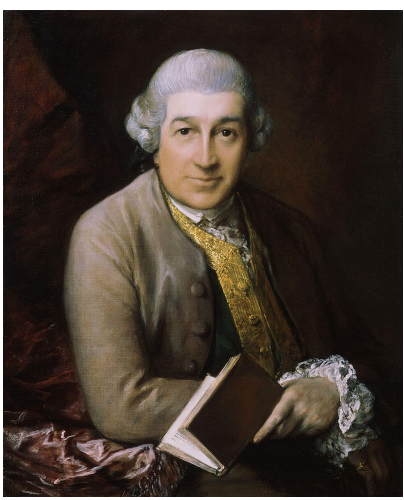


# David Garrick

David Garrick



David Garrick by Thomas Gainsborough.

Born	19 February 1717
Died	20 January 1779 (aged 61)
Years active	1741-1779
Spouse	Eva Marie Veigel

**David Garrick** (19 February 1717 – 20 January 1779) was an English actor, playwright, theatre manager and producer who influenced nearly all aspects of theatrical practice throughout the 18th century and was a pupil and friend of Dr Samuel Johnson. He appeared in a number of amateur theatricals, and with his appearance in the title role of Shakespeare's *Richard III* audiences and managers began to take notice. Impressed by his portrayals of Richard III and a number of other roles, Charles Fleetwood engaged Garrick for a season at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. He remained with the Drury Lane company for the next five years and purchased a share of the theatre with James Lacy. This purchase inaugurated twenty-nine years of Garrick's management of the Drury Lane, during which time, it rose to prominence as one of the leading theatres in Europe. At his death, three years after his retirement from Drury Lane and the stage, he was given a lavish public funeral at Westminster Abbey where he was laid in Poets' Corner.

As an actor, Garrick promoted realistic acting that departed from the bombastic style that was entrenched when Garrick first came to prominence. His acting delighted many audiences and his direction of many of the top actors of the English stage influenced their styles as well. Furthermore, during his tenure as manager of Drury Lane, Garrick sought to reform audience behaviour. While this led to some discontent among the theatre-going public, many of his reforms eventually did take hold. In addition to audiences, Garrick sought reform in production matters, bringing an over-arching consistency to productions that included scenery, costumes and even special effects.

Garrick's influence extended into the literary side of theatre as well. Critics are almost unanimous in saying he was not a good playwright, but his work in bringing Shakespeare to contemporary audiences is notable. In addition, he adapted many older plays in the repertoire that might have been forgotten. These included many plays of the Restoration era. Indeed, while influencing the theatre towards a better standard he also gained a better reputation for theatre folk. This accomplishment led Samuel Johnson to remark that "his profession made him rich and he made his profession respectable."

Biography

Early life

Garrick was born at Hereford, into a family with French Huguenot roots that could be traced to the Languedoc region of southern France. Garrick's grandfather, David Garric, was in Bordeaux in 1685 when the Edict of Nantes was abolished, revoking the rights of Protestants in France. David Garric fled to London and his son Peter, who was an infant at the time, was later smuggled out by a nurse when he was deemed old enough to make the journey. David Garric became a British subject upon his arrival in Britain and anglicized the name to Garrick.<sup>[1]</sup> At the time of David Garrick's birth in 1717, the family was living in the city of Hereford moving to Lichfield, home to Garrick's mother, shortly after his birth. His father, Captain Peter Garrick, was an army recruiting officer stationed, through most of young Garrick's childhood, in Gibraltar.<sup>[2]</sup> Garrick was the third of five children and his younger brother, George (1723–1779), would be an aide to David for the remainder of his life. Playwright and actor, Charles Dibdin, recorded that George, discovering his brother's absence would often inquire "Did David want me?" Upon Garrick's death in 1779, it was noted that George died forty-eight hours later, leading some to speculate that "David wanted him."<sup>[3]</sup> His nephew, Nathan Garrick, married Martha Leigh, daughter of Sir Egerton Leigh, Bart and sister of Sir Samuel Egerton Leigh, author of *Munster Abbey; a Romance: Interspersed with Reflections on Virtue and Morality* (Edinburgh 1797).

The Play-Box that announced the first appearance of Mr. GARRICK.

GOODMAN'S FIELDS. October 10, 1741.

At the Theatre in Goodman's Fields, this Day will be performed,

*A Concert of Vocal & Instrumental Music,*

DIVIDED INTO TWO PARTS,

TICKETS AT THREE, TWO, AND ONE SHILLING.

Persons for the Boxes to be taken at the Place Tenon, near the Theatre.

N.B. Between the Two Parts of the Concert will be presented an Historical Play, called the

**LIFE AND DEATH OF**

**King Richard the Third.**

CONTAINING THE HISTORIES OF K. HENRY VI.

The sad acquisition of the Crown by King Richard,

The Murder of Young King Edward V. and his Brother in the Tower,

THE LANDING OF THE EARL OF RICHMOND,

And the Death of King Richard in the memorable Battle of Bosworth Field, being the last that was fought between the Houses of York and Lancaster; with many other true Historical Passages.

The Part of King Richard by A GENTLEMAN,

(Who never appeared on any Stage.)

King Henry, by Mr. GIFFARD. Richmond, Mr. MARSHALL.

Prince Edward, by Mr. HIPPLEY. Duke of York, Mr. HATTON.

Duke of Burgundy, Mr. PATTERSON. Duke of Norfolk, Mr. BLAKEL. Lord Stanley, Mr. FROST.

Queen, Mr. VAUGHAN. Tull, Mr. W. GIFFARD. Count de Harcourt, Mr. GIFFARD.

Rose, Mr. HATTON. Tyne, Mr. PUTTENDEN. Lord Mayor, Mr. DUNNELL.

The Queen, Mr. STEEL. Duchess of York, Mr. YATES.

And the Part of Lady Anne, by Mrs. GIFFARD.

With

**Entertainments of Dancing,**

By Messrs. FROMET, Madame DUVALT, and the Two Masters and Miss GRANIER.

To which will be added a Ballet Opera, of the Air, called

***The Virgin Unmask'd.***

The Part of Lucy, by Miss HIPPLEY.

Both of which will be performed Gratis, by Persons for their Diversion.

The Concert will begin exactly at Six o'Clock.

Playbill from Garrick's debut as Richard III.

At the age of nineteen, Garrick, who had been educated at Lichfield Grammar School, enrolled in Samuel Johnson's Edial Hall School. Garrick showed an enthusiasm for the theatre very early on and he appeared in a school production around this time in the role of Sergeant Kite in George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*. After Johnson's school was closed, he and Garrick, now friends, travelled to London together in order to seek their fortunes. Upon his arrival in 1737, Garrick and his brother became partners in a wine business with operations in both London and Lichfield with David taking the London operation.<sup>[4]</sup> The business did not flourish, possibly due to Garrick's distraction by amateur theatricals. Playwright Samuel Foote remarked that he had known Garrick to have only three quarts of vinegar in his cellar and still calling himself a wine merchant.<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1740, four years after Garrick's arrival in London and with his wine business failing, he saw his first play, a satire, *Lethe: or Aesop in the Shade*, produced at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane.<sup>[5]</sup> Within a year he was appearing professionally playing small parts at the Goodman's Fields Theatre under the management of Henry Giffard. The Goodman's Fields Theatre had been shuttered by the Licensing Act of 1737 which closed all theatres that did not hold the letters patent and required all plays to be approved by the Lord Chamberlain before performance. Garrick's performances at the theatre was a result of Giffard's help with Garrick's wine business. Giffard had helped Garrick win the business of the Bedford Coffee-house, an establishment patronized by many theatrical and literary people and a location Garrick frequented.<sup>[6]</sup>



*Have mercy, Jesu! Soft! I did but dream. O coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me! -- Shakespeare's Richard III Act V, Sc. 3.* David Garrick in 1745 as Richard III just before the battle of Bosworth Field, his sleep having been haunted by the ghosts of those he has murdered, wakes to the realization that he is alone in the world and death is imminent. Painting by English painter, William Hogarth.

## Professional actor

He made his debut as a professional actor at Ipswich in 1741 in *Oroonoko, or the Royal Slave*, a play by the British dramatist Thomas Southerne. He also joined a summer tour to Ipswich with Giffard's troupe, where he played Aboan in Southerne's *Oroonoko*, appearing under the stage name *Lyddal* to avoid the consternation of his family.<sup>[7]</sup> But, while he was successful under Giffard, the managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden rejected him.<sup>[4]</sup> On 19 October 1741, Garrick appeared in the title role of *Richard III*. He had been coached in the role by actor and playwright Charles Macklin and his natural performance, which rejected the declamatory acting style so prevalent in the period, soon was the talk of London. Of his performance at Goodman's Fields, Horace Walpole remarked, "there was a dozen dukes a night at Goodman's Fields."<sup>[8]</sup> Following his rousing performance, Garrick wrote to his brother requesting withdrawal from the partnership in order to devote his time completely to the stage. Having found success with *Richard III*, Garrick moved onto a number of other roles including Tate's adaptation of Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Pierre in Otway's *Venice Preserv'd* as well as comic roles such as Bayes in Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*; a total of 18 roles in all in just the first six months of his acting career. His success led Alexander Pope, who saw him perform three times during this period, to surmise, "that young man never had his equal as an actor, and he will never have a rival."<sup>[9]</sup>

With his success at Goodman's Fields, Charles Fleetwood, manager of Drury Lane, engaged Garrick to play Chaumont on Otway's *The Orphan* (a role he first played in Ipswich<sup>[10]</sup>) on 11 May 1742 while he used his letters patent to close down Giffard's theatre.<sup>[11]</sup> That same month, Garrick played *King Lear* opposite Margaret "Peg" Woffington as Cordelia and his popular *Richard III*.<sup>[12]</sup> With these successes, Fleetwood engaged Garrick for the full 1742-43 season.<sup>[4]</sup>

## At Drury Lane



Garrick (right) as Abel Druggier in Jonson's *The Alchemist* painted by Johann Zoffany.

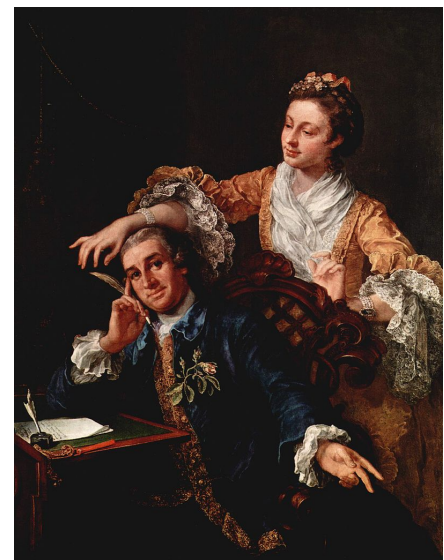
At the end of the London season, Garrick, along with Peg Woffington, traveled to Dublin for the summer season at the Theatre Royal, Smock Lane. While in Dublin, Garrick added two new roles to his repertoire: Shakespeare's Hamlet, Abel Druggier in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* (a role that garnered him much acclaim<sup>[4]</sup>) and Captain Plume in Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*.<sup>[10]</sup> Some of his success could be attributed to one of his earliest fans, John Boyle, 5th Earl of Cork, who wrote letters to many noblemen and gentlemen recommending Garrick's acting. His writings led Garrick to exclaim that it must have been the reason he was "more caressed" in Dublin.<sup>[13]</sup>

Five years after joining the acting company at Drury Lane, Garrick again travelled to Dublin for a season where he managed and directed at the Smock Alley Theatre in conjunction with Thomas Sheridan, the father of Richard Brinsley Sheridan. After his return to London, he spent some time acting at Covent Garden under John Rich while a farce of his, *Miss in Her Teens*, was also produced there.

With the end of the 1746-1747 season, Fleetwoods' patent on Drury Lane expired in partnership with James Lacy, Garrick took over the theatre in April 1747. The theatre had been in a decline for some years, but the partnership of Garrick and Lacy led to success and accolades. The first performance under Garrick and Lacy's management opened with an *Ode to Drury Lane Theatre, on dedicating a Building and erecting a Statue, to Shakespeare* read by Garrick and written by his friend, Dr. Johnson. The ode promised the patrons that "The drama's law the drama's patrons give,/For we that live to please must please to live." Certainly this statement could be regarded as succinctly summing up Garrick's management at Drury Lane where he was able to balance both artistic integrity and the fickle tastes of the public.

After the Woffington affair and a number of other botched love affairs, Garrick met Eva Marie Veigel (1724–1822), a German dancer in opera choruses who emigrated to London in 1746. The pair wed on June 22, 1749 and were preserved together in several portraits, including one by William Hogarth. Hogarth also made several drawings and paintings of them separately. The union was childless but happy, Garrick calling her "the best of women and wives", and they were famously inseparable throughout their nearly 30 years of marriage.

Garrick would manage the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane until his retirement from management in 1776. In his last years he continued to add roles to his repertoire; Posthumus in *Cymbeline* was among his last famous roles. He died less than three years later, at his house in Adelphi Buildings, London<sup>[14]</sup> and was interred in Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey. Mrs. Garrick survived her husband by 43 years. Shortly before his death he worked on the production of *The Camp* with Sheridan at Drury Lane.



David Garrick and his wife, Eva Marie Veigel, painted by William Hogarth. This painting is in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

## An easy, natural manner

Perhaps it was Garrick's acting, the most showy of his careers, that brought him the most adulation. Garrick was not a large man, only standing 5'4" and his voice is not described as particularly loud. From his first performance, Garrick departed from the bombastic style that had been popular, choosing instead a more relaxed, naturalistic style that biographer Alan Kendall states "would probably seem quite normal to us today, but it was new and strange for his day." Certainly this new style brought acclamation: Alexander Pope stated, "he was afraid the young man would be spoiled, for he would have no competitor." and Garrick quotes George Lyttelton as complimenting him by saying, "He told me he never knew what acting was till I appeared." Even James Quin, an actor in the old style remarked, "If this young fellow be right, then we have been all wrong."

While Garrick's praises were being sung by many, there were some detractors. Theophilus Cibber in his *Two Dissertations on the Theatres* of 1756 believed that Garrick's realistic style went too far:

*His over-fondness for extravagant attitudes, frequently affected starts, convulsive twitchings, jerkings of the body, sprawling of the fingers, flapping the breast and pockets; a set of mechanical motions in constant use; the caricatures of gesture, suggested by pert vivacity; his pantomimical manner of acting, every word in a sentence, his unnatural pauses in the middle of a sentence; his forced conceits; his wilful neglect of harmony, even where the round period of a well-expressed noble sentiment demands a graceful cadence in the delivery.*

But Garrick's legacy was perhaps best surmised by Rev Nicolas Tindal, the historian, when he said that:

*The 'deaf' hear him in his 'action, and the 'blind' see him in his 'voice'.<sup>[15]</sup>*

## Legacy

- A monument to Garrick in Lichfield Cathedral bears Johnson's famous comment:  
"I am disappointed by that stroke of death that has eclipsed the gaiety of nations, and impoverished the public stock of harmless pleasure."
- A carved stone medallion, a metre or more in diameter, showing Garrick is on display at Birmingham Central Library.
- Garrick was the first actor to be granted the honour of being buried in Westminster Abbey, in Poets' Corner by the monument to William Shakespeare. Later Henry Irving, the first actor to be knighted, was buried beside him on the same spot. Laurence Olivier was the third to be given that honour, in 1989.
- A film made in 1937, a comedy called *The Great Garrick* directed by James Whale is a fictional story revolving around Garrick's acting skills and his ego which inspires the Académie française to teach him a lesson. The film stars Brian Aherne as Garrick.
- A School House at King Edward VI School, Lichfield is named after him.
- The lyrics he penned for *Heart of Oak* remain, with William Boyce's music, the official March Of the Royal Navy.
- Juan de Dios Peza (1852–1910) wrote a poem ("Reir Llorando", tr. "To Laugh Crying") about an English actor named Garrick, portraying him as a depressed comedian. Apart from being strictly a comedian, the poem's character is a nobleman ("noble he nacido"), unlike historic David Garrick.
- In May 2007, the Spanish comedy troupe Tricicle opened a production of comedic sketches entitled "Garrick"<sup>[16]</sup> in tribute to the actor.
- Legend has it that he was so engrossed in a performance of Richard III that he was oblivious to a bone fracture, inspiring the theatrical felicitation "Break a leg!"<sup>[17]</sup>



## Theatre names

Several theatres have been named after Garrick:

- Two theatres, in London, have been named for him. The first, Garrick Theatre (Leman St) in Whitechapel opened in 1831, and closed in 1881. The second, opened in 1889 as the Garrick Theatre, still survives.
- The Lichfield Garrick Theatre takes its name from David Garrick, as does the Garrick Room, the main function suite in Lichfield's George Hotel.
- Two amateur dramatic theatres in Greater Manchester, the Altrincham Garrick Theatre and the Stockport Garrick Theatre, also take his name.
- The arts and theatre building at Hampton School is named after him.
- A Community Theatre located north of Perth, Western Australia is named after Garrick.

## Major works

- *Lethe; or, Aesop in the Shades* (1740)
- *The Lying Valet* (1741)
- *Miss in Her Teens; or, The Medley of Lovers* (1747)
- *Lilliput* (1756)
- *The Male Coquette; or, Seventeen Fifty Seven* (1757)
- *The Guardian* (1759)
- *Harlequin's Invasion* (1759)
- *The Enchanter; or, Love and Magic* (1760)
- *The Farmer's Return from London* (1762)
- *The Clandestine Marriage* (1766)
- *Neck or Nothing* (1766)
- *Cymon* (1767)
- *Linco's Travels* (1767)
- *A Peep Behind the Curtain, or The New Rehearsal* (1767)
- *The Jubilee* (1769)
- *The Irish Widow* (1772)
- *A Christmas Tale* (1773)
- *The Meeting of the Company; or, Bayes's Art of Acting* (1774)
- *Bon Ton; or, High Life Above Stairs* (1775)
- *The Theatrical Candidates* (1775)
- *May-Day; or, The Little Gypsy* (1775)



'A literary party at Sir Joshua Reynolds's'. 'A literary party at Sir Joshua Reynolds's' [18], D. George Thompson, published by Owen Bailey, after James William Edmund Doyle, published 1 October 1851 Use a cursor to see who is who.

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## Notes

- [1] Kendall, p. 12.
- [2] Britannica.
- [3] Kendall, p. 13.
- [4] Hartnoll, p. 315.
- [5] Kendall, p.17.
- [6] Kendall, p. 19.
- [7] Holland, p. 411.
- [8] Freedley, p. 290.
- [9] Britannica
- [10] Woods, p. 291.
- [11] Hartnoll, p. 231.
- [12] Kendall, p. 27
- [13] Kendall, p. 26.
- [14] *The Strand, southern tributaries - continued*, Old and New London: Volume 3 (1878), pp. 100-110 (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=4513>) accessed: 30 May 2008
- [15] Nichols, John (1812) 'Literary Anecdotes' Article on Nicolas Tindal ([http://books.google.com/books?id=T9scAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA515&lpg=PA515&dq="nicolas+tindal"&source=web&ots=YrSfQAhx-M&sig=GqogshT2NPGJpV2nJ\\_0uLsx\\_KXk#PPA515,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=T9scAAAAMAAJ&pg=PA515&lpg=PA515&dq=))
- [16] <http://www.tricycle.com/templates/intro.php?area=theatre&ProdID=126&Sub=main&lang=en>
- [17] Tom Dale Keever (1995-12-18). "Richard III as rewritten by Colley Cibber" (<http://www.r3.org/bookcase/cibber.html>). *Primary Texts and Secondary Sources On-line*. Richard III Society — American Branch. . Retrieved 2008-04-11.
- [18] <http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/portrait.php?LinkID=mp64290&rNo=0&role=art>

## External links

- 'David Garrick as Richard III' by William Hogarth (<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/collections/18c/hogarth.asp>) at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (<http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/walker/>)
- Garrick's Temple to Shakespeare (<http://www.garrickstemple.org.uk>)
- Garrick Theatre Lichfield (<http://www.lichfieldgarrick.com>)
- Timeline from [[Garrick Club (<http://www.garrickclub.co.uk/profiles.asp>)]]
- Hiss'd of ye English Stage - The Diary Junction Blog (<http://thediaryjunction.blogspot.com/2009/01/hissd-off-ye-english-stage.html>)

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