

1790

The Managers of the Opera beg permission to solicit the Lord Chamberlain's protection, and to lay before his Lordship a real state of the hardships under which they suffer.

They beg leave to represent to his Lordship that it is impossible for the Receipts of Italian Opera's only to support the necessary expences.

That the Salaries of the first Singers and Dancers being so enormous they are at a larger yearly expence than the other Theatre, and instead of six Nights in a Week have in effect only one as on the Tuesdays they constantly play to great loss.

That the Subscription Saturday Nights are only twenty five and the few nights after the Subscription scarce worth taking, as the People of fashion are out of town.

That the Kings Theatre was originally a play house under his Majestys immediate protection and that of the Lord Chamberlain and continued such till Mr Collier came into a compromise with the Managers of Drury Lane to suspend giving plays at the Opera House on condition the Managers of Drury Lane engaged not to play on Opera Nights and to allow the Directors of the Opera as a further compensation Two Hundred Pounds a Year an Agreement which has not been fulfill'd on the side of the Patentees of the other Theatre of many years: on the contrary, they have given the strongest pieces they possibly could at both houses, on Opera Nights, and given both comic and serious English Operas with Italian Music, to the great detriment of the Managers of the Opera.

That the Salary of even one capital Performer at the Opera House, is more than equal to those of three at the Playhouse: tho the latter play six times a Week and the Opera House but twice, and one of those Nights a certain loss.

That his Lordship has been so good in consideration of the impossibility of supporting Operas without some indulgence to allow the Managers two Masquerades but from their being become so common, and given every where, they do not pay the expences, and therefore they have this year been obliged to decline them and have only given one tho his Lordship was so good to allow these two.

That besides the above disadvantages the Pantheon a



new undertaking; establish'd since the present Managers came to the Kings Theatre in the manner it is now carry'd on, is to the utmost degree ruinous to the Opera, as they not only divide the Musical audiences, but by offering the most exorbitant terms to Italian Singers make it almost impossible for the Managers of the Opera to engage any Performers, except at prices which even the utmost success can never enable them to pay. This they can easily do as they are a numerous body fifty persons at least divided amongst whom the salaries are but trifles, and in any of whom being (as we are inform'd) Tradesmen find their account in furnishing refreshments, as well for the common nights, as for Masquerades &c

That the present Managers have embark'd a large sum in the purchase which must be sunk with perhaps much more, unless his Lordship has the Goodness to grant them an extension of their present licence.

That in the days of Shakespear London contain'd no less than seventeen playhouses a circumstance to which we probably owe that immortal writer

That the present number of Theatres in this Capital being so very inadequate to the amazing increase of its inhabitants since the act of Limitation, the Nobility and Gentry continually refus'd places, and weary'd out by repeated disappointments have to the great discouragement of dramatic genius, almost left off frequenting the theatres.

That if there are any solid objections to an additional theatre, they cannot affect the Opera House, originally built and licens'd for a playhouse, and honor'd with the name of the Kings Theatre

That the present Directors encourag'd by the general wish of the Nobility and Gentry to have plays at a Theatre so conveniently situated, humbly entreat that the licence for the Opera House, now confin'd to Italian performances, may be extended on the intermediate Nights to theatrical entertainments in the English language also.

If a licence for plays is absolutely impossible that his Lordship will be so good to permit English Operas on the intermediate nights, or if that cannot be had, a summer licence in the nature of Mr Fode's patent but on different nights.

If it should be urg'd that the present Managers of Drury Lane and Covent Garden House purchas'd at a great expence, the Managers of the Opera have done the same, and have ever since play'd to loss, whereas the profits of the other theatres, even with a third wou'd be immense. It is also to be considered that the law restraining the number of theatres expressly gives Power to the Lord Chamberlain to licence more at his pleasure, and therefore the purchase of Drury Lane and Covent Garden have been always made under the supposition that more might, and probably wou'd be granted.

Nor was the Act of Limitation intended to limit the number which is still in the Lord Chamberlain's power but to restrain the licentiousness of the theatres. Nor wou'd such an extension of their licence as the Managers of the Opera humbly solicit, add to the number of theatres, which wou'd be still the same: a consideration which has encourag'd them to ask his Lordships







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Idea of distinction in Mankind, both on the Heads of Religion  
Government, Priests, Ministers & Judges; all were levelled by  
this Draw cancer in Witt, who spared neither Friend nor Foe,  
till at last ~~by~~ by his own Petric Fire (like a second Erosbratus  
he consumed his own Stage) by writing up an Act of Par-  
liament; for the purposes before reciev'd — thus far Libbert  
who wrote at the time the Act passed: but it was suspected  
that this Adventurer was hired to do this dirty business  
by the Patentees, who possibly were apprehensive if some  
Check was not given their Emoluments would soon decrease.  
if 'twas so, no price was too high for the purchase of so  
invaluable a privilege — from hence tis evident  
twas the licentious use & abuse of the Stage that was  
the real cause of the Restraint, by w. only Two Theatres  
were from that time permitted, and those under imme-  
diate Inspection of the S. Chamberlain, whose licence  
must give sanction to every piece before it can appear.  
this restriction has totally suppressed every abuse nay  
it has even banished every Indelicacy; so that there  
is now nothing left that can shock the ears of an  
Audience — the



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The good Effects of this part of the Restriction is further Evident as it has been the cause of rooting out the prolixities of Old Authors as well as refining the Modern — the Stage at this day is so traste, that it is become a school of efforality — and considering the strong effect Theatrical representations have on the Heart where is there so good a Master — no Lecture on Lawley's Ambition can ever operate on the Mind with equal power to the Amirated Scene of a Macbeth; nor will any sermon on the Relative duties sink so deep in the young Heart, as those inculcated by at Bonwell — and it is further to be observed that since frequenting the Theatres has become general, that the manners and conversations of the people in this kind of it is become more delicate, more refined; for what would have been received as wit in 1675 would in this Age be deemed obscenity —

If in the year 1737 Two Theatres were thought necessary, how inadequate will they appear in 1770 — when <sup>population</sup> is so immensely increased in this Metropolis: tis but to examine those vast Spaces of Ground which from Bond St<sup>re</sup> were



were so lately green fields, and are now covered with almost Numberless Buildings, forming the New Squares and Streets extending even to Mary-L-Bore, to be convinced of the vast Disproportion there is in the two periods; and if to this we add that there is in every part of London an increase of Play goes in proportion as 20 is to 1 since the time the Act passed: should general observation not bring conviction - another Test can be produced amounting to a greater certainty - tis about 20 years since Drury Lane House did not contain when full £100 - and then but Seldom subject to an overflow; and that every House is at this day generally inaccessible for the greatest part of the Season, though it is enlarged so as to contain £200 - and the same observation holds good at the other House, can there want a stronger proof that 3 Houses now is not more in proportion than one was at the period referred to

That it does not, nor ever has been looked upon as an amusement that infringes too much upon the time and attention of a Trading people, or as being too expensive to them, is

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is a fact; the Law was framed to correct the language not  
to restrain the frequenters of the Theatre; nor was any argu-  
ment used upon that occasion that had that tendency  
but solely turned upon the Insolence, Malice, Immorality  
and seditious Calumny which was at that time propagated  
by Theatrical pieces: nor did it then pass without a vigorous  
opposition; and leaving in His Majesty an indiscriminate  
power at any time, to extend by his Royal Letters patent  
this prerogative when ever, he in his wisdom should think fit  
to grant such an Indulgence; within 10 Miles of his usual  
Residence, ~~in~~ Relaxations are necessary, they will  
they must dissipate; Men do it now at the Theatre, instead of  
the Tavern, by this means excess is avoided, the mind improved, &  
domestic society is promoted; nay tis economy, for tis less  
expensive to pay for a place in the pit or Gallery than a  
Tavern bill — The Mistress of a family in this Age has  
not a less propensity to relax, if so, tis surely better to lead  
her to an amusement that will edify than to see those Hours  
spent in Visiting and being Visited, the general appendage  
to which is the Card Table, and tis too well known that



That every Mimicker of Fashion is too well bred to play bow: of w<sup>ch</sup> importance is it then to divert them from a Gaming Table, and lead them to the much more moderate expence of a Rational Evening entertainm<sup>t</sup> at the Theatre,

— May so far be <sup>it</sup> from being deemed an Amusement prejudicial to the Minds or Interest of a Trading people there is many, the most consequential Corporations in this Kingdom, have, as bodies Corporate applied to parliament and obtained Royal Patents for Theatres, thinking such amusem<sup>t</sup> absolutely necessary to keep the Active mind well and soberly employed, by which they continue judicious;

As there is at present with all the increase of population with all the Thirst among all ranks of people for this usefull amusem<sup>t</sup> no more than 2 Theatres which was only thought sufficient 33 years ago, thousands are excluded and fly to more expensive and less edifying scenes of pleasure, — and these have no choice — they attempt to get to a play — find no Receipt Night after Night, the House is full; tis so true that many Women of fashion give up sending for places, many a Tradesmans family is drove into more dangerous pleasure



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Admitting there is any truth in the preceding observations 'tis humbly hoped his Majesty will graciously condescend to use his prerogative in granting a 3<sup>d</sup> Patent for a Winter Theatre, but sh<sup>d</sup> any doubts arise in respect to the influence it may have upon the property of the present Patentees it may with deference be urged, that as to the Proprietors of Drury Lane, they have by a continuation of Royal Indulgences made princely Fortunes, one of them without Heirs to Inherit; the other having only an illegitimate Son. — The other Patentees possess by purchase; but to any arguments in their favour, the following observations may 'tis hoped with justice be opposed — 'tis certain they clear themselves Annis £10,000 — for which they have invested a Capital of £20,000 — which after deducting the Interest at 5<sup>th</sup> leaves them a clear profit of £7500 — If then with their Patent<sup>s</sup> being perpetual, plusage retains its value — so that admitting a 3<sup>d</sup> Patent should be granted as it cannot be presumed to rival them, no oppressive disadvantages can arise, — Let it be admitted some division of profit should be made, it would not be unjust; their gain is great — it will bear a reduction — and



and if tis tried in the Scale of Justice it will not preponderate  
in their favor 12% is more than a profit to the Man of  
Trade who gives a credit, and runs the risk of bad Debt  
for his Goods what then may it be called in a Business  
where the money is paid daily clear of every Risk & clear  
of every Deduction — admitting this it allows a  
Drawback upon them of £3000 leaving them  
a clear profit of about 12% — but it is by no means  
certain they could suffer even that Deduction

This monopoly of Royal Favor ties up even the  
Hands of Government from extending its influence —  
for we find in History it has been no uncommon thing to  
reward the faithful services of distinguished Characters  
by this mode of Grant, which created a new Place a Sin-  
cere well worth the Acceptance of any Gent. whose merit  
either in parliamentary or other Capacities intitled them  
to solicit such marks of favor being no less than £3000  
10. Ann. among which were

Mr. Congreve

Mr. Congreve

Henry Killigrew

J. In. Ventrush

J. Tho. Skipwith

J. Rich. Steel M.P.



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who obtained the grant often in favor of persons who con-  
ducted the undertaking <sup>7000</sup> ~~paying them~~ the stipulated  
allowance

[Enclosure of 6653]



