

To His Royal Highness, The Prince Regent;
The Memorial of George Colman, principal Proprietor of the
Theatre Royal in the Hay Markets,

Humbly sheweth,

That Your Memorialist, with the utmost duty and respect, implores Your Royal Highness's consideration, in relief of the above Theatre, which is labouring under extreme difficulties:—the causes of which difficulties have been, of late years, rapidly increasing; particularly through the protracted Seasons of the Winter Theatres, and through the recent License obtained for the performance of New English Operas, and Ballets, during the Summer, at the Lyceum;—and, also, through the many places of nominally limited exhibitions, which have started up, in addition to the Surrey Theatre, Sadlers Wells, and Astley's. In all such last mention'd numerous places of subordinate Entertainments, the Act of Parliament is evaded. Pieces, though constructed in verse, are not sung, as the Statute directs, but spoken, so as to appear like prose; while a harpsichord, only just audible, is touch'd, occasionally;—and thus Dialogue, and complete Dramas, are rightly given, under the pretence of slight Burlettas, and Recitative accompanied by Musick. — Even old Plays, Operas, and Farces, appropriate to the regular Theatres, are, by similar artifice, frequently perverted to their purposes; and instances of subterfuge are so multiplied that all the above places have, virtually, become Play Houses;—to the great injury of all Theatres, but especially of that in the Hay Markets, which must contend with them in the midst of the summer, when their attractions are most strong, and the Town most empty.

Your Memorialist, further, humbly sheweth, that, in consequence of the Winter Theatres having so far extended their Seasons, the Season of the Hay Markets Theatre, now licenced for Five Months, is reduced to about Seven Weeks; unless it exercise the whole of its grants to its own destruction:—

For Your Memorialist most humbly prays Your Royal Highness to consider, that he has twice attempted to collect an almost entire New Company of Performers, from the Country; and that, in these experimental struggles to maintain his independence of the Winter Houses, in the fair exercise of his License, while their ~~Theatres~~ Theatres have been open, he has fail'd, and suffer'd loss:—and experience has, now, convinced Your Memorialist that histrionick talents are too scarce to enable a London Manager to present

to the Publick of this Metropolis nearly a full Company of new provincial Performers, all at once, which would give satisfaction. — a Company might be establish'd, in the course of two or three seasons, by adding to a few Performers, who have newly succeeded with the Town, others who may, from time to time, arise; But, without a further extension of license, this cannot be effected in the Hay Market Theatre; — for when new Performers become favourites there, they are engaged by the Winter Proprietors; and the talents which have struck root are transplanted, and lost to the soil that reard them.

And Your Memorialist, further sheweth, that the monopoly of Performers which the Winter Proprietors possess over him is occasion'd by their unlimited power of employing the Actors for the greatest part, or the whole, of the year; while Your Memorialist can only hold out to them less extended and less solid emoluments. — Even after their Theatres are closed, the Actors are only allow'd to perform with him by courtesy from the Winter Managers, according to their agreements with them: — so that, although the Hay Market Theatre has, for so long a series of years, boasted the sanction and protection of His Majesty, the Winter Managers can keep its doors shut, ad libitum; or, otherwise, they must be open'd to a heavy loss, from the reasons and causes above stated.

And Your Memorialist, further sheweth, that, no longer ago than in the year Eighteen hundred and nine, His Majestys then Lord Chamberlain (the late Earl of Dartmouth) granted a Summer License, to Mr Arnold, to open the Lyceum, for the performance of New English Operas, and Ballets; on which grant Your Memorialist respectfully remonstrated; and the Lord Chamberlain was pleased to inform him, in writing, that "Mr Arnold being in possession of his License, it could not be revoked, because he had expended money upon the faith of it" but adding, that, "when he granted it he did not imagine that it would materially interfere with the interests of the Hay Market Theatre."

But Your Memorialist most humbly states, that, if Mr Arnolds expenditure of money, in a new scheme, on the faith of his recent License, be an abstracted argument in his favour, it is plain, a fortiori, that the Proprietors of the Hay Market Theatre have infinitely more serious claims upon consideration; — that Theatre having been in possession of the Lord Chamberlains annual Licence, since the year Seventeen hundred and seventy eight, and having proceeded upon the faith of His Majestys most gracious protection; — upon which faith the Proprietors have (as Mr Arnold has not) risk'd their whole fortunes. — The avowal, also, that the License was given to

Mr Arnold" with no conception that it would materially injure the Hay Market Theatre" (which it materially has) involves it in a candid admission, on the part of the late Lord Chamberlain, that the above Theatre should be defended from invasion and ruin.

And Your Memoiralist, further, sheweth, that the License for the New English Opera render'd the Lyceum, in the first instance, equal to the Hay Market Theatre: — it has since proved superior to it. How cramp'd your Memoiralist is in the means of procuring and retaining attractive performers has been above shew'd; but, by the connection of the Holder of the Lyceum with the Proprietors of the late Drury Lane Theatre, he is enabled to make his Winter speculations with them profitable to his summers scheme; to blend his double interests; and to modify his summer engagements with nearly whom he chooses of the Winter Company, and, thus, both in point of saving and attraction, to command very great advantages. As to the Exhibition of New Operas, Operas produced years ago, and Musical Farces brought out in the Winter, have been already acted under this grant: — and, by a subterfuge, new Plays of any description, by the insertion of a few airs, may be easily made New Operas. — The first season of the English Operas hurt the receipts of the Hay Market Theatre; the second most materially diminish'd them; and the third (in the present year) has involved the Proprietors in a loss of Several thousand pounds.

Your Memoiralist, therefore, for himself, and for his partners, humbly prays
Your Royal Highness,

First, that he may be relieved from the opposition set up against him by the summer License, at the Lyceum, which was not given as a permanent grant, but merely as an experiment to ascertain whether New English Operas might proceed without injury to others whose property has been for years under the protection of the Crown: — and
Secondly, in consideration of the protracted Seasons of the Winter Theatres, in consideration of all he hath suffer'd and doth suffer, in the apprehension of his property being totally crush'd, and himself reduced to the utmost point of distress, that Your Royal Highness will be pleas'd to grant him such an addition, namely, that of Three Months, to his present Annual License, as will enable him to retain a Company of Performers exclusively; and as the only means of procuring him that subsistence which it was His Majestys most gracious intention to afford him when His Majesty originally allow'd him to enjoy the Lord Chamberlains License; — but which most gracious

Intention is now frustrated, by the causes above mention'd.

And Your Memorialist will ever pray &c &c

28th - September 1811.

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W. P. S. on

W. P. S. on
enclosure -
C. Johnson - Memorial

Sep. 28 1811

For
His Royal Highness,
The Prince Regent,
The Memorial of George
Colman of the Theatre
Royal Hay Market.