

OPERA IN PHILADELPHIA

The beginnings

RESEARCH BY OTTO E. ALBRECHT 1899-1984

RESEARCH BY JOHN CURTIS 1867-1927

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The performance information found in this part of the chronology is, at the moment, taken almost entirely from the research of Otto E. Albrecht, published in Fall 1979, in the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, Vol. 32 No. 3, titled *Opera in Philadelphia 1800 - 1830*.

Albrecht indicates the first performance of each opera presented in Philadelphia between 1800 and 1830, but when an opera's Philadelphia première had occurred earlier, he also indicates the date of that performance. He does not indicate the performing company names, venues, casts, or subsequent performances for most works. His purpose was to provide a more rounded presentation of (light) opera during that period than had been provided by John Curtis (whose only intention was to document the history of "grand opera" in Philadelphia).

Some details, such as cast information and venue, were taken from the following sources:

- *A Record of the Opera in Philadelphia*: W.G. Armstrong: Porter & Co., (copyrighted by Townsend Ward; Press of Edward Stern & Co.), Philadelphia, 1884.
- *One Hundred Years of Grand Opera in Philadelphia* (unpublished) : *The First Volume, Section One* (1790s - 1843): John Curtis, 1920: Typescript (original) found in Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.
- *One Hundred Years of Grand Opera in Philadelphia : The First Volume* (1790s - 1860): John Curtis, 1920: Typescript (typewriter carbon copy) found in the Free Library, Philadelphia.

1769

11/24/69: *Midas* (burletta): Philadelphia, unknown

1772

12/14/72: *Lionel and Clarissa* (Charles Dibdin): Philadelphia, unknown

1773

3/03/73: *Cymon and Sylvia, or Love and Magic (The power of enchantment)* (Michael Arne): Philadelphia, unknown

1787

1/29/87: *The agreeable surprise* (Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, unknown

7/05/87: *Love in a camp* (William Shield): Philadelphia, unknown

1790

2/19/90: *The dead alive, or The double funeral* (Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, unknown

4/05/90: *Macbeth* (Locke): Philadelphia, unknown

1791

00/00/91: *The lord of the manor* (William Jackson): Philadelphia, unknown

4/08/91: *The waterman, or The first August* (Charles Dibdin): Philadelphia, unknown

1792

10/22/92: *The romp* (Charles Dibdin): Philadelphia, unknown

11/30/92: *No song, no supper* (Stephen Storace): Philadelphia, unknown

1793

Albrecht writes: ... the Chestnut Street Theatre was built in 1793 by Wignell and Reinagle, when it was know as the New Theatre. It was a copy of the Theatre Royal at Bath. The theatre was destroyed by fire in 1820.

1794

2/17/94: *The castle of Andalusia* (Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)

Don Suipio Mr. Finch
Don Cesare John Darley
Don Fernando Mr. Marshall
Don Juan J. P. Moreton (aka: John Pollard)
Pedrillo Mr. Bates
Spado Thomas Wignell
Sanquino Mr. Green
Phillips John Darley, Jr.
Victoria Mrs. Worrell
Lorenza Mrs. Marshall (Ina: Mrs. Wilmot)
Isabella Mrs. Bates
Catalina Miss Broadhurst
maestro direttore George Gillingham

Who's the dupe (A farce): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)

Doiley Mr. Morris
Sandford J. P. Moreton
Granger Mr. Cleveland
Gradus John E. Harwood
Miss Doiley Mrs. Francis
Charlotte Mrs. Howson

3/05/94: *The spoiled child* (Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, unknown

3/10/94: *Robin Hood, or Sherwood Forest* (Reinagle, after Shield): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Th. (Wignell and Reinagle)

Robin Hood John Darley
Little John Thomas Wignell
Scarlet Mr. Francis
Bowman Mr. Worrell
Allan-a-Dale John Darley, Jr.
Friar Tuck Mr. Whitlocke
Edwin Mr. Marshall
Agelina Miss Broadhurst
Annette Mrs. Marshall
Clorinda Mrs. Oldmixon
maestro direttore George Gillingham

3/17/94: *St. Patrick's Day, or The scheming lieutenant* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Th. (Wignell and Reinagle)

4/26/94: *La forêt noire* (Alexander Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)

5/19/94: *The seraglio* (Charles Dibdin, as *The sultan*): Philadelphia, unknown

5/26/94: *The prize, or 2, 5, 3, 8* (Stephen Storage): Philadelphia, unknown

7/07/94: *The spanish barber, or The fruitless precaution* (Reinagle and Carr): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)

John Curtis: The book [libretto] was by George Colman, the Younger (based on the same story of Beaumarchais that inspired the works of Rossini and Mozart); the music was by Dr. Arnold with additional airs by Professor Reinagle.

11/24/94: *The children in the wood* (Benjamin Carr after Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, unknown

1795

- 1/02/95: *Harlequin shipwreck'd, or The grateful lion* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Th. (Wignell and Reinagle)
- 1/07/95: *The purse, or The benevolent tar* (William Reeve): Philadelphia, unknown
Arbrecht names William Reeve as the composer of *The Purse*, but the Opera Glass web-site indicates Alexander Reinagle after Samuel Arnold.
- 1/21/95: *The volunteers* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)
- 4/05/95: *Auld Robin Gray, or Jamie's return from America* (Reinagle after Arnold): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Th. (Wignell and Reinagle Company)
- 4/22/95: *Tom Thumb the Great* (Thomas Arne): Philadelphia, unknown
- 4/27/95: *My grandmother* (Stephen Storace): Philadelphia, unknown
- 6/05/95: *The sicilian romance, or The apparition of the cliffs* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)
- 6/12/95: *Harlequin's invasion* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)

1796

- 2/10/96: *The warrior's welcome home* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)
- 2/26/96: *The witches of the rocks, or Harlequin everywhere* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. T. (Wignell & Reinagle)
- 3/14/96: *The lucky escape, or The ploughman turned sailor* (Reinagle after Dibdin): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)
- [1796]: *The archers, or Mountaineers of Switzerland* (Benjamin Carr): [Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre]:
William G. Armstrong: was performed in New York 4/18/96 and was probably also performed in Philadelphia where Mr. Carr resided.
John Curtis: William Dunlap wrote what is said to have been the first American opera to be produced *The Archers* or *Mountaineers of Switzerland* based on the legend of William Tell... Although both composer and librettist were now residents of this city [Philadelphia], the writer [John Curtis] can find no record of any performances.
- [1796]: *Blaise et Babet* [Nicolas Dezède]: Philadelphia, [Theatre at Fifth and Prune (Locust) Streets] (French Equestrian and Dramatic Company / M. Lailson)
- [1796]: *Les deux petits Savoyards* [Nicolas Dalayrac]: Philadelphia, Fifth/Prune (French Dramatic Company)
- 5/23/96: *The maid of the oaks, or A fête champêtre* (François Hippolyte Barthélemon): Philadelphia, unknown
- 12/14/96: *Les souliers Mordorés* (Alessandro Fridzeri): Philadelphia, Fifth/Prune (French Dramatic Company)
- 12/17/96: *Le tableau parlant* (Grétry): Philadelphia, Fifth/Prune (French Dramatic Company)
- Les deux chasseurs et la laitière* [Egidio Romoaldo Duni]: Philadelphia, Fifth/Prune (French Dramatic Company)

performing in the operas above:

M. Pouble
M. Jaymon
M. Douvilliers
M. Lailson
Mlle. Lailson
Mlle. Douvilliers
Miss Sophie

1797

- 1/30/97: *Columbus, or A world discovered* (Alexander Reinagle): Philadelphia, unknown
4/17/97: *The iron chest, or Honor's victim* (Stephen Storace): Philadelphia, unknown
7/12/97: *The savoyard, or The repentant seducer* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Th. (Wignell and Reinagle Co.)

1798

- 3/02/98: *The shipwreck* (Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, unknown
3/[25]/98: Triple bill:
Richard, Cœur de Lion [Grétry]: Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (unknown company)
Tancred and Sigismunda: Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (unknown company)
Cure for a cold (A farce): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (unknown company)
4/11/98: *The Italian monk* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut Street Theatre (Wignell and Reinagle Company)
4/21/98: *Marian* (William Shield): Philadelphia, unknown

1799

- 4/05/99: *The rival soldiers, or Sprigs of laurel* (William Shield): Philadelphia, unknown
4/13/98: *The arabs of the desert, or Harlequin's flight from Egypt* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut (Wignell & Reinagle)
5/04/99: *Auld Robin Gray, or Jamie's return from America* (Samuel Arnold): Philadelphia, unknown
5/24/99: *Blue Beard, or Female curiosity* (Michael Kelly): Philadelphia, unknown
12/30/99: *The constellation, or A wreath for American Tars* (Reinagle): Philadelphia, Chestnut St. Th. (Wignell & Reinagle)