in so . . . Plain a Compass that 'twill be impossible for him to deceive the People any Longer . . ." <sup>66</sup> But when Rich saw the possibility of controlling both theatres through his protégé Swiney, he happily conformed to the Lord Chamberlain's plan, or at least this is what Cibber would have us believe.<sup>67</sup> Congreve thought otherwise. The playwright, who had resigned his partnership in the Haymarket but who still had well-informed sources, reports in a letter of 10 September 1706 that Rich was furious at the Lord Chamberlain's order, which Congreve clearly

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season. However, the phrase "sett to Musick" did not refer just to operas but also to spoken plays with songs, masques, dances, and *entr'actes* — in other words, the kind of heterogeneous entertainments that Rich exploited during this period.

<sup>62</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), p. 178.

<sup>63</sup> See Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny" (note 13 above), p. 172: "Swiney signed the dedication in the 1706 libretto and therefore probably received whatever money was paid for the libretto by the printer and by the dedicatee."

<sup>64</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), pp. 177-179.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> GB Lbm Add. 38607, fol. 60.

<sup>67</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), pp. 177-179.

saw as a move to improve the condition of the actors oppressed by the evil Rich:

The play-houses have undergone another revolution; and Swinney, with Wilks, Mrs. Olfield, Pinkethman, Bullock, and Dicky ["Jubilee Dicky" Norris?],<sup>68</sup> are come over to the Hay-market. Vanbrugh resigns his authority to Swinney, which occasioned the revolt. Mr Rich complains and rails like Volpone when counterplotted by Mosca. My Lord Chamberlain approves and ratifies the desertion; and the design is, to have plays only at the Hay-market, and operas only at Covent Garden [*i.e.*, Drury Lane]. I think the design right to restore acting, but the houses are misapplied, which time may change.<sup>69</sup>

The effects of the 1706 reorganization, which at first appeared to please almost no one, were gradually felt. For the first time in years the actors were now being paid regularly by Swinney at the Hay-market.<sup>70</sup> Rich, who had jealously guarded his right to produce both plays and operas, gave more performances of Italianate operas than ever before. And using the skeleton crew of actors left by the transfer (listed at the far left in Diagram 2), he also produced at least four revivals of old musical plays. But this sweeping change which Congreve saw as "right to restore acting" victimized England's last major dramatic opera and nipped in the bud the finest, all-sung English opera of the period.

In compliance with the Lord Chamberlain's order, the Haymarket theatre retained a modest musical establishment, and new act music was even commissioned for George Farquhar's successful comedy, *The Beaux Stratagem*, which opened on 8 March 1707.<sup>71</sup> But no elaborate musical episodes were possible in the plays mounted at the Haymarket during the 1706-07 season. Granville's *The British Enchanters* had been the new theatre's only successful musical production, but the 1706 revolution now prevented it from being performed, because it

<sup>68</sup> Hodges (note 28 above) identifies "Dicky" as Congreve's friend Richard Estcourt. Since Estcourt was not transferred to the Haymarket at this time, however, Norris, who did change companies, seems a better guess. I am grateful to Judith Milhous for this observation.

<sup>69</sup> Hodges, *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>70</sup> Cibber, *An Apology* (note 15 above), pp. 181-182.

<sup>71</sup> The music is by Jean-Claude Gillier (in GB Lbm g.15); see Price, "Handel and the Alchemist," *The Musical Times*, CXVI (1975), 787-788. Further evidence that the Haymarket maintained musicians is offered by a report written by Swinney for the Lord Chamberlain to explain that he had refused to let a young musician into the theatre orchestra because he was utterly unqualified (see Nicoll, *A History* [note 11 above], II, 291).

requires considerable musical forces. This did not, however, deter Swincy from announcing a performance of the work on 9 December 1706.<sup>72</sup> Granville saw the advertisements and wrote an outraged letter to the Vice Chamberlain: ". . . the Players in the Hay Market have put forth Bills for acting the British Enchanters tomorrow without Singing and Dancing . . . which I can deem no other than a design to murder the Child of my Brain . . ." <sup>73</sup> Granville, later elevated to Lord Lansdowne, asked his friend at court to suppress the performance. The dramatic opera was never again performed with its musical scenes, although later in the season, Granville was apparently persuaded to let it be staged "with all the Original Scenes, Machines, and Decorations."<sup>74</sup>

A greater tragedy for English music drama resulted from the 1706 Lord Chamberlain order, however. With a monopoly on opera, Rich planned several new productions for the 1706-07 season. Among these were English semi-operas as well as Italianate pasticcis. Daniel Purcell was working on an "Orlando Furioso," adapted from Quinault, and the sober critic and playwright John Dennis had concocted a masque of "Orpheus and Euridice" that was set to music by an anonymous composer.<sup>75</sup> Nothing came of these essays in native music drama; they were presumably pushed aside by *Thomyris*, one of several Italianate operas being adapted for the London stage at the time.<sup>76</sup> Yet another opera was composed for this watershed season: John Eccles and William Congreve's *Semele*, the only English opera of worth to survive from the critical decade.<sup>77</sup> Considering its fine quality and lack of Italian traits, it could perhaps have signaled a new direction for an English baroque opera tradition. Since Congreve was a close friend of Vanbrugh and a former partner in the Haymarket venture, scholars have assumed that *Semele* must have been designed for Van-

<sup>72</sup> See *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), p. 134.

<sup>73</sup> GB Lbm Add. 38607, fol. 51. The letter, superscribed "Cockpit Monday Night," is undated; since the dramatic opera was advertised for the following evening, then canceled and replaced with a standard repertory piece (*Hamlet*), this is the most likely date for Granville's complaint.

<sup>74</sup> See *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), pp. 143 and 145. There is no evidence that these last performances contained any music.

<sup>75</sup> See *The Muses Mercury* (January 1707), p. 11.

<sup>76</sup> See *The Muses Mercury* (September and December 1707), pp. 218 and 288.

<sup>77</sup> GB Lcm Ms. 183. For a discussion of *Semele*, see Stoddard M. Lincoln, "The First Setting of Congreve's 'Semele,'" *Music & Letters*, XLIV (1963), 103-117, and Winton Dean's response to the article, same journal, p. 417.



brugh's Haymarket theatre.<sup>78</sup> But *The Muses Mercury*, a monthly periodical devoted to the arts, reports in January 1707 that Eccles' opera was ready for rehearsal at Drury Lane;<sup>79</sup> and a document in the Vice Chamberlain's papers confirms that Congreve and Eccles had come to an oral agreement with their old arch-rival, Rich, to have their opera produced at Drury Lane, which, of course, had the opera monopoly.<sup>80</sup> Witnessing this dubious agreement was the influential Earl of Halifax, the Lord Treasurer. Halifax was a generous patron of the arts, native as well as foreign, and during this season he was engaged in an unsuccessful project to bring the creator of *Camilla*, Giovanni Bononcini, from Vienna to London.<sup>81</sup> While he and his influential friends courted the continental opera composer, Congreve's *Semele* sank into oblivion. It was never performed and probably never even rehearsed. Instead, *Thomyris* began its long run in April 1707. It is not known what role Rich played in selecting operas for his Drury Lane theatre nor the extent of the pressure put on him by the Lord Chamberlain and the patrons, but the balance had finally swung decisively in the Italian direction: English music drama, both the old Purcellian semi-opera and a new, all-sung type which Eccles showed himself capable of mastering, was dead.

<sup>78</sup> E.g., *ibid.*, pp. 105-106, and W. Barclay Squire, "Handel's 'Semele,'" *The Musical Times*, LXVI (1925), 138.

<sup>79</sup> Pp. 10-11: "The Opera of *Semelé*, for which we are Indebted to Mr. C—— c is Set by Mr. Eccles, and ready to be Practic'd, and from the Excellence of those two Masters, in their several Kinds, the Town may very well expect to be Charm'd, as much as Poetry and Musick can Charm them." Lincoln ("The First Setting of Congreve's 'Semele'" [note 77 above], p. 105) incorrectly ascribes this passage to the December 1707 issue, an error which weakens his speculation about the fate of this opera.

<sup>80</sup> US CAH Thr 464.4.15\*, fols. [68-69v], with a copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 51-53. This important document, written in February or March 1707, attempts to clarify several agreements between Rich and his various pasticcio makers, namely J. J. Heidegger (*Thomyris*), Valentini Urbani (*Love's Triumph*), Clayton (*Arsinoe* and *Rosamond*), and Haym (*Camilla* and, later, *Pyrrhus and Demetrius*). The date of this document is ascertained from internal evidence ("Mr Clayton's opera call'd Rosamond is finished & in all Probability may be perform'd in 3 Weeks time, the parts being getting up by Mr Rich his performers"; it was first performed on 4 March 1707). The last paragraph pertains to *Semele*:

"Besides my Lord Chamberlain knows that Mr Rich was in a manner Engag'd in the presence of himselfe & my Lord Hallyfax to perform an Opera written by Mr Congreve & sett by Mr Eccles before ever Mr Headacre [*i.e.*, Heidegger] offered his Opera [*Thomyris*] to Mr Rich. who thinks himselfe hardly used to putt by other good Bargains meerly for Mr Headacres Interest & profit."

<sup>81</sup> See Lindgren, "A Bibliographic Scrutiny" (note 13 above), pp. 228 ff.

But Rich's operatic empire had begun to crumble. His relation with Swiney, the new manager of the Haymarket, ruptured. The former protégé had apparently paid off his debt to Rich and showed no desire to continue any private agreements.<sup>82</sup> The collusion suspected by Cibber had apparently occurred between Vanbrugh and Swiney, not Rich and Swiney. The Earl of Halifax, who had earlier taken a keen interest in Rich's operatic productions, now turned against the old manager and helped the Haymarket company stage a successful series of revivals of famous plays.<sup>83</sup> Halifax's rekindled interest in Shakespeare may be an advance warning of the next theatrical revolution, one which depended upon a solvent Haymarket theatre and a bankrupt Rich. More serious difficulties, however, came from within Rich's own organization, as he began to have major disagreements with his singers, dancers, and orchestral musicians. Katherine Tofts, in particular, England's first great operatic soprano, felt that Rich had cheated her out of salary,<sup>84</sup> and she and other singers petitioned the Lord Chamberlain for allegedly unpaid fees.<sup>85</sup> The crisis flared into the public view when on 15 November 1707 of this stormy season a performance of *Camilla* had to be canceled, because Mrs. Tofts and Margarita de l'Épine refused to sing; they now considered their contracts with Rich to be void.<sup>86</sup> But the critical turn of events which finally stripped Rich of his monopoly to perform operas took place

<sup>82</sup> Cibber, *An Apology* (note 15 above), pp. 181-183.

<sup>83</sup> See Cibber, *op. cit.*, and *The Muses Mercury* (January 1707), p. 12: *Julius Caesar*, e.g., "was Play'd at the Desire of some Persons of Quality, who have contributed 400 l. by a Subscription to Support the Dramatick Muse . . ."

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., her complaint against Rich summarized in Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II, 290, and Kern, "Documents Relating to Company Management, 1705-1711" (note 48 above), p. 63.

<sup>85</sup> This bitter petition against Rich is in US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fols. [77-78], and in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 77-80; Cummings prints it in "The Lord Chamberlain and Opera" (note 48 above), pp. 42-44. Earlier in the same year (5 March 1707) Rich had been temporarily silenced by the Lord Chamberlain for disobeying an order regarding the speaking of a banned prologue. See Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II, 282.

<sup>86</sup> A report in *The Post-Boy* of 13-15 November 1707 (rpt. in *The London Stage 1700-1729* [note 10 above], p. 158) states that the women will not perform because there are "no Articles of Agreement between them and the Managers . . ." The entry in *The London Stage* implies that the performance did take place, but *The Muses Mercury* (October 1707—written in November), p. 240, is specific: "The Theatre in *Drury-lane* has not been much made use of this Season. There was a great Expectation of an Audience for the Opera of *Camilla* last Saturday [this was to be the first opera performance of the season], and they were all forc'd to return

among powerful aristocrats, who thought the interests of Italian opera in London better served by Vanbrugh and Swincy at the Haymarket.

### Revolution II

As early as September 1707 there had been rumors of a plot to return opera to the Haymarket. The anonymous editor of *The Muses Mercury* may have known something of the behind-the-scenes plans. He is usually meticulous in his reports of rumored opera productions, often correcting minor misstatements in subsequent issues. He also respected the confidentiality of his obviously well-placed informants. In the September 1707 issue (p. 218) he reports that several operas are being prepared but that the one "in the greatest Forwardness" is Scarlatti's *La Didone Delirante*.<sup>87</sup> "We have Reason to know something of this Opera, but that Reason hinders us from Saying any more of it." Perhaps he had been told of a plan to rehearse operas surreptitiously at the Haymarket. On 1 December of the same season, the Lord Chamberlain gave Rich's best Drury Lane instrumentalists permission to rehearse an opera secretly at the Haymarket.<sup>88</sup> The theatre, supposedly reserved exclusively for plays, even announced a performance of *Thomyris* for a week later, but this apparently never happened.<sup>89</sup> Rich's monopoly on opera had been thoroughly undermined, and he promptly dismissed the defecting musicians and stopped his singers' salaries.<sup>90</sup> The production of opera at Drury Lane lurched to a halt.<sup>91</sup>

In the middle of the second revolution of the critical decade, the Lord Chamberlain issued a sweeping order which again reorganized the London theatres, as shown by Diagram 3. The order, issued on 31 December 1707 — the same day that Kent had received word of the stalemate between Rich and his musicians — requires that all singers, dancers, and instrumentalists be transferred to the Haymarket,

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as they came; the Singers, the Women, and Foreigners especially, refusing to sing, without being secur'd such exorbitant Rates ev'ry Night for the whole Season . . ."

<sup>87</sup> See pp. 218 and 288. This opera does not appear to survive. The editor reports that "'Tis entirely Scarlati's" and that it was adapted by Richard Leveridge, the singer, who "has the good Fortune to be an *Englishman* . . ."

<sup>88</sup> Printed in Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II, 285.

<sup>89</sup> See *The Daily Courant*, 8 December 1707 (rpt. in *The London Stage 1700-1729* [note 10 above], p. 160).

<sup>90</sup> See the petition mentioned in note 85 above.

<sup>91</sup> The last Drury Lane opera of the season was given on 18 December 1707 (see *The London Stage 1700-1729* [note 10 above], p. 161).

REVOLUTION II  
After 10 January 1708

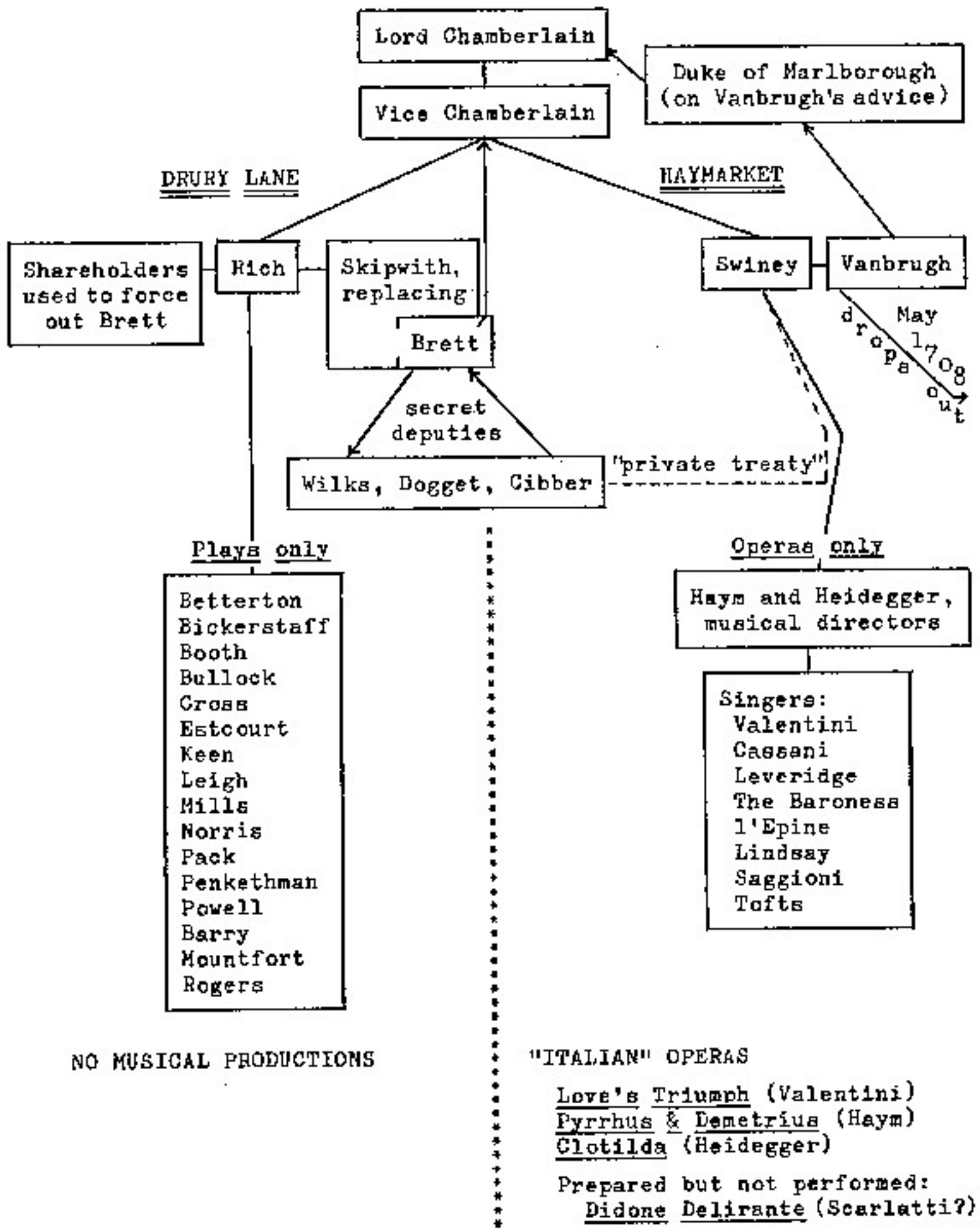


DIAGRAM 3

where (beginning on 10 January 1708) only operas could be performed, and that all actors should report back to Drury Lane.<sup>92</sup> This order, which left only musicians at the Haymarket, created London's first theatre devoted exclusively to opera.

By virtually all accounts of this period, the complete separation of musicians and actors was satisfactory to both parties, although the actors, again under the thumb of the despised Rich, did not immediately see its benefits. Cibber, who considered the action the turning point in the recovery of his profession into a golden age, reports that Swiney was given sole control of the Haymarket opera.<sup>93</sup> But the Vice Chamberlain documents clearly show Vanbrugh to be in charge during the first few difficult months of 1708.<sup>94</sup> In fact, in a 24 February letter Vanbrugh takes credit for the change in management, stating that he exerted his influence in the highest places. He writes to the Earl of Manchester, at the time Ambassador Extraordinary to Venice: ". . . I got the Duke of Marlborough to put an end to the play-house factions, by engaging the Queen to exert her authority, by the means of which, the actors are all put under the Patent at Covent Garden house, and the operas are established at the Haymarket . . ." He adds a word of encouragement for Manchester, whose unofficial duties in Italy included scouting singers and opera composers for possible service in London: "[the separation of dramatic forces is] to the general liking of the whole town, and both [operas and plays] go on in a very successful manner, without disturbing one another."<sup>95</sup> Vanbrugh must have felt it politic to paint a rosy picture for the ambassador, because despite Marlborough's influence, the Queen's compliance, and the Vice Chamberlain's love and encouragement of Italian opera, the Haymarket theatre was in a financially precarious position for the early months of 1708. Vanbrugh's chief difficulties

<sup>92</sup> In GB Lbm Add. 20726, fols. 36-36v, printed in Philip Olleson, "Vanbrugh and Opera at the Queen's Theatre, Haymarket," *Theatre Notebook*, XXVI (1971-72), 95-96. The wording of this document is similar to the 1706 Lord Chamberlain "order" reproduced in note 61.

<sup>93</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), p. 212: "Swiney their sole Director was prosperous . . ."

<sup>94</sup> See Olleson, "Vanbrugh and Opera" (note 92 above), pp. 96-98, and various documents in GB Lbm Add. 38607, e.g., fol. 3 (proposes alternative ways of paying Valentini, Tofts, Margarita, Dieupart, Haym, and Pepusch); fol. 58 (a letter of 14 May [1708] concerning the salaries of various opera singers); Vanbrugh's original letter is in the Huntington Library, Ms. 6833.

<sup>95</sup> Rpt. in Olleson, *ibid.*, p. 96.

were the salary demands of the singers and a fear that the devious Rich was counterplotting. A letter from Vanbrugh to Coke graphically illustrates both of these worries; it almost certainly dates from 20 January 1708, little more than a week after the Lord Chamberlain's order took effect:<sup>96</sup>

Tuesday night

I endeavour'd twice today to wait on you—I hope you can spare an hour to morrow, that some Conclusion may be made with these singers and musick; for without your aid, nothing can be done with 'em. 'There was but £150. last time and £120. to night. 'Tis impossible to go thorough with it, if the Performers are not reduc'd to Reason. I have appointed severall of 'em to attend you to morrow—I'll likewise wait on you about ten a Clock and shew you what I have drawn up, w<sup>ch</sup> I think is all can possibly be offer'd em. There will be an other misfortune, a great one if not nip'd in the Bud. I mean musick meetings. There's one given out to morrow at York Buildings, and the Bills larger & much more remarkable than usuall. I'm told, (and believe) Rich is in the Bottom on't. But I hope you'll move My L<sup>d</sup> Cham<sup>b</sup>: for an Order to stop their Performances. Which will be a great means to make our musicians both accept reasonable sallarys and be carefull in their Business.

Apparently heeding the playwright's advice, the Lord Chamberlain canceled the York Buildings concert.<sup>97</sup> Mr. Rich, stripped of his right to perform operas and fighting his last battle for managerial control of the Drury Lane theatre, could still be a thorn in Vanbrugh's side.

Cibber's account of the momentous reorganization of December 1707 differs considerably from Vanbrugh's, and since it involves people at the lower echelons of authority, it is probably ingenuous. As Diagram 2 shows, Skipwith, one of the main shareholders in the Drury Lane company, gave his shares outright to Henry Brett, a close friend of Cibber's, in the early autumn of 1707.<sup>98</sup> The reasons for the transfer are not altogether clear; apparently Skipwith had lost interest in the financially troubled company and had grown weary of battling with the chief patentee. According to Cibber, Brett took an active role in the running of the theatre upon receipt of Skipwith's shares.

<sup>96</sup> In New York, Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, Ms. 117, printed in Arthur R. Huseboe, "Vanbrugh: Additions to the Correspondence," *PQ*, LIII (1974), 136-137. Apparently unknown to Huseboe is the copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 55-56.

<sup>97</sup> This is convincingly shown by Huseboe, *ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>98</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), pp. 199-208. According to a document printed in Fitzgerald, *A New History* (note 43 above), II, [443], the transfer was made on 6 October 1707.

He angered Rich by insisting that the actors be paid regular salaries,<sup>99</sup> and, more important, "he made use of the Intimacy he had with the Vice-Chamberlain to assist his Scheme of this intended Union . . . ,"<sup>100</sup> that is, the December 1707 revolution, for which Vanbrugh also takes credit. But Brett's stint as a shareholder in the Drury Lane company was short-lived. When the financial condition of that theatre began to improve after the reorganization, Skipwith decided to reclaim his shares. Rich was probably behind this maneuver (shown in Diagram 3), because he enlisted the aid of several minor shareholders to help force Brett out of the company.<sup>101</sup> But before his ouster, Brett appointed three influential actors, John Wilks, Thomas Dogget, and Cibber,<sup>102</sup> as his secret deputies with managerial responsibilities, a move designed to split Rich's company and to bring eventual stability to the London theatres. Sometime during the 1707-08 season, Swiney, the titular manager of the Haymarket theatre, took the three actors into a secret partnership,<sup>103</sup> thus laying the groundwork for the third revolution of the critical decade.

<sup>99</sup> Documentation of Brett's involvement with the Drury Lane company is scarce, but an undated letter from him to the Vice Chamberlain (in US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fol. [64]) shows him pleading the case of an actress:

"I hope this will find you in a disposition to suffer Mrs Bradshaw to Play upon the terms she has agreed on w<sup>th</sup> Mr Rich. She has convince'd me she left Mr Vanbrug for reasons that will very well excuse her, and at least if you shou'd [severely?] think there's no room for favour to her as a Player, I hope you will joine with me in not being able to refuse her any thing as Mrs Bradshaw. if I have been too solicitous to you in this affair, I hope you'll forgive me for preferring her interest and the interest of y<sup>e</sup> House to any other consideration . . .

Hen: Brett"

Mrs. Bradshaw is recorded as a member of the Drury Lane company for the 1707-08 and 1708-09 seasons; see *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), pp. 154 and 176.

<sup>100</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), p. 207.

<sup>101</sup> See Cibber, *ibid.*, pp. 212-214, and Fitzgerald, *A New History* (note 43 above), II, 444-445.

<sup>102</sup> On 31 March 1708. For a discussion of this appointment, see *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber*, ed. Robert W. Lowe (London, 1889), II, 56, n. 1. Anne Oldfield was originally named by Brett as one of the deputies. But as Cibber reports in *An Apology*, p. 220 (Fone ed., note 15 above), "Dogget, who had no Objection to her Merit, insisted that our Affairs could never be upon a secure Foundation, if there was more, than one Sex admitted to the Management of them." She was accordingly eased out of the group, a move softened by a handsome long-term contract with her future manager, Swiney, dated 21 April 1709 (see Nicoll, *A History* [note 11 above], II, 286).

<sup>103</sup> See Nicoll, *ibid.*, II, 284.

At the end of the 1707-08 season, with the Italian opera firmly in the hands of Swiney at the Haymarket, Vanbrugh finally dropped out as an active participant in the managerial struggles. On 11 May 1708 he writes: "I have parted with my whole concern to M<sup>r</sup> Swiney; only reserving my Rent: So that he is entire Possessor of the Opera And most People think, will manage it better than any body."<sup>104</sup> But Vanbrugh retained an interest in his theatre for several years, as he continued to give Swiney advice, and as late as November 1713 he provided the Vice Chamberlain with an account of the location and value of the Haymarket stock (scenery, costumes, etc.).<sup>105</sup>

The December 1707 reorganization, like the first in 1706, was detrimental to English music drama. G[iles] J[acob], a perceptive chronicler of the early eighteenth-century London stage, bluntly expresses what other champions of the English dramatic opera must have believed to be the reason for the Lord Chamberlain's new order: "for the better Encouragement of the *Italian Operas*, at that time the prevailing Passion of the Town."<sup>106</sup> Drury Lane, formerly the home of Henry Purcell's stage works, no longer had the musical forces to present even a simple play with incidental songs,<sup>107</sup> while the Haymarket, now reserved exclusively for Italian opera, had no actors and only two or three English singers with whom to mount a dramatic opera. This form, which had begun with Shadwell's 1674 version of *The Tempest*, ended in 1706 with Granville's *The British Enchanters*.<sup>108</sup> One native prima donna, Mrs. Tofts, was evidently unaware

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Olleson, "Vanbrugh and Opera" (note 92 above), p. 99, and in Barnard, "Sir John Vanbrugh: Two Unpublished Letters" (note 47 above), p. 349.

<sup>105</sup> See GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 40-41 and 56-57.

<sup>106</sup> In *The Poetical Register*, I, 125.

<sup>107</sup> Drury Lane apparently retained only a small orchestra, as the Haymarket had done when Rich's theatre held the opera monopoly. Musicians would have been needed, for instance, when Thomas Baker's comedy, *The Fine Lady's Airs: Or, an Equipage of Lovers* (1709), opened at Drury Lane on 14 December 1708, with incidental music composed by John Barrett (in GB Lbm g.15, "M<sup>r</sup> Barretts Musick in the Comedy call'd the Ladys fine Aires [sic] for Violins and Hoboys").

<sup>108</sup> This was not, however, the last dramatic opera to have a première. Thomas Durfey's *Wonders in the Sun, or, The Kingdom of the Birds; A Comick Opera*, "With great Variety of Songs in all kinds, set to Musick by several of the most Eminent Masters of the Age" (1706), opened at the Haymarket on 5 April 1706 and had five performances before closing on 10 April. For many of the songs in this unsuccessful work, see Day and Murrie, *English Song-Books* (note 38 above), Nos. 1212, 1772, 1891, 2223, 2499, 2742, 2950, 3478, 3622, 3735, and 3872. The incidental music by John Smith is found in GB Lbm g.15. One more dramatic opera



of just how restrictive the new order would be: among her four demands in a contract submitted c. December–January 1707–08 is that she “not be debar’d singing at a Play w<sup>ch</sup> is coming out upon condition it does not interfere w<sup>th</sup> an Opera.”<sup>109</sup> Someone has marked this item with a cross, perhaps to remind Mrs. Tofts that plays could no longer be produced at her new theatre, the Haymarket. The Italian bilingual pasticcio now reigned as the only type of music drama on the London stage. Purcell’s dramatic works enjoyed a resurgence of popularity two seasons later, but no new dramatic operas were offered during this period.

### Revolution III

The next major change in the London theatrical organizations was a natural result of the various designs set in motion by the December 1707 order. Rich quarreled with his actors over how much they should be paid for their benefit plays, and he even ignored the Lord Chamberlain’s order which decided in favor of the actors,<sup>110</sup> a disobedience which led to his downfall. Again Kent condoned private agreements prejudicial to Rich before actually issuing an official order, as he allowed Swiney and the three actor/managers to enlist players for an eventual secession from the Drury Lane company.<sup>111</sup> Rich was in a very low condition when in the early part of the 1708–09 season he tried to placate his actors by appointing some of them as deputy managers, a desperate move probably designed to counteract Brett’s assignment of his authority to Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber. This futile act is alluded to in “A Long Vacation Prologue Writ by Mr. [Thomas] B[a]k[e]r; and spoke by Mr. Es[tcour]t, at the *Theatre-Royal* in *Drury Lane*,” apparently during September 1708.<sup>112</sup> In a passage

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was published, in 1709: *Alarbas*, “Written by a Gentleman of Quality.” Apparently it was never performed.

<sup>109</sup> Reproduced in Sands, “Mrs. Tofts, 1685?–1756” (note 44 above), Pl. 2.

<sup>110</sup> These disagreements are summarized in Cibber, *An Apology* (note 15 above), pp. 214–223. For another account, told from Rich’s point of view, see GB Lbm Add. 20726, fols. 29–29v.

<sup>111</sup> E.g., Swiney made a contract with the actress Mary Porter before Rich was silenced and before actors were allowed to return to the Haymarket (see Nicoll, *A History* [note 11 above], II, 286).

<sup>112</sup> Rpt. and discussed in Avery, “Some New Prologues and Epilogues, 1704–1708” (note 40 above), pp. 464–466.

pertaining to theatre managers, a printed marginal note states that "Mr. R[ic]h appointed 8 Managers," and listed are Powell, Keene, Johnson, Bullock, Norris, Leigh, Bickerstaff, and Mrs. Powell. It may have been this act which prompted Cibber to remark that Rich "was as sly a Tyrant, as ever was at the Head of a Theatre; for he gave the Actors more Liberty, and fewer Days Pay, than any of his Predecessors . . ." <sup>113</sup> The impudent prologue also reveals that the actors hoped Richard Norton of Southwick, for whom some of them had performed during the summer vacation, would "Buy out these sordid *Patent-Masters* [i.e., Rich, Skipwith, *et al.*], And make a *Free Gift* of it to the *Actors* . . ." <sup>114</sup>

On 6 June 1709 the Lord Chamberlain finally removed Rich as manager of the Drury Lane theatre,<sup>115</sup> and early next season, two new companies were established,<sup>116</sup> as shown in Diagram 4: Drury Lane could act plays and was once again allowed to interlard them with musical entertainments other than operas. Several experienced actors were transferred to the Haymarket, but the theatre retained its operatic establishment; Swiney could present plays, musical entertainments, and, of course, Italian operas. During the chaotic autumn of 1709, there was a struggle for control of the Drury Lane playhouse, and William Collier and Aaron Hill emerged as the new managers. Collier, who had been one of the shareholders in the company for several years, cleverly subverted Rich's attempt to run the company in "exile."<sup>117</sup> Hill, too, learned his new trade the hard way: in the early summer of 1710, after Collier had removed some actors as sharing managers, the rebellious players broke into the theatre on 5 June, assaulted Hill with swords drawn, and invited the deposed Rich to retake command of the theatre. Fortunately for Collier and Hill, the

<sup>113</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), p. 139.

<sup>114</sup> Besides a letter from the playwright John Dennis to Norton congratulating the country gentleman on having such distinguished actors to perform at his home, nothing further is known of Norton's relationship with the Drury Lane company (for the 10 August 1708 letter, see *The Critical Works of John Dennis*, ed. Edward Niles Hooker [Baltimore, 1939-43], II, 392-393).

<sup>115</sup> The Lord Chamberlain's succinct order is partially quoted in Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II, 282.

<sup>116</sup> The personnel of the Haymarket company and their duties appear in a document issued on 24 December 1709, although the troupe began acting in September of the 1709-10 season (see Nicoll, *ibid.*, pp. 278-279). The Drury Lane company, temporarily without a manager, did not open until November.

<sup>117</sup> See GB I.bm Add. 20726, fols. 29v-33v.

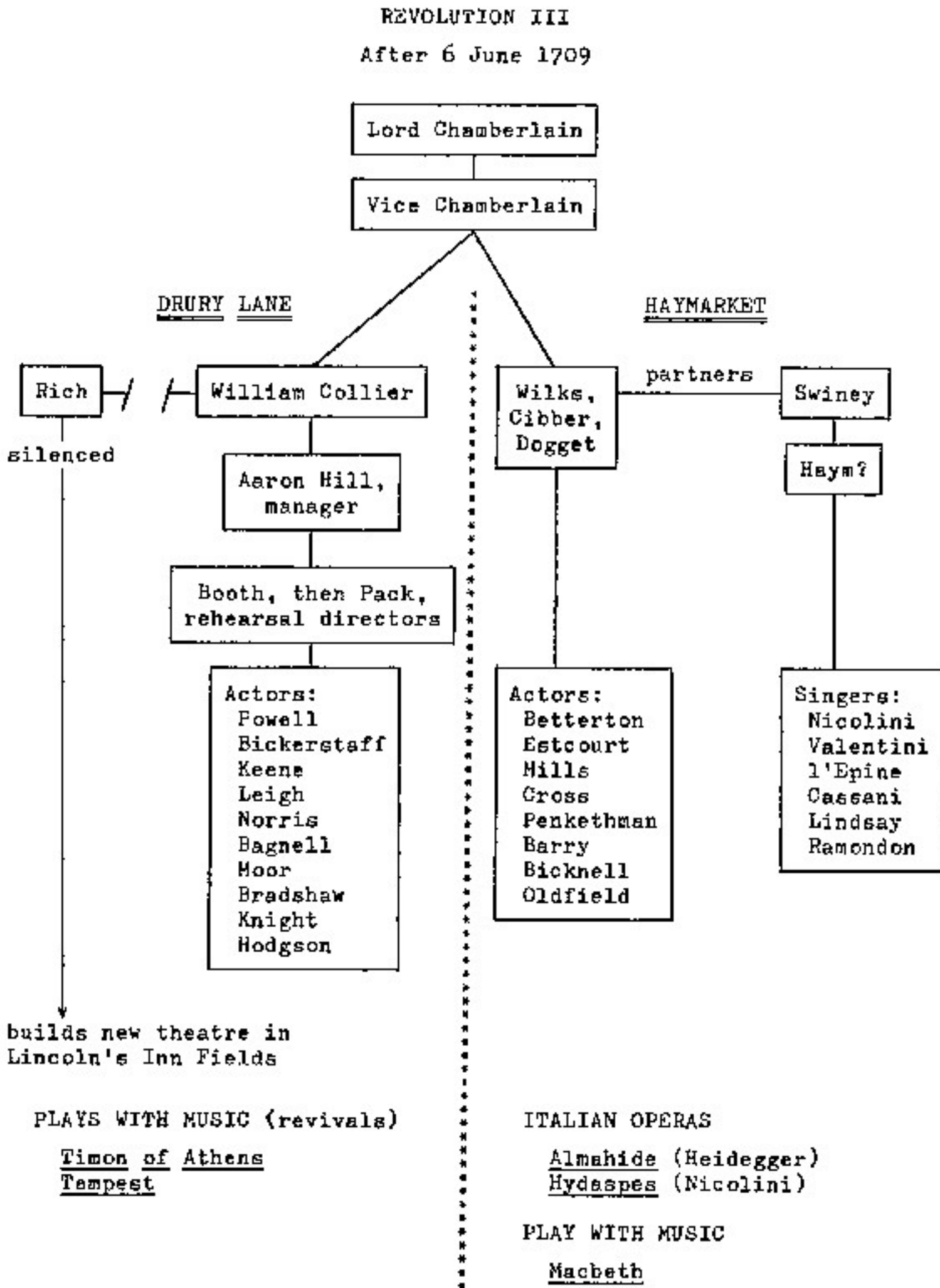


DIAGRAM 4

Lord Chamberlain interceded and stopped the rebellion.<sup>118</sup> Rich apparently still controlled a majority of the shares in the company, and during the 1710–11 season, he temporarily regained his position as manager by ousting Collier in a financial maneuver.<sup>119</sup> But Rich finally abandoned Drury Lane and began to build a new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, which opened shortly after his death in 1714. Rich's power never depended much upon aristocratic connections, but rather upon wise investments. There is evidence that even after Kent revoked his monopoly on opera in December 1707, he remained heavily invested in operatic productions at the Haymarket.<sup>120</sup>

The Haymarket company was mostly free of the managerial disputes plaguing Drury Lane during the 1709–10 season. Wilks, Dogget, and Cibber and their partner Swiney spent the summer of 1709 having Vanbrugh's theatre remodeled. It had been notoriously poor for spoken drama, and Cibber even believed the playhouse's operatic acoustics to be an important factor in the December 1707 decision to make it the opera house.<sup>121</sup> Plays fared well under the trio's management, but the actors were not good opera impresarios. Cibber admits as much (in *An Apology*, p. 226), and his confession is confirmed by an undated letter from Nicolini Grimaldi, the first great operatic castrato to sing in London.<sup>122</sup> He complains that not only has Swiney disregarded his contract, but that the manager's associates, "tous trois Comediens," have done far worse: "leur interest, et leur but est de detruire les Operas, et de faire insulte à ceux qui s'opposent à leur dessein . . ." The Lord Chamberlain apparently recognized the En-

<sup>118</sup> See GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 24–25, and the Lord Chamberlain's response in Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II, 292.

<sup>119</sup> See GB Lbm Add. 20726, fols. 31v–33.

<sup>120</sup> The document suggesting Rich's involvement (in US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fols. [38–39], copy in GB Lbm Add. 38607, fols. 98–99) is dated, remarkably, two days after the Lord Chamberlain's December 1707 order took effect, when Rich supposedly no longer had any control of opera productions in London.

<sup>121</sup> *An Apology* (note 15 above), esp. p. 173. The location of the new theatre was probably equally responsible for its being selected as the opera house. *The Muses Mercury* for December 1707 (pp. 287–288) explains that plays were attended largely by a middle-class audience from the City, whereas opera was the court's favorite pastime. Since Drury Lane was farther east than the Haymarket (therefore closer to the City), it was more convenient to "the Scene of Business," while the opera company, situated closer to St. James's, was "nearer than ever to their Protectors."

<sup>122</sup> For the date of his arrival in England, see Olleson, "Vanbrugh and Opera" (note 92 above), p. 100. The letter is in US CAh Thr 464.4.15\*, fols. [97–98v].

English actors and Italian singers at the Haymarket as strange bed-fellows, because on 6 November 1710 he transferred Swiney and all actors back to Drury Lane, appointing Collier and Hill to manage opera at the Haymarket.<sup>123</sup> A measure of stability was thus achieved in the London theatres for several years. This is certainly not the last major change in the management of the early eighteenth-century London stage, but it is the last one which significantly affected the balance of music and drama.

It is perhaps surprising to note that after the separation of Thespian and musical forces was ended at the beginning of the 1709–10 season, plays with musical episodes, a type which had been officially vanquished by the Lord Chamberlain and his opera-loving peers, re-emerged on the London stage. For example, on 28 November 1709 the Haymarket *opera* house presented *Macbeth*, "With all the Vocal and Instrumental Musick and Dances proper to the Play"; and a month later, the Drury Lane house announced a performance of *Timon of Athens*, "With all the Original Sonatas, and other Pieces of Musick set by the late Mr Henry Purcell."<sup>124</sup> This season also saw a return to the former custom of opera singers performing between the acts of plays, a practice which galled Nicolini, who considered it a "Means to Vilifie and Prejudice the Opera."<sup>125</sup> The imported music drama, now emerging from the bilingual pasticcio disguise in which it first appeared in London, certainly remained the most popular musical type on the London stage, but a segment of the ever-more-middle-class

<sup>123</sup> Nicoll, *A History* (note 11 above), II, 275–276.

<sup>124</sup> See *The London Stage 1700–1729* (note 10 above), pp. 203 and 206.

<sup>125</sup> On 18 March 1710 the Haymarket announced a performance of a play with "Select Scenes of Musick" between the acts sung by Nicolini, Valentini, and Margarita (see *The London Stage 1700–1729* [note 10 above], p. 216), but on the preceding day, the following handbill was issued:

"It has been Publish'd in Yesterdays *Daily Courant*, and last Night in her Majesty's *Theatre* at the *Hay-Market*, that to Morrow (being *Saturday* the 18<sup>th</sup> of *March*) will be presented there, A Comedy, with several Select Scenes of Musick, to be perform'd between the Acts by Cavalier Nicolini, Signior Valentini, and Signiora Margarita; which sort of Performance the Said Cavalier Nicolini finding to be directly contrary to the Agreement made between him and Mr. Owen Swiny, and that the same wou'd prove a real Means to Vilifie and Prejudice the Opera. He doth hereby acquaint all Gentlemen and Ladies, that his Intention is strictly to observe the Tenor and Meaning of the said Agreement, that is to say, to Sing during the Winter Season only formal Operas, and to be always ready to please and serve them according to his Duty and usual Custom" [electrostatic negative in GB Lbm 1879.c.3, fol. 58].

audience still preferred to hear music drama within the context of a spoken play.

The revolutions discussed above, though variously motivated and producing diverse effects, had two common goals: to accommodate Italian opera in a theatrical system which had long resisted the all-sung form and which had not the resources nor the audience to sustain both plays and operas; and to assure that the introduction of Continental music drama did not weaken what was then and is now the most important stage genre of the English: the spoken play. The casualties of this collision and subsequent reconciliation of music and drama on the London stage were the Restoration play with music and John Eccles and his out-of-fashion colleagues. Even Henry Purcell, had he lived into the critical decade, would, I believe, have succumbed to the foreign foes and playhouse politics.

The native music which remained on the stage after the critical decade paled next to the Italian operas of Handel and Bononcini. The greatest musicians of the era were at the disposal of the opera companies, while the playhouses were forced to use only actors in their musical entertainments.<sup>126</sup> The diminished condition of English music drama is well expressed in a famous essay by Joseph Addison in *The Spectator* of 1711,<sup>127</sup> the first important opera criticism in the English language:

There is nothing that has more startled our *English* Audience, than the *Italian Recitativo* at its first Entrance upon the Stage. People were wonderfully surprized to hear Generals singing the Word of Command, and Ladies delivering Messages in Musick . . . But however this *Italian* Method of acting in *Recitativo* might appear at first hearing, I cannot but think it much more just than that which prevailed in our *English* Opera before this Innovation: The Transition from an Air to Recitative Musick being more natural, than the passing from a Song to plain and ordinary Speaking, which was the common Method in *Purcell's* Operas.

This passage is remarkable in that it shows a formidable English critic embracing the operatic convention: people could actually converse in recitative without the benefit of a dramaturgical context. The Restora-

<sup>126</sup> A Lord Chamberlain's order of 17 April 1712 requires that "The Undertakers and Managers of the Comedy shall not be permitted to represent any Musickall Entertainment or to have any Dancing perform'd but by the Actors" (Nicoll, *A History* [note 11 above], II, 281).

<sup>127</sup> 3 April 1711. *The Spectator*, ed. Donald F. Bond, I (Oxford, 1965), 119-120.

tion convention of "passing from a Song to plain and ordinary Speaking," in other words, the practice of having musical episodes dependent upon the context provided by a spoken play and its actors, now seemed old-fashioned to Addison. It may be puzzling that the critic speaks of Purcell's dramatic operas in the past tense and with a detachment far greater than the nine or ten years that had elapsed since the Drury Lane theatre specialized in such musical shows, for Addison was probably familiar with "the Frost Scene" in *King Arthur*, "the Conjuror's Scene" in *The Indian Queen*, and the masque in *Dioclesian*, all of which were heard in London about the time he wrote this passage.<sup>128</sup> But Purcell's miniature dramas now only infrequently appeared with their original plays. The masques in these works were carved up and intermingled with music of indifferent quality to make diverting afterpieces and *entr'actes*. In the years following the critical decade, English art music rarely enhanced the scenes of English plays, and the London stage entered an era of music hall.

### *Postscript*

Despite an abundance of documents in the Vice Chamberlain papers and elsewhere and the complex story that can be reconstructed from them, the critical decade remains a much confused period for the London stage. Mostly hidden from our view are the motivations of the principal characters, Vanbrugh, Rich, Haym, and particularly the aristocrats who operated behind the scenes. It is hoped that their roles in these affairs will be better understood as more documents come to light. Most extraordinary is that we know the least about the person who was at the center of all the revolutions described above: Rich. Damned on all sides, everyone's villain, the chief patentee apparently was very careful about putting anything in writing or affixing his signature to any document. He remained remarkably aloof from the tumult which finally consumed him. A qualified vindication of this much-abused manager is in order: Rich certainly diluted the quality of "good English plays" by introducing novelties, but was he not simply following a tradition of heterogeneous entertainment which emerged very early in the Restoration? And did not Vanbrugh and Congreve, even Betterton, commit similar theatrical atrocities? Part of our uneasiness about this period of drama history stems from a

<sup>128</sup> See *The London Stage 1700-1729* (note 10 above), p. 246.

failure to recognize that serious drama, opera, and "vaudeville" co-existed on the same stage for essentially the same audience. It is impossible to separate high-brow from low-brow entertainment at this time. A large segment of this audience enjoyed Shakespeare, Bononcini, Farquhar, and rope dancing almost in equal measures. Italian opera, to be sure, was exotic, expensive, and artificially sustained for the enjoyment of the leisure class. But more than just the gentry flocked to hear *Camilla*. Also it should be remembered that it was Vanbrugh the playwright, not Rich the businessman, who was most responsible for assuring that the foreign opera gained a foothold on the native stage. We may postulate that he designed his Haymarket theatre with opera in mind, negotiated with Italian musicians, groomed his protégés as opera managers, befriended and influenced opera-loving aristocrats, and, like many others who have since become intoxicated with music drama, lost his shirt in his gamble with the tastes of the town and the greed of the opera singer.



## CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

M. D. FELD, Reference Librarian in the Littauer Library of the Harvard College Library, was Librarian of Harvard's Center for International Affairs from 1959 to 1977. In 1976 a gift from Charles and Mary Tanenbaum enabled the Library to award him a grant for research on the printed book and the secularization of authority in early modern Europe, with special reference to the revolt of the Netherlands, 1566-1617. He is the author of *The Structure of Violence: Armed Forces as Social Systems* (Beverly Hills and London: Sage Publications, Inc., 1977).

ELEANOR M. GARVEY, Curator of Printing and Graphic Arts in the Harvard College Library, joined the staff of the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts in 1953 and has been Curator since 1975. She has edited several exhibition catalogues, including *The Artist & the Book* (1961), and her other published writings include contributions to the Autumn 1958 and October 1973 issues of the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN.

CURTIS A. PRICE, Assistant Professor of Music at Washington University, St. Louis, earned his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1974; his dissertation was "Musical Practices in Restoration Plays, With a Catalogue of Instrumental Music in the Plays, 1665-1713."

BRIDGET PUZON, O.S.U., Assistant Professor of English and Assistant to the President at Hollins College, is the author of a Harvard dissertation (1973), "The Archetype of the Journey; Studies in Bunyan, Smollett, and Conrad," and "The Hidden Meaning in *Humphry Clinker*" in the January 1976 HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN.

ALAN SEABURG, who has been Curator of Manuscripts in the Andover-Harvard Theological Library since 1970, has contributed to numerous periodicals and is Poetry Editor of *Snowy Egret*; before coming to Harvard he had been Librarian of the Crane Theological School at Tufts, Minister of the Charles Street Meeting House in Boston, and Archivist of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

MERTON M. SEALTS, JR., is Henry A. Pochmann Professor of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. One of his books, *Melville's Reading* (1966), was originally serialized in the HARVARD LIBRARY BULLETIN and supplemented by an article in the July 1971 issue. In 1974 the University of Wisconsin Press published his *The Early Lives of Melville: Nineteenth-Century Biographical Sketches and Their Authors*, and he has edited two volumes in the edition of Emerson's *Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks* that is being published by the Harvard University Press.