

LEGENDARY TRAILBLAZERS



MAXINE ELLIOTT (1868-1940)
**American Actress, Theatre
Owner/Manager**

In 1908 she opened her own theatre, The Maxine Elliott, located on 39th Street, just off Broadway. At the time, she was the only woman in the United States running her own theater. "The stage offers bigger prizes for a woman than any other profession. and for those lucky enough to gain the prizes, life presents a broader horizon and many of the agreeable perquisites of success. Try the stage, but be sure it is your vocation. You must have a serious ambition and reasonable qualifications: the constitution of a horse, the skin of a rhinoceros, and that which is perhaps

the best definition of genius-an infinite capacity for taking pains."

Theatre, August 1908.

EVA LE GALLIENNE (1899-1991)

British-born Actress, Producer, Director

Eva Le Gallienne was a high-strung daughter of the poet Richard Le Gallienne. She was educated in Paris and made her "somewhat terrified" stage debut in London's West End in *Monna Vanna* in 1914. She played numerous roles in New York theatre, giving distinctive performances in Ferenc Molnar's *Liliom* and *The Swan*. In the fall of 1926 she obtained the 14th Street Theatre (105 West 14th Street), a playhouse with a leaking roof and an illustrious past. She was of the conviction that a great mass audience could be found for fine plays and that the location of the theatre didn't matter. Under the new name of Civic Repertory Theatre, she presented the works of Shakespeare, Ibsen, Chekhov, and J. M. Barrie at a popular price scale-35 cents to \$1.50-and doing these plays with her own permanent and carefully selected company. Nearly 40 plays were presented during Ms. Le Gallienne's regime. Her permanent company included such talented actors as Alla Nazimova and Joseph Schildkraut. Her audiences composed of workers, students, and teachers saw *Camille*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Alice in Wonderland*. She staged many of the productions and appeared in the majority of them. She operated her theatre for five seasons, closed it for a sabbatical year, and then played for three more seasons. Although minus a subsidy during the final two seasons, her theatre was generally playing to 97% of capacity. "We learned a great deal at the Civic, and I suppose we were ten years ahead of our time. *Peter Pan* and *Romeo & Juliet* went wonderfully, but *The Cherry Orchard* with Nazimova as Madame Ravenskaya was probably our best."



THE SOCIETY FOR THE
PRESERVATION OF
THEATRICAL HISTORY



STAGE STRUCK *From Kemble to Kate*

STUDY GUIDE

A Brief Chronicle of the Heritage of Actresses in the 19th and early 20th Centuries, featuring a Timeline and Bibliography

"Whether a woman should go on the stage depends entirely on her motive. If she wishes to go on for amusement or to gratify her vanity, I emphatically answer 'NO!' but if she wishes to earn a living or adopt the stage because she has love and real talent for it, I say 'YES'."

Joseph Jefferson, famous creator of Rip Van Winkle

This Study Guide has been sponsored, in part, by the League of Professional Theatre Women (LPTW), a non-profit organization which has been promoting visibility and increasing opportunities for women in theatre since 1982.

LEAGUE OF PROFESSIONAL
**THEATRE
WOMEN**

www.theatrewomen.org

The Study Guide is a product of the research and scholarship of the **LPTW Heritage Committee.**

WOMEN'S WORK IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: NO GENDER PARITY

The common belief in the 19th Century was that the woman was subservient. Her jobs were to support her husband and be the moral teacher for her children. She was advised not to leave her "sphere" to compete with him or to supervise him. Women who worked outside of the home were not respected.

Unmarried women were employed in the cotton mills, silk, lace, shoe, wool, and hat factories. In 1817, female employees in a cotton mill in Falls River, MA worked from 5am to 8pm. They were allowed half an hour at midday to rush home, eat and then return to work. The mills were unventilated, filled with cotton dust, and the rancid smell of fumes from the oil lamps.

Mill girls in Lowell, MA were paid 35 to 50 cents a day plus room and board. In the 1860s, 30,000 female factory workers in New York City received an average salary of 33 cents a day. Sewing machine operators earned from \$5 to \$8 a week, out of which they had to pay \$3 to \$4 for, as one woman wrote, "a bed in a wretched room, often with several other occupants, and without a window."

Seamstresses, tobacco packers and book folders averaged only one dollar a week. In 1868, milliners were averaging from \$4 to \$7 a week; saleswomen from \$6 to \$7. In the 1870s and '80s women mill workers were paid only half the wages paid to men. A male factory worker received \$14 a week for performing the same work for which women were paid \$4.

Domestic servants in the homes of privilege were on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In 1858, they made \$5 a month or less. Saleswomen had to stand behind their counters from 5am until 10pm for six days a week and a half day on Sunday to take inventory. Like factory workers they were fined for tardiness or for overstaying their allowed three to five minutes in the company bathrooms. They were paid less than half the wages paid to men for the same work.

In 1837 Mount Holyoke Seminary in South Hadley, MA was the first women's institution of higher learning. In 1841 the first woman was awarded a college degree. In the 1840s male teachers had average salaries almost three times those of females. By the 1860s they were still paid only half of men's salaries. By 1867 few women teachers were ever paid more than \$600 a year.

By 1893 the average salary for working women in New York City was still only 60 cents a day, ranging from \$2 a day for cashiers to 30 cents a day for eastside factory workers, who worked from 12 to 15 hours a day.

Between 1850-1900 there were a limited group of women who became telegraph operators, typists and government clerks-higher skilled and higher wage jobs..

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"The object of life is to gain happiness, but the means of obtaining happiness differ widely and it is the conflicts that help to make interesting dramas."

Daniel Frohman

MAJOR THEATRICAL PUBLICATIONS : TIMELINE

Broadway Ballyhoo by Mary C. Henderson (Excerpt)

- 1831-1902 ***The Spirit of the Times: A Chronicle of the Turf, Agriculture, Field Sports, Literature and the Stage***
- 1853-1924 ***The New York Clipper***: A Weekly which was most familiar to theatrical professionals during the second half of the 19th century. T. Allston Brown who chronicled the New York stage in several volumes was its most famous editor. In 1924 *Variety* absorbed the magazine without its sports pages.
- 1879-1922 ***The New York Dramatic Mirror*** begins publication. It was acquired in 1881 by the 20 year old Harrison Grey Fiske. Under his aegis the magazine found a "cause celebre" in the monopoly known as the Theatrical Syndicate. From 1896 until 1911 when Fiske left the paper, he crucified the syndicate in every issue.
- 1886-1893 ***The Theatre: A Record of the Stage*** was a weekly which endeavored to provide the public with a bright and interesting paper.
- 1900-1931 ***Theatre Magazine*** (added magazine to its name in 1917) was the single most important and influential theatrical magazine of its time and the closest thing to a magazine of record for an entire era. In 1900 it was published by the Meyer brothers and was edited for six years by Arthur Hornblow Sr.
- 1905 ***Variety*** was founded by Sime Silverman.
- 1917-1964 ***Theatre Arts Magazine*** a monthly publication edited by Edith Isaacs until 1945 when Rosamond Gilder assumed the post. In 1948 Alexander Sandor Ince merged *Theatre Arts* with *Stage*, a one time, rival publication that ended in 1939.

THE WALNUT STREET THEATRE

- 1809 Walnut Street Theatre is founded in Philadelphia and remains the oldest operating theatre in the U.S.
- 1812 *The Rivals* premieres with President Thomas Jefferson in the audience.
- 1837 Gas footlights are installed for the first time in America
- 1855 First theatre to feature "air conditioning"

THE STAGE AS AN OCCUPATION FOR WOMEN

What Advantage Has it Over Other Occupations for Women?

Chapter 12, *STAGE CONFIDENCES*, (1902)

by CLARA MORRIS

Consider acting as a practical occupation. The independence of the actress is a great advantage over other workers. Measured by the bondage of other working-women, it is very great. We both have duties to perform for which we receive a given wage, yet there is a difference. The working girl is expected to be subservient, she is too often regarded as menial, she is ordered. An actress, even of small characters, is considered a necessary part of the whole. She assists, she attends, she obliges.

True her life is hard, she has no home comforts, but then she has no heavy duties to perform, no housework, bed-making, sweeping, dishwashing or laundry and when her work is done she is her own mistress. She goes and comes at her own will; she has time for self improvement, but best of all she has something to look forward to. That is a great advantage over girls of other occupations, who have such a small chance of advancement.

The theatre is the only place where a salary is paid to students during all the time they are learning their profession; surely a wonderful advantage over other professions to be self-sustaining from the first. In the art of acting the response and recognition come swift as lightning, sweet as nectar, while you are young enough to enjoy and to make still greater efforts to improve and advance.

"What is the greatest difficulty a young actress has to surmount?" Acting is a matter of pretense, and she who can best pretend a splendid passion, a tender love, or a murderous hate, is admittedly the finest actress.

Time was when stage wardrobe was a pretense too. An actress was expected to be historically correct as the shape and style of her costume; but no one expected her queenly robes to be of silk velvet, her imperial ermine to be anything rarer than rabbit skin. I have had and seen others have, in the old days, really gorgeous brocades made by cutting out great bunches of flowers from chintz and applying them to a cheaper background, and then picking out the high lights with embroidery silk, the effect being beautiful and rich. All these make-believes were necessary then on a weekly salary of \$30 or \$35, for a leading lady drew no more.

But times are changed, stage lighting is better, stronger. And more is expected from the actress of today. Formerly she was required to sink her own individuality in that of the woman she pretended to be; and next, if it was a dramatized novel she was acting in, she was to make herself look as nearly like the described heroine as possible.

I have often been told by famous women of the past that the beautiful Mrs. Russell, then of Wallack's Theatre, was the originator in this country of richly elegant realism in costuming. What I would ask for is moderation, freedom for the actress from the burden of senseless extravagance, not by the public but by the mischievous small hands of sister actresses who have private means outside of their salaries. Extravagance is inartistic. What a nightmare dress used to be for me! Sometimes a girl loses her chance at a small part that she may be

right for, because some other girl can out-dress her. When the simplest fashionable gown costs \$125, what must a ball gown with cloak, gloves, fan, slippers and all come to?

If I were a young actress, I would rather be noted for acting than for originating a new style of garment; And though the young actress has the clothes question heavy on her mind and finds it hard to keep up with others and at the same time out of debt, she has the right to hope that by and by she will be so good an actress, and so valuable to the theatre, that a fat salary will make the clothes matter play second fiddle to the question of fine acting

***“Three qualities are indispensable for success on the stage.
Personality, Pluck and Perseverance.”*** David Belasco

MAJOR INVENTIONS AFFECTING LIVING & WORK CONDITIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

- 1800 - POWER LOOM
- 1840 - MODERN KEROSENE LAMP
- 1846 - SEWING MACHINE
- 1857 - ELEVATORS
- 1879 - INCANDESCENT LIGHT BULB (LASTS 40 HOURS)
- 1880 - 16 WATT LIGHTBULB (LASTED 1500 HOURS)
- CARPET SWEEPER
- 1888 - KODAK PORTABLE CAMERA
"You Press the Button, We Do The Rest!"
- 1889 - ELECTRIC SEWING MACHINE
- 1891 - ROTARY FAN
- 1893 - FLUORESCENT LAMPS
- 1899 - FIRST COMMERCIAL ESCALATOR

HISTORICAL TIDBIT

Before the end of the nineteenth century, when indoor plumbing became common, chores that involved the use of water were particularly demanding. Well-to-do urban families had piped water or a private cistern, but the overwhelming majority of American families got their water from a hydrant, a pump, a well, or a stream located some distance from their homes. According to calculations made in 1886, a typical North Carolina housewife had to carry water from a pump or a well or a spring eight to ten times each day. Washing, boiling and rinsing a single load of laundry used about 50 gallons of water. Over the course of a year she walked 148 miles carrying over 36 tons of water.” www.digitalhistory.uh.edu (online textbook)

STAGE LIGHTING IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY *The Development of the Drama by Brander Matthews (Excerpt)*

The most marked differences between our more modern playhouses at the beginning of the 20th century and their predecessors a hundred years ago are due to the improvement in the methods of lighting, gas giving a far better light than oil, and the later electricity having many advantages over gas. As a result of the newer means of illumination the actor can now stand on whatever part of the stage it is best for him to place himself, and he is no longer forced to come down to the center of the footlights so that his features may be in the full glare of the “focus” (as it used to be termed). The footlights themselves are of less importance, since there are now “borderlights” and “bunch lights,” and since the whole stage can be flooded with a sudden glare or instantly plunged into darkness at the turn of a handle or two. In the ill-lighted theatres of old, the dramatic poet had to take care that his plot was made clear in words as well as in deeds; and he was tempted often to let his rhetoric run away with him. But in the well-lighted modern houses, he can, if he chooses, let actions speak louder than words.

FUN FACT: Once the distinction between auditorium and stage lighting systems was made it was possible to extinguish the auditorium or burner chandelier separately, and the custom of darkening the auditorium was in place by the end of the 19th century.

MAKING UP: A PRACTICAL AND EXHAUSTIVE TREATISE ON THE ART FOR PROFESSIONAL AND AMATEUR (1905) Excerpt by May Robson (1858-1942)

What the brush is to the artist, make-up is to the actor. I cannot act without it. How do I put it on?" "Mix it with brains", as Sir Joshua Reynolds said. Observe, watch, experiment, that's the way. You often hear young actresses complaining that they can't understand how the veterans in the business get such perfect make-ups. By observing, that's how; not on the stage, but in the street cars, elevated cars—everywhere. The born actress is always seeing types. She stores them away in her memory for future use. Why, an actor or actress who is worth his salt is as constantly on the lookout for fresh character studies as a painter. Some are comic. The lines of the face irresistibly suggest laughter.

In some characters I use no make-up, or rather a trick make-up. Grease paint is not the pleasantest thing to have on the face, but you get used to it. Of course I have to have wigs to match every part. That is something the actress can't make for herself, but she can design, invent, and devise, and the wigmaker can be made to follow her directions. The same is true of the costumer; and of course both wigmaker and costumer are oftenest called upon to imitate nature, to imitate painstakingly some queer, odd, or pathetic bit of human material picked up in the street by the actress herself.

As Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, I got my idea of the make-up from a poor, overworked farmer's wife, tired and worn by care and worry, whom I had known. I studied the lines in her face, and imitated them so that I won the sympathy of the audience.

Some actresses think that a juvenile make-up is simple—just a few dabs of rouge, lines under the eyes, red on the lips, and so on. But it's not so easy. One girl should put white on the inside of the eyelid because the pupils of her eyes are too large for the rest. Another should use the directly opposite method of loading the lashes with cosmetics, because the pupil is encircled with white and she needs color.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS BETWEEN THE NINETEENTH TO EARLY 20TH CENTURY AS EXPRESSED BY ACTORS AND HISTORIANS

From *The Fabulous Forrest* by Montrose J. Moses

"Regarding the steamboat in the early days (1830s): Whenever steam threatened to give out, then was the time for landing, and "hands" and passengers would fall to and cut enough wood to go a bit farther. One spent more time stopping than going. Often the actor smiled with pleasure at the prospect of a 300 mile horseback ride. The actor took conditions as he found them—ploughed through mud, or dashed irregularly over corduroy roads. Risks had to be taken, whether or not the road was known, whether or not the waterway was charted. Land rats and water thieves infested the roadside and the shore. Indians gazed at the travelers from screened underbrush."

From the pen of Ruth Gordon in her autobiography *My Side*

"In Cheyenne there was a storm and all the lights went out. We each had to carry a candle to light us while we played the show. Heading back from the coast, we ran into full summer. Terrible heat, mostly travel in day coaches, windows open, soot and grit pouring in. Out the window, the world had turned into hot green cornfields, not a breeze stirring, even the corn silk lay limp. Sun, dry earth, sun, cornfields, sun, dry earth, everybody wilted."

Daniel Frohman remembered in his book *Encore*

"Since my early days, I have seen many changes in the geography of the city, especially on Broadway. I remember the horse cars and the time when women wore such voluminous skirts that a favorite amusement used to be to watch them squeeze themselves into the cars."

Arthur Hornblow in *Training For the Stage*

"Travelling 'on the road' is trying for the young actress. Playing one or two night stands, always on the jump, practically living on trains, exposed to all kinds of weather, eating poor food, getting no sleep, the life is far from easy."

Ward Morehouse in *Matinee Tomorrow* reflects

In 1898 "first class ship fare to England was \$50.00 and a round trip to Niagara Falls, via the West Shore Railroad was \$8.00. It was an era of clanking Broadway cable cars, ungainly Hudson River ferryboats...The early automobiles were being driven through the city's streets to the accompaniment of chuckling and muttered abuse from the pedestrian multitude."

FUN FACT: "Jerk Water Town": Where the freight train doesn't stop, just slows down for the engineer to jerk the water pipe open and the man on the caboose closes it. In a "jerk town" or "playing the jerks", nobody from the management was looking at you, so an actor could learn the "know-how".

HISTORICAL TIDBIT

The very first streetcar in the U.S. appeared on November 26th, 1832 on the New York and Harlem Railroad in New York City. The earliest streetcars used horses and sometimes mules, usually two as a team, to haul the cars. By the mid-1880s, there were 415 street railway companies in the USA operating over 6,000 miles of track and carrying 188 million passengers per year using horse cars.

CHURCH AND STAGE: THE THEATRE AS TARGET OF CONDEMNATION IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA (Excerpt) Claudia Durst Johnson, McFarland & Co. Inc. 2008

"The values that the church and its mainstream religious public, especially its middle class, promoted, are at the root of anti-theatrical fervor in the United States. The Church's unqualified insistence on concealment, order, tradition, self-control, self-denial, industry, and rigid class stratification frequently resulted in physical repression, prudery, and repressive attitudes toward women, children and the poor."

The churchgoing mainstream had its foundation in the ideal family living quietly and orderly in its Victorian home. Here deportment and order took on the force of moral value. For those who could afford to dine, meals were taken at precise times. To sleep late was to be a laggard, to bed late was profligate. Good habits, genteel manners, and a predictable routine were signs of moral stability in the sacrosanct home. The whole of Western civilization seemed to hang in the balance as one chose the right fork or the right hat. How different was the life of the actor. Theatre people rarely had the luxury of stable homes, moving as they did from place to place in search of work. A painful line from a letter by America's first lady of the stage, Mary Ann Duff, illustrates: "I wish to return home when it please my children to let me know where that home is."

The Victorian insistence on concealment was epitomized by the multiple layers of clothing that concealed the human body. There was the long-sleeved shirtwaist, worn often in the heat of summer, the long skirts, the fear of exposing an ankle in alighting from a carriage, and, for men, cravats, suit coats, and sometimes overcoats for gentlemen, even in summer.

Parallel to concealment of the body in long clothes was the concealment of what was deemed unpleasant or coarse in language, particularly matters regarding the body or remotely suggesting sensuality. This was the age of euphemism, the use of words to mute realities. Thus, leg became limb; chicken breast became white meat; weathercock became weather vane; cock became rooster; prostitute became fallen woman; cow manure became good rich earth, hell became Hades or Guinea. For men and boys, especially, emotions had to be concealed, especially those that would naturally tend to evoke tears, for tears were a sign of weakness reserved for women. Loss of emotional control was undignified and betrayed a "common" up-bringing.

The clergy also preached the necessity of holding excitement and emotion at bay. So, for example, leisure activities were carefully supervised and kept to a minimum. Typical activities of ideal wives consisted of making afternoon calls, doing needle work and attending Bible and missionary meetings. The reading of fiction, poetry, and philosophy were not encouraged as pastimes for women because it stimulated the emotions and intellect and was known to cause not only dissatisfaction, but both mental and physical ailments. Some educated women allowed themselves the self-indulgence of keeping diaries.

Like their mothers, little girls were allowed only the quiet diversions of sewing, playing with dolls, sometimes painting, restrained piano playing, and readings of a moral or religious nature. Physical activities were forbidden as unladylike. Little boys were allowed the latitude of high-jinks on the playing fields and in swimming holes, but all children, when in adult society, were to be seen and not heard.

(continued)

Victorian economic values, as well as personal ones, affected the reception of the theatre by the church and its supporters. The howling dogs of disorder and misrule were as apparent and as threatening to society at large as they were to individual character. Power in America was held by wellborn men, successful businessmen, and prominent men of the cloth who were the darlings of big business.

The church encouraged certain behaviors and condemned others with the purpose of assisting capitalism in working smoothly and productively as God intended. For businessmen certain conditions had to prevail: individuals, particularly women, children and members of the working classes, had to remain quietly in their proper places, had to avoid idle pleasure seeking, turbulence and disruption: tradition and order had to be maintained: and the moral requirements of the clergy and religious public had to be respected. **The mere existence of such an inverse subculture as the theatre posed a constant threat to the civilization built by the Protestant Ethic."**

Enter the Working Actress: Stars Are Born



Charlotte Cushman 1816-1876 Legendary American Actress

"I think I love and reverence all the arts equally, only putting my own just above the others; because in it I recognize the union and culmination of my own. To me it seems as if, when God conceived the world, that was poetry; he formed it, and that was sculpture; He colored it, and that was painting; He peopled it with living beings, and that was the grand, divine, eternal drama."

DANIEL BLUM'S PICTORIAL HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN THEATRE 1860-1870

By mid-19th Century Manhattan's population was over a half million. There were 6 regular theatres, plus several music halls or so-called "gardens". for opera, ballets, concerts, variety shows-later to become vaudeville and minstrel troupes. There were also theatres in Brooklyn, Williamsburg, Greenpoint, the Bronx, Long Island City and Flushing. But Manhattan was already the hub of the American Theatre.



DANIEL FROHMAN (1851-1940) Jewish American Theatrical Producer-Manager

With his brothers, he helped to develop a system of road companies that would tour the nation while the show also played in New York City. The three brothers worked together at the Madison Square Theatre in the early 1880s. Daniel was the producer-manager of the old and new Lyceum Theatres and the Lyceum stock company from 1886 to 1902. During this period he

launched careers for such actors as Henry Miller, Maude Adams, and Richard Mansfield.

BLUM: 1880-1890

The 1880s brought to an end what historians call the "golden era" of the American theatre and began the "combination system" that was in the next decade to kill the brilliant stock companies, bringing theatres and "the road" under the control of powerful managers and theatrical combines who found it more profitable to send complete productions on tour from city to city rather than to maintain local stock companies and mount new productions in each place. Plays were often produced more with a view to road tour profits than for their artistic merit. A "hit" play did not need a great-name star to succeed on the road. Some managers tailored their plays to fit their actors and "the play" ceased to be "the thing".

- 1882 -Wallack's new theatre opened with a revival of *School For Scandal*.
Minnie Maddern made her adult debut in *Fogg's Ferry*.
- 1882 -The Actors Fund of America was organized by Edwin Booth, Lawrence Barrett, Lester Wallack, Augustin Daly and A.M. Palmer.
- 1884 -Playbill was launched.
- 1884 -American Academy of Dramatic Arts founded as first school of acting in the U.S. by Franklin Haven Sargent. Cost of a year's course was \$400.
- 1886 -Daniel Frohman took over management of the Lyceum Theatre until 1902.

BLUM 1890-1900

In 1890 **David Belasco**, having become a successful playwright, left the Lyceum Theatre to become an independent producer and star maker, rivaling Charles Frohman.

There were other monopolistic interests growing as well, especially the Klaw and Erlanger booking agency, and Nirdlinger and Zimmerman, managers from Philadelphia. They, with Charles Frohman and Alf Hayman, in 1896 formed the Theatrical Syndicate that for a number of years held firm control over most American theatres, and forced their own terms on managers and touring stars. Eventually, independent stars and producers like Minnie Maddern Fiske and her husband Harrison Grey Fiske broke its power. The rise of the Shubert brothers also helped defeat the Syndicate.

In 1897 Mrs. Fiske had two great successes in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and in 1899 costarring with Maurice Barrymore in *Becky Sharp*. By 1900 the star system was flourishing. There were over 400 "Dramatic" companies and stock companies touring the United States. Over 40 "Opera and Extravaganza" companies were in existence, and both Vaudeville and Burlesque were popular.

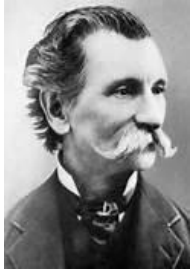
HISTORICAL TIDBIT - 12th Night Club

In 1891, Alice Fischer founded the Twelfth Night Club, Inc. She envisioned a sister organization to the Lambs and Players. Originally known as the F.A.D.s (fencing, acting and dancing), Daniel Frohman suggested "The Twelfth Night Club" would be a more appropriate name since members were all Broadway leading ladies. The archives contain many autographed photos of past members including Modjeska, Laurette Taylor, Viola Allen, the first president, May Robson, Minnie Maddern Fiske and Helen Hayes. They are still holding functions at a space on West 57th St. provided by the Actors Fund of America and continue as a support network of encouragement and companionship for actresses in the 21st century.

BLUM: 1870-1880

The 1870s are distinguished mainly as a period of growth and expansion. The new completed 50,000 miles of road beds across the continent, and the extraordinary growth of the population, meant a similar expansion in a demand for entertainment. More and more road shows trekked to smaller cities. The older exponents of the classic acting styles began to find themselves less welcomed by the increasingly sophisticated audiences of the major cities. Younger, more naturalistic players came to popularity, many of them continuing into the 20th Century.

MAJOR THEATRICAL MANAGERS-PRODUCERS OF THE 19TH CENTURY



JOHN A. ELLSLER (1821-1903)

American Actor, Theatre Manager, Acting Instructor

Ellsler helped make Cleveland, OH one of the more important theatre towns in post-Civil War America. He first became acquainted with the Theatre as a delivery boy for a firm that printed theatrical programs and posters. He came to Cleveland in 1853 where his management saved the Cleveland Theatre (later known as the Academy of Music) from bankruptcy. For two decades the Academy of Music was one of the more prestigious theatres and acting schools in

America. Nearly every major actor of the period appeared there He groomed Clara Morris for stardom; she was a member of his company for eight years.



AUGUSTIN DALY (1838-1899)

American Theatrical Manager and Playwright

Daly worked as a dramatic critic for several NY papers from 1859, and adapted or wrote a number of plays. His first success was *Under the Gaslight* (1867). In 1869 he became the manager of the Fifth Avenue Theatre on 24th Street and in 1873 the Fifth Avenue Theatre on 28th Street. In 1879 he opened Daly's Theatre at Broadway and 30th Street. Some of the best actors on the American stage owed their training

and first successes to him: Maude Adams, Maurice Barrymore, John Drew, Isadora Duncan, Mrs. Gilbert, Clara Morris, and Ada Rehan. Daly's willingness to "stoop to the curb and bestow upon the low, untried actor a chance of greatness" earned him his nickname "Little Man Auggie".



ALBERT MARSHALL PALMER (1838-1905)

American Theatrical Manager

Palmer first entered the theatrical business as co-manager and head bookkeeper of the Union Square Theatre in 1871, becoming its manager in 1872. Due to his keen business sense and theatrical taste, he assembled a first-rate acting company. He managed the Madison Square Theatre between 1884-91. His successes included Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan* and Clyde Fitch's *Beau Brummell*. He was one of the first American managers to pay royalties to

foreign authors and a major force in the founding of the Actors Fund of America.

Acting was at last becoming an honorable profession, although those choosing it required staunch physical stamina to withstand the rigors of stage coach and early riverboat travel, to say nothing of makeshift lodgings. Actors had to learn a tremendous repertory of roles, frequently doing three plays in a week. Yet, a particular character sometimes offered a star virtually a lifetime role and he would tour with his own company, garnering the financial rewards of actor-producership.

In 1861 the Civil War brought a temporary depression to the theatre, followed a season later by a resurgence. The war hysteria helped four *Uncle Tom's Cabin* shows to thrive simultaneously in New York. The 253 performances of actress-manager Laura Keene's *Seven Sisters* described as an "operatic, spectacular, diabolic, musical, terpsichorean, farcical burletta" enjoyed the longest consecutive run up to that time. Ms. Keene introduced the first Saturday matinee in 1863.

In 1864 the three Booth brothers (Edwin, John Wilkes and Junius Brutus) gave a single benefit performance of *Julius Caesar* (their only performance together ever) to help erect a statue of Shakespeare in Central Park. The most popular stars who toured during this decade include Charlotte Cushman, Edwin Forrest, the Booths, Adah Isaacs Menken as "Mazeppa", Joseph Jefferson, Charles and Ellen Kean, E. A. Sothorn as "David Garrick".



LAURA KEENE (1826-1873)

British-born American Actress- Manager

In her 20-year career, she became known as the first powerful female manager in New York. After several stage performances in London, she accepted an offer from James William Wallack to go to New York and serve as the leading lady in the stock company at his successful theatre. In order to have greater control over her career, she entered into theatre management with the help of John Lutz. In November 1856 a new theatre was built named Laura Keene's Theatre, and she oversaw

seven popular seasons until 1863. The comedy *Our American Cousin* debuted there in 1858, but on April 14, 1865 it was playing at Ford's Theatre in Washington, DC. She was in the wings, waiting for her entrance cue when John Wilkes Booth (not part of the cast) rushed from the stage carrying a dagger and struck her hand out of his way as he ran by. She heard an outcry from the audience, some of them yelling "Kill the actors!" Upon learning that Lincoln had been shot, she rushed onstage and managed to quiet the audience. She then proceeded up to Lincoln's box just as an hysterical Mary Todd Lincoln was being escorted away. Laura rushed to the President and held his head on her lap until men arrived to take him to the house across the street. One reporter wrote "her hair and dress were in disorder and not only was her gown soaked in Lincoln's blood, but even her cheeks, where her fingers had strayed were bedaubed with the sorry stains!"

HISTORICAL TIDBIT - The Gilded Age

The term "**Gilded Age**" was coined by writers Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner in *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today* (1873), satirizing what they believed to be an era of serious social problems disguised by a thin, gold gilding.

MAJOR INVENTIONS AFFECTING COMMUNICATIONS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

- 1861 -Western Union Builds first Transcontinental Telegraph Line
- 1874 -Typewriter appears on open market
- 1876 -Alexander Graham Bell invents Electrical Speech Machine, a microphone that would become the telephone
- 1877 - Edison invents phonograph
- 1878 -Bell sets up first telephone exchange in New Haven, CT
- 1884 -Long distance connection between Boston and NYC
- 1885 -AT&T is formed
- 1896 -First theatrical exhibition of Edison's Vitascope
- 1897 -Marconi receives official British patent for the radio

TRAINING FOR THE STAGE BY ARTHUR HORNBLow **The Stage As A Career For Women (Excerpt)**

Almost every young girl has been stage-struck at some time or other and fired with the ambition to enter upon the theatrical career. Caught by the glamour of the footlights, she thinks she would like to be an actress because it looks easy. The mysterious, fascinating puppet world, peopled with the interesting characters of the playwright's brain, appeals irresistibly to her imagination. She already sees herself playing Juliet, Desdemona, Rosalind. She gives free rein to her fancy, when suddenly her enthusiasm receives a chill. Some kind friend explains: "Going on the stage? You're mad. No girl can go on the stage and retain her self-respect."

Is it true that conditions behind the footlights are any worse than in other careers for women? It is difficult, if not impossible, to express an opinion on this frequently discussed and very delicate subject. Only those who have trodden the boards and been bred, so to speak, in the atmosphere of the stage, only those who have encountered such perils and overcome them, are competent to speak with authority. Even the players themselves are divided on the question. One well-known actress said that if she had a younger sister the stage was the last place in the world she would allow her to be. Other players contend that conditions back of the curtain are no worse than in other careers for women---perhaps not so bad.

The assertion that the companionship of actors is dangerous to the actress is not based upon fact. If a girl behaves in a ladylike manner, is serious and attends only to the work in hand, no actor is likely to annoy her. Some think that the handsome leading man, who charms the audience with his fascinating personality, exerts the same influence over the actress with whom he is playing. It is a well-known fact that the actress, instead of admiring her fellow-player, is almost always quite indifferent to him. While the love scene is in progress it is possible that the players may actually feel the emotion they are portraying, but directly it is over, and the curtain has fallen, the spell is completely broken.

It is true that there are serious objections to the present dressing-room system. The quarters provided by the average theatre are totally inadequate. "There is scarcely a theater in the United States" says historian William Winter, "that contains a sufficient number of dressing rooms to accommodate a reasonably numerous theatrical company. Each performer should have a separate dressing room: that is a matter of imperative necessity as well as of decency: yet, in many of the theatres, two, three, or four persons, usually nervous and sometimes uncongenial, must occupy one small room, and in that room must prepare themselves for a performance, under circumstances that make the essential composure impossible."

The business and professional woman is, or should be, safe at home once the working day is ended. With the actress the day is never ended. She is up all hours and her work does not begin until other women are almost ready for bed. Logically, these late hours should be bad for health, yet statistics do not show that the actress is any less healthy than other women. On the contrary, her busy life and mental activity seem to make her immune from the ills, imaginary or otherwise, from which most women suffer. It is a well-known fact that actresses, often exposed in low-necked dresses in violent and unavoidable draughts on the stage, seldom catch cold. A physician accounted for this by explaining that the effect of the chill on the body was neutralized by the excitement and mental stimulus of acting.

The woman of intelligence soon learns that the only success worth-while is honestly won and that real happiness is attained only by the straight and narrow path. The vast majority of players must be content to remain the hewers of wood and drawers of water, and as the salaries paid the rank and file are small, and employment precarious, the outlook for any but the most brilliantly endowed is doubtful and uncertain.

Joseph Jefferson, the famous creator of Rip Van Winkle, was once asked his opinion of the stage as a career for women. "This is an oft repeated question not easily answered. I cannot but be prejudiced in my reply, for I am already four generations deep in the dramatic profession. My great-grandfather, my grandfather and grandmother, my father and mother were all actors and actresses, and in the face of this it is not likely I should say anything against my calling. I dislike to defend my own profession. My daughters never showed any talent for the stage, but if they had they would have acted side by side with their father. Whether a woman should go on the stage depends entirely upon her motive. If she wishes to go on for amusement or to gratify her vanity I emphatically answer 'No,' but if she wishes to earn a living or adopt the stage because she has love and real talents for it I say 'Yes.' And the public should not be deprived of such. It depends upon the woman herself in any calling whether her life is respectable or not."



ANNIE RUSSELL (1864-1936) **English-born American Stage Actress**

I have been on the stage all my life, ever since I was 7 years old. I have never left it except for illness, and I have always found there the best protectors and advisors. The old-time impression that a woman who adopts a stage career imperils her moral welfare is probably pretty well outgrown. All through my life, the best men and women I have known I have met on the stage.