



LOWER CAPE FEAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc. BULLETIN

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Professional Entertainers in Wilmington Before 1860

Thomas Hall Wetmore

Editor's Note: This is an excerpt from Thomas Hall Wetmore's 1940 Duke University thesis The Literary and Cultural Development of Ante-Bellum Wilmington, North Carolina. The manuscript was sent to former Bulletin editor Mr. Henry Jay MacMillan, who was kind enough to forward it to me for publication. Readers who wish to further pursue this topic can find a copy of the entire thesis at the New Hanover County Public Library. Nancy Reagan also addresses this subject in her doctoral dissertation Music in Antebellum Wilmington and the Lower Cape Fear of North Carolina which is available at the William Madison Randall Library at UNC-W. Mrs. Laura Howell Norden Schorr has given a fine collection of music of the Lower Cape Fear during the Antebellum era to UNC-W Library. —DCC

The performances given by professional entertainers in Wilmington before 1860 were, as one would expect, both more numerous and, as a rule, more finished than those of the Thalian Association. In the eighteenth century players from Charleston often came by boat to spend a few weeks in Wilmington during the spring. The few records of their visits indicate that they were actors of ability and that the plays they presented were by standard English dramatists. Scarcity of newspapers covering the time before 1840 makes a complete history of the Wilmington stage impossible. Even after this time there are often gaps which cannot be filled for lack of adequate records. The theater advertisements which are available, however, mention many performers who received national recognition during their careers. Of the actors and actresses mentioned by name as appearing in Wilmington, only a few were unimportant enough to escape mention in G.C.D. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage*.¹ Joseph Jefferson, James E. Murdoch, Mrs. Hughes, Winchell, and others ranked high in the New York theaters of this time. Even more imposing is the list of famous musicians who visited Wilmington: Ole Bull (Frederick Buckley), Sigismund Thalberg, Jenny Lind, L. M. Gottschalk, Terese Parodi, Amalia Patti, Cora de Wilhorst, and Mrs. Anna Bishop.

There were professional actors in Wilmington as early as 1768. In that year Governor Tryon wrote from Brunswick the following letter to the Bishop of London asking him to ordain an actor who desired to become a minister:

I was solicited a few days ago by Mr. Giffard, a young man who is engaged with a company of comedians now in this province, to recommend him to your lordship for ordination orders, he having been invited by some principal gentlemen of the province to be inducted into a

parish and to set up a school for the education of youth. He assured me it was no sudden caprice that induced him to make the application, but the result of very mature deliberation; that he was most wearied of the vague life of his present profession, and fully persuaded he could employ his talents to more benefit to society by going into holy orders and superintending the education of the youth in this province. I candidly told Mr. Giffard that his address to me was a matter of some surprise; that as to my own part I could have no reason to obstruct his present intentions, which might, if steady and determined, be directed to the benefit of this country; but that I could not possibly flatter him with success with your lordship, as I am not assured how far your lordship would choose to take a member of the theatre into the church. I however, promised him I would give testimony to your lordship that during his residence in this province his behavior has been decent, regular, and commendable; as such, my lord, I beg leave to present him to you, leaving the propriety of the ordination to your lordship's wisdom. He takes this letter by way of Providence, being under obligation of contract to attend the company there. If your lordship grants Mr. Giffard his petition, you will take off the best player on the American stage.²

A company which played in Wilmington in 1787 evidently could not boast of any members of Mr. Giffard's religious aspirations. They had planned to present Dryden's *Spanish Friar* in Halifax, but owing to the indelicacy of the play, only five tickets were sold and the doors remained unopened. There is no record of their performances in Wilmington, but at Newbern the play given was *The Miser*. When Judge

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BULLETIN

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Latimer House: Headquarters of the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, Inc., 126 S. Third Street, Wilmington, N.C. 28401 — Telephone: 762-0492. Mrs. Jane Kay, Tour Guide. The House is open free of charge to members Tuesday - Saturday from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. The Archives are available for use on Thursdays and by appointment — Telephone: 343-1225.

MEETING

Date: Sunday, October 17, 1982
Time: 4:00 p.m.
Place: Thalian Hall
Speaker: Mr. Thomas Savage, Jr.
Curator, Historic Charleston Foundation

Mr. Savage will speak on Period Room Arrangement and Decoration — American 1750-1850. The program is co-sponsored and co-funded by the New Hanover Committee of the Society of Colonial Dames in North Carolina.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The winter season augurs well as the exterior painting of the Latimer House is completed and Diane Cashman's *Cape Fear Adventure* is just over the horizon. Old Wilmington by Candlelight this year will focus on South Fourth Street December 11 and 12 with the Wassail Bowl the evening of the 10th. Things are looking up!

However, the glow of the aforementioned events diminishes somewhat when one realizes what has yet to be done. New members have not been recruited in the numbers we need. We are not in the best of financial health. The gardens and grounds detract considerably from the fresh appearance of Latimer House. Only the initial recommendations of the Long Range Planning Committee, chaired by Dr. Anderson, have been implemented. Others are still outstanding.

New approaches, or ones that have fallen into disuse, must be undertaken at minimum disruption and cost. A docent program to assist our guide, Mrs. Kay, is an example of such effort. I am confident that the Long Range Planning Committee will continue to be a rich source of sound suggestions.

As the Board of Directors, the various committees and the members all work together for the common good of the Society the shadows which I now see will soon disappear. Things, indeed, are looking up!

Captain Frank S. Conlon, USN (Ret)
President



LATIMER HOUSE

The Latimer House gleams in new paint. Restoration specialist Edward F. Turberg contributed his services to the Society and completed paint research studies to determine the original colors. David Black of the Restoration Section of the North Carolina Department of Archives and History did microscopic studies of the iron work so that all the paints used are considered to be authentic to the original.

Mr. James Robert Warren and Mr. John Robert Lane supervised the painting project which was contracted to Tinney Brothers of Wilmington. The cost of the exterior painting was funded from proceeds from The Old Wilmington By Candlelight 1981 Christmas Tours and from special gifts from Mr. Hargrove Bellamy, Mr. Bruce B. Cameron, Mrs. Albert F. Perry, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas H. Wright, Jr.

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Iredell saw them perform, two of the actors, Kidd and McGrath, fought behind the stage.³

The earliest newspaper notice found of professional actors appearing on the Wilmington stage was in the June 18, 1788, issue of the *Wilmington Gazette and Weekly Advertiser*. Mr. Kenna's troupe of comedians from Charleston,⁴ which had opened the Newbern Theatre on June 13, planned "in the course of a few days" to open the Wilmington Theatre. Mrs. Kenna, whose "equal had not appeared for many years in the southern states," brought "pearly drops" to the eyes of the audience when she played the leading role in Thomas Southerne's *Isabella, or The Fatal Marriage* (1694). Since this issue is the only one available for the season, it is impossible to record the success of the Wilmington season for that year.

A sufficient number of issues of the *Hall's Wilmington Gazette* for 1797 are available to give some indication of what the theatrical bill of fare for that year must have been. A Mr. Edgar, from Charleston,⁵ had become manager of the Theatre, and by January 9 was ready to open the season with "a comedy as reduced to three acts", called *The Provok'd Husband* (1728), being the joint production of Sir John Vanbrugh and Mr. Colley Cibber, to which will be added Mr. [George] Coleman's celebrated opera *Inkle and Yarice, or The American Cousin* (1792).⁶ "An occasional prologue" by Mr. Edgar was to precede the play; and between the play and the farce were to come "a variety of singing" and *The Epilogue to Notoriety*, also by Edgar. The doors opened at 5:30 p.m., and the performance started at 6:30. The manager requested that before coming to the performance, all persons buy their tickets at Messrs. Levy and Isaacks, Mr. Dorsey's Coffee House, or the Printing Office. On the "next Saturday, Monday, and Tuesday after the opening," the Edgar players presented *The West Indian* (1781), a comedy by Richard Cumberland, and as an afterpiece Murphy's *The Citizen* (1763). Persons wishing special songs or other entertainment besides that called for on the program were asked not to request them at the end of the play, but to give them to the company the morning before the performance.⁷ On February 16, Edgar presented John Home's *The Tragedy of Douglas and Like Master Like Man, or The Wrangling Lovers* (1745) by William Lyon.⁸ "By the request of many," *The Tragedy of Douglas* was again presented late in April, this time followed by T. Lloyd's *The Farce of the Romp* (1789).⁹ The season closed on the third of March with *Louis XVI*, a play the company had performed at the Church Street Theater in Charleston "upward of eleven nights." The audience was especially pleased with the last scene in the play, the scene in which Louis bids farewell to his wife and children. This play was followed by two shorter ones, Murphey's *The Citizen* (1763) and Coleman's *The Deuce in Him, or A Soldier for the Ladies* (1763), and a farewell address by Mr. Edgar. His successful season had induced him to rent the theatre for "some years".¹⁰ The editor of the *Gazette* stated that "the propriety which had attended his performances, and the judgment he had clearly shown in selection of pieces, must insure him a continuance of that support which has attended his small Theatre."¹¹

The month following Edgar's departure, Llewellyn L. Wall, another comedian, came to Wilmington and presented several plays and lectures at the Theatre, or Oratorical Chamber, as it was sometimes called. On Saturday evening, April 8, 1797, he gave his "Elegant Lecture on Heads," "Calculated to dissipate care, raise drooping spirits, and improve the morals." The program also included guitar

music and a play called *The Italian Shades*. The admission fee was fifty cents.¹²

The only notice available for 1798 announces the appearance of the Charleston Company "for nine nights only".¹³

The following is their program for the third night:

March 9, 1798

Tragedy of Douglas or The Noble Shepherd
Written by the Rev. Mr. John Home.

Lord Randolph	Mr. M'Kinzie
Glenalvon	Mr. Tubbs
Young Norval	Mr. Downie
Old Norval	Mr. Clough
Prisoner	Mr. Fitzgerald
Attendant	Mr. Hughes
Lady Randolph	Mrs. Tubbs
Anna	Mrs. Hughes

Between play and farce will be presented a ballet, performed in Charleston with universal applause, called

Lizette and Annette, or The Bird Catcher

Colin (the bird Catcher)	Mr. Tubbs
Hunters	Messrs. Downie, Hughes, Clough and M'Kinzie
Lizette	Miss Arnold
Annette	Mrs. Hughes

In which will be introduced a *Triple Allemande* by Mrs. Hughes, Miss Arnold, and Mrs. Tubbs.

Then the Farce called *The Poor Soldier*

Patrick (the Poor Soldier)	Mr. Downie
Dermot	Mr. Clough
Father Luke	Mr. Hughes
Captain Fitzroy	Mr. M'Kinzie
Baggetelle	Mr. Fitzgerald
Jack	Miss Arnold
Darby	Mr. Tubbs
Kathleen	Mrs. Tubbs
Norah	Miss Arnold

Tickets one Dollar, Children half price ... Doors to open at half past five, and the performance to begin at half past six precisely. No money taken at door.

The Wilmington audience was probably delighted with the performance of the charming little Miss Arnold. They would have indeed called it a dramatic evening if they could have known that the ten-year-old Jack in *The Poor Soldier* was the future mother of one of America's greatest literary geniuses, Edgar Allan Poe. Elizabeth Arnold had been in Charleston with her actress mother, Mrs. Tubbs, during the previous season and had sung several songs between acts. Her appearance in *The Poor Soldier*, however was one of her first talking parts, if not her first. Strangely enough, the biographies of Poe as well as historians of the Cape Fear seem to have completely overlooked the fact that the poet's mother appeared in Wilmington for nine nights in 1798. There can be no doubt about the identity of the Miss Arnold as Elizabeth Arnold. Mrs. Tubbs, her mother, is mentioned several times in the Wilmington paper as being a member of the cast. Furthermore, the other members of Edgar's cast are the same as those who played with Elizabeth later in the season at Charleston. Miss Willis, in her history of the Charleston stage, mentions that Mr. Edgar, Mrs. Tubbs, and Miss Arnold went to Wilmington during March 1798.¹⁴

The lack of newspapers covering the first quarter of nineteenth-century Wilmington life makes it impossible to

furnish specific information on the theater for that time. From the chapter on the Thalian Association, however, it will be remembered that during this period the lower part of the Innes Academy building was used as a theater and that the first and second groups of Thaliens kept the Cape Fear theatrical thirst quenched. It is probable, though, that many outside companies appeared on the stage to supplement the Thaliens' efforts.

Notices of two performances for 1833 were found. In January Smith's Company presented a play called *The Mischievous Monk* or *The Magicians*,¹⁵ and in March a Mr. Marek, "accomplished both in vocal and instrumental music, gave several concerts."¹⁶

Negro minstrel shows, or "Ethiopian Operas", were made popular in the thirties by Thomas Dartmouth's "Daddy" Rice.¹⁷ His song "Jim Crow" and the accompanying dance, or "jump", as it was called, was such a financial success that it gave rise to many imitations throughout the country.¹⁸ The first negro minstrel troupe in Wilmington seems to have been the Plantation Melodists in December of 1844. True to form, they advertised their show as a "Mr. Crow" entertainment, although there is little likelihood of its being the original Jim Crow group. Their impersonations of negro characters kept the audience "bursting with laughter".¹⁹ The only other performers mentioned during 1844 were the Swiss Bell Ringers.²⁰

Mr. Forbes, of Charleston and New York, took over the theater for April of 1845. According to newspaper notices, he and his wife were old timers in Wilmington. They opened the season with Bulwer's *The Lady of Lyons* or *Love and Pride*, Forbes playing Claude Melnotte; Mrs. Forbes, Pauline Deschappelles; Mr. Fuller, Colonel Damas; and Miss Birchard, Dame Melnotte. Mrs. Forbes' high, rich voice and beautiful enunciation were praised by the local editor, who also remarked that Fuller's role in the farce *Dead Shot* "would make a misanthrope crack his sides." L. H. Medina's *Nick of the Woods*, based on the novel by R. M. Bird, and Thomas H. Bayly's *Barrack Room* were given on April 4;²¹ and the company's stay in Wilmington ended on April 25 with a benefit performance for Mr. Forbes, at which time the actors presented two of Douglas Jerrold's plays: *Rent Day* and *Black-Eyed Susan*.²²

The Forbes troupe shared honors for the season with several other performers: Dr. Wooster, "well-known lecturer on the science of phrenology," seems to have attracted much attention;²³ Herr Cline and the Ellsler Brothers, tight rope performers and musicians, spent several days in Wilmington;²⁴ and Wattie Ferguson, the Scotch piper, appeared with Eliza and Emma Kilmiste, four and six year old troupers.²⁵

The Thaliens evidently dominated the 1846 season at the Theatre. At the Masonic Hall, however, some interesting programs were presented by outsiders: Dr. Slater spoke for two evenings on Mexican manners and customs;²⁶ a Miss Hill (perhaps a Wilmingtonian), accompanied by her father, gave a series of concerts of vocal and instrumental music;²⁷ and a Mr. Morris spoke "fluently and with deep interest" on "Christ Healing the Sick."²⁸

For the 1847 season a Mr. Frary seems to have been the manager. A performance for his benefit was given on the night of February 25, one night before the season closed. The entertainment given was Bulwer's five-act play *The Lady of Lyons* or *Love and Pride* and a farce by T. J. Dibdin, *The Two Gregories* or *Where Did the Money Come From?* Admission was fifty cents for seats in the pit, twenty-five cents for seats in the gallery, and a dollar for one gentleman and two ladies

in the boxes.²⁹

The Pee Dee Ethiopian Opera Troupe appeared at the Theatre on March 24, 1848.³⁰ In April a Mrs. Looms gave a series of lectures on mesmerism.³¹ During May an unnamed company presented T. J. Dibdin's *The Jew and the Doctor* (1800) and James R. Planche's *The Invisible Prince*, or *The Island of Tranquil Delight*, a humorous play "popular for ten or fourteen years" with Wilmington audiences.³² Later in May, Ward's Troupe was appearing at the Masonic Hall, but seemed to be meeting with little success.³³

During April, 1851, the Campbell Minstrels, "who were capital performers, . . . free from anything like delicacy [sic] or rowdism [sic]" appeared at the Theatre.³⁴ Another high spot of the season was the appearance in town of the Johnson and Company Circus.³⁵ In June Signor Frederica Popileto, a native Carolinian, gave concerts which he followed by a speech on Southern rights. One of his original songs was quoted in part in the June 10, 1851, *Commercial*:

If you want to lib up to your lebbel,

Make the Constitution

Gib de equal distribution,

And kick dem abolitionists to de debbel.

The Masonic Hall was used on several occasions during the season: S. S. Sandford's New Orleans Troupe played three nights to large audiences;³⁶ and in April James E. Murdoch, popular elocutionist, gave a series of readings.³⁷ He read Collins' "The Passions: An Ode for Music," followed by scenes and soliloquies from *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Richard III*, Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved*, together with Claude Melnotte's *Description of Lake Como* and passages from Bulwer's *The Lady of Lyons*.³⁸ At the Mozart Hall in March a Professor Nixon gave lectures on "An Easy System of Acquiring Knowledge." The people of Wilmington were so much pleased with these talks on mnemonics that the gentleman was able to form a class.³⁹

Sometimes lotteries were held in connection with performances; for instance, when the New Orleans Opera Troupe appeared at the Theatre in 1852, besides the attraction of their excellent singing, a lottery for some "neat articles of jewelry" was announced.⁴⁰ Earlier in the year the Fat Babies had appeared in Wilmington. The editor of the *Daily Journal*, spoke of the obesity in his usual humorous vein: "Why, consumption stands no chance with these people, and Cod Liver Oil would be Love's labor lost. But in the summer we have them on the hip; Lord, how they must suffer. Think of July and August, ye Cassius', and bless your natal stars."⁴¹

During both 1851 and 1852 the Theatre was leased by Joe Jefferson and a Mr. Ellsler. Some of the other actors were Sir William Don, an English nobleman and comedian, John Crocher and a Mrs. Ray. In his autobiography Jefferson gives an interesting account of his experience in Wilmington.

On our arrival in Wilmington the days were spent in preparing the dusty old rat trap of a Theatre for the opening, and wondering if our party was safe. They sent the "party" by boat to save expenses. . . . Within a week, however, they arrived, looking jaded and miserable. Another week for rest and rehearsal and our labors began.

Comedy and tragedy were dished up, and I may say, hashed up, alternately, as for instance, fancy dresses and dances by the soubrette, songs by the second comedian, concluding with the *Spectre Bridegroom* by W. T. Moncrieff and based on Irving's *Sketch Book*. The next evening we gave *Romeo and Juliet*.⁴² Jefferson made a balcony of empty candle boxes for Juliet,

and the audience roared when they discovered that one of the boxes had been placed with the unpainted side out; "on which was emblazoned a semicircular trade mark, setting twenty pounds of the best 'short sixes'."⁴³

In December, 1850, Jenny Lind, the famous "Swedish Nightingale," came through Wilmington on a tour of the Southern cities on route to Havana, Cuba. She returned the next year and gave a concert in the Mozart Hall, which still stands on Front Street between Market and Dock.⁴⁴

On the evening of March 11 Robinson and Eldred's Southern Circus, in addition to the performance of clowns, acrobats, equestrians, and dancers, gave an anonymous spectacle entitled *Cinderella, or The Little Glass Slippers* (1804).⁴⁵ About this time the editor of the *Herald* wrote a tribute to the comedian Winchell, who had been killed by the cars in Pittsburgh. Winchell had often played at the Wilmington Theatre.⁴⁶ The only other professional entertainers mentioned during the year were the Concordia Concert Artists,⁴⁷ and Madame Anna Bishop, who on June 12 gave her last performance before retiring.⁴⁸

Madame Bishop evidently reconsidered her decision to retire, for in April, 1853, she again appeared with her "party" for a week of "musical festivities". At the same time, a group called the Serenaders, vocalists and instrumentalists, were followed the next week by lectures on mnemonics by a Miss Pike at the Masonic Hall and lectures by Professor Bache at the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁵⁰ On the sixteenth Mrs. Emma Gillingham Bostwick's concert was called "superior to almost anything of the kind ever exhibited here."⁵¹ In May four other musicians were introduced to a Wilmington audience: Arnoldi, "a finished tenor", Taffanelli, Maestro Nicholas, and Signora Steffanone, who sang "Casta Diva".⁵² The Concordia Concert Artists again appeared at the Mozart Hall for a week in June. They were so successful that three additional appearances were commanded by the music lovers of the town. Music seemed to be the order of the day, for besides these mentioned, other concerts were given during the year by the Maceroy Troupe,⁵³ Kunkel's Nightingale Opera Troupe, who boasted that they had spent one hundred and four consecutive nights at Washington, and The Fakir of Siva's "great southern Ethiopian Opera and Ballet Troupe."⁵⁵ During this year Professor Carl, "the great magician", also made three appearances at the Theatre.⁵⁶

The highlight of the 1854 season seems to have been the appearance on January 16 of the Grand Italian Company.⁵⁷ With a troupe of forty performers, a "grand" chorus, and an orchestra under the direction of L. Arditi, the company gave Bellini's *Norma* (1832) with the following cast:

Signora Rose De Vries, the grand prima of the age, as Norma

Signora Seidenbourg as Adalgisa

Signor Arnoldi as Pollisno

Signor Coletti as Orneso

Parquet and boxes were \$1.50 and the gallery or family circle seats \$.50. The editor of the *Journal* stated:

We have so often had 'Operatic Concerts' here, that we think the *opera itself*, produced by a first class Company, ought to draw a full house — especially *Norma*, with Rosa DeVries as Norma, in which character she is not excelled by any Artiste on the Stage, and equalled by none in the United States. Arnoldi is a most capable tenor, and it will be remembered that, when he was here some time since with Steffanone, he was the only one of the company that exerted himself to give satisfaction.⁵⁸

The opera played to a "large and fashionable audience at

the Theatre, which was filled through."⁵⁹

Two nights later Ole Bull, violinist, returned to Wilmington for a program which was described as a "relief to the attention which has been strained by listening to flights of Italian opera music with Italian words." Little Adelina Patti's English ballads were the feature of the program.⁶⁰ The last week of January was filled with performances of Sharpley's Terpsichorean Minstrels, who promised to give away "\$200 worth of rich and princely gifts."⁶¹ Other performers for the year included Campbell's Minstrels,⁶² Professor Donaldson, a lecturer,⁶³ and the Spalding and Rogers Circus.⁶⁴

In 1855 West and Peel's Campbell Troupe of fourteen performers returned to the Theatre for three nights of "song, farce, operatic burlesque, and Italian Opera."⁶⁵ The Swiss Bell Ringers with George Brown, vocalist, and John Stokley, wood and wind instrumentalist, also returned during the season.⁶⁶ At the Masonic Hall Colonel Wood exhibited his "grand Museum of Living Curiosities."⁶⁷

A Wilmingtonian visiting Philadelphia in November of 1855 wrote reviews of performances he saw there. He was elated over the appearance of Rachel, the great French tragedienne, in Moliere's *Depit Amoureux* and Corneille's *Horaces*. He also discussed Fred Douglas, North Carolina satirist and abolitionist, a Dr. Hare, lecturer on spiritualism, and Teresa Parodi, a singer.⁶⁸ Jullien's Minstrels and Burlesque Opera Troupe during February, 1856, at the Masonic Hall presented the Hutchinson Family and the following troupers: A. M. Hernandez, J. B. Smith, Frank Wilson, R. Buckley, J. K. Campbell, J. R. Dalsey, W. Person, and Chas. L. Smith.⁶⁹ In March Mme. Teresa Parodi, famous for her singing of "La Marseillaise", appeared at the Mozart Hall under the direction of Maurice Stakosch, and assisted by J. Leornardi. She came "straight from Charleston".⁷⁰

The April 15, 1856 *Journal* announced that Clara Kean, assisted by Mr. Cameron, appeared at the Masonic Hall the evening before and was enthusiastically received. Part of the program follows:

Clara Kean and Mr. Cameron

1. Grand duet (4 hands) Gallop de Bravura (Shuloff)
2. Caratina Infelice (Ernani) — Verdi
3. Scena and Cavatim Verdi
4. On the Field of Glory Donizetti
Clara Kean and Mr. Cameron
5. National Song Red, White, and Blue
Clara Kean
(Between scenes Miss Kean performs Gottschalk's celebrated "Grotesque Fantasia Imitation of the Banjo".)
6. Ballad Young Agnes, (Fradiavolo)
Clara Kean
7. Ballad . . . The Virginian's Song of Home (Gosden)
Clara Kean
8. Ballad Dearest Spot on Earth to Me is Home
Clara Kean

Miss Kean again appeared at the Masonic Hall on the next night.⁷¹ She sang these songs: "Shells of the Ocean", "The Sky Lark", "New Foundland Dog", "The Wolf", "La ci darum la mana", "Over the Summer Sea", "Drinking Song" from Lucretia Borgia, "As I View These Scenes So Charming", "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep", "Boat Song", and a duet: "Molly Brown". On her last night in Wilmington, Miss Kean and Mr. Cameron gave the following program:

1. Duet from Don Giovanni Donizetti
Clara Kean and Mr. Cameron

2. Song Come, Brother, Arouse — Russell
Mr. Cameron
3. Echo Song The Skylark — Benedict
Clara Kean
4. Song "Man The Lifeboats"
Mr. Cameron
5. Cavatinetta I'm a Merry Ziaigura — Balfe
Clara Kean
6. Boat Duett sic O, Come Maiden, Come
Clara Kean and Mr. Cameron
7. Serenade Sweet Love, Arise — Hinson
Clara Kean
- Comic duet by request Mr. and Mrs. Smith —
Henson

II

1. Aria Non piu Andrai — Mozart
Mr. Cameron
2. My Gay Cavalier
Clara Kean
3. Ballad Sally in Our Alley — Templeton
Mr. Cameron
4. Herdsman's Song . . . Jenny Lind's Echo by request
Clara Kean
5. Descriptive Song Maniac
Mr. Cameron
6. Ballad Katy Darling
Coming Through the Rye
Within a Mile of Edinboro
A Little More Cider
Clara Kean
7. Duet Super and Fair (Emanuel)

Ole Bull, the violinist, appeared again on May 5, 1856. This time he was assisted by the "favorite and talented prima donnas, Signora Anna Spinola and Miss Anna Vail, the great cornet-a-piston player, Louis Schreiber, and Frank Roth, distinguished pianist and composer."⁷³ The program follows:

Part One

1. Solo "Pagageno Rondo" by F. Roth
F. Roth
2. Grand Aria "Qui la Voce" from Opera
Puritana by Belini
3. Solo Cornet-a-Piston
selection from Opera of Somnambula
Louis Schreiber
4. Ballad "Something to Love Me" — Hime
Miss Vail
5. Solo, violin Grand Concerto Allegro
Ole Bull Adagio Rondo

Part Two

1. Ballad "Annie Laurie"
2. Solo Cornet-a-Piston, "Katy Darling — Shreiber
Shreiber
3. Cavantini "A Miel Preigh" — Donizetti
Miss Vail
4. Solo, violin Capricio on American Airs,
including "Arkansas Traveller", "Pop goes
the Weasel", and "Last Rose of Summer"
Ole Bull
5. Grand Duo "Losteria di Adujas" —
Guiseppi Lilli
Siga Spinola and Miss Vail
6. Solo, violin Carnival of Venice — Ole Bull
Old Bull⁷⁴

In the following year Maurice Strakosch returned to Wilmington to present Mlle. Ermini Frizzolini in conjunction

with Amalia Patti Strakosch and Herr Klotzen at the Mozart Hall on November 28.⁷⁵ Other entertainments in 1857 were given at the Mozart Hall by Signor Blitz, magician,⁷⁶ Walter's Empire Minstrels, who presented "Soirres d'Affrique",⁷⁷ and Professor Johnson, "late British Consul at Jerusalem", who lectured, with illustrations, on travel in Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and Jerusalem.⁷⁸

The Mozart Hall played a big role in the history of Wilmington entertainment during the later fifties. The editor of the *Herald* was sure that Strakosch, the pianist, would return to Wilmington in 1856, "especially now that we have a Hall so eminently suited to the successful rendition of the opera"⁷⁹ Among Strakosch's troupe that year were Mmes. Parodi, Colson, Wilhorst, and Strakosch, and Signora Amodia and Barelli Barili.⁸⁰

On January 19 S. Thalberg and Henry Vieuxtemps, "greatest of living violinists", appeared at the Mozart Hall. With them were Madam Berth Johansen (Cantatrice dicamera to the Emperor of Austria, and prima donna of the Italian Opera House, Italy, Germany, and Academy of Music, New York), Miss Annie Kemp (American prima donna contralto, expressly engaged by the Academy of Music, New York), for the production of American operas and oratorios, and Signor Lerman, the eminent baritone. Tickets were \$2.00, and the audience was such a large and appreciative one that the *Journal* predicted a return of the troupe in the spring.⁸¹

A troupe of forty, called Marsh's Little Actors, spent several weeks in Wilmington during December of 1859. On the 24th they presented T. R. Planche's *Brigand* with Louise Arnot in the leading role, assisted by Master George W. Marsh, aged nine, Miss Girouflo, and Jenny Arnot, six. On December 27 their plays were *The Battle Imp* and *Monsieur Deshalumeau*; on the twenty-eight, *The Naiad Queen*; and on the twenty-ninth, the musical farce *Coleman and Sheridan's Forty Thieves. The Sea of Ice, or The Prayer of the Wrecked*, by Adolphe D'Ennery and F. Dugue, was given the next night as a benefit performance for Louise Arnot. On December 30, *Simon Siegal* was given for the benefit of George Marsh.⁸²

In November the Parker Family opened "for a season" at Thalian Hall, the new theater in Wilmington. They featured Joseph and Samuel Parker, and H. W. Gossin, "prominent American tragedian". Others in the company included Mary and Julia Parker, J. L. Mathews, W. H. Bokee, Jerry Taylor, O. W. Faucett, H. W. Williams, E. S. Wise, and John Shape.⁸³ In September both the J. Christopher Burlesque Opera Troupe,⁸⁴ and Wood's Excelsion Minstrels performed at Thalian Hall.⁸⁵

It is apparent from this study that most of the actors coming to Wilmington before 1800 came directly from Charleston. The building of railroads during the thirties and forties made Wilmington easily accessible from the North, and we notice that such troupes as Campbell's Minstrels found their way to the Cape Fear. There was apparently no business relationship between the professional actors and the Thalian Association. The visiting actors, however, served as a stimulus to the Association, and often the local actors offered the same plays they had seen given by the professionals. When interest in amateur theatricals would wane for a while, the brilliant performance of a visiting company would spur the Thalian on to more successes. In the years just preceding the Civil War, the Association often hired professional women players for the feminine roles in their plays.

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- ⁴Eola Willis, *The Charleston Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Columbia, S.C., 1924) p. 170.
- ⁵Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 400.
- ⁶*Hall's Wilmington Gazette*, Jan. 9, 1797.
- ⁷*Ibid.*
- ⁸*Ibid.*, Feb. 16, 1797.
- ⁹*Ibid.*, March 2, 1797.
- ¹⁰*Hall's Wilmington Gazette*, March 2, 1797.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*
- ¹²*Ibid.*, April 16, 1797.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, March 8, 1798.
- ¹⁴Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 411.
- ¹⁵*People's Press*, Jan. 9, 1833.
- ¹⁶*Ibid.*, March 20, 1833.
- ¹⁷Carl Wittke, *Tambo and Bones* (Durham, N.C. 1930), pp. 20 ff.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 28: Since Joseph Jefferson later became Manager of the Wilmington theatre, his early connection with Rice of interest: "In Washington 1832, Rice varied his act by using the four year old Joseph Jefferson as a partner. Rice dressed up the lad to represent a miniature Jim Crow, blacked his face, put him in a large sack, and came to the footlights singing
Ladies and Gentlemen, I'll have you to know
That I've got a little darkey here that jumps Jim Crow.
At this point in the song, the little blackened-up boy was dumped from the sack upon the stage."
- ¹⁹*Journal*, Dec. 13, 1844.
- ²⁰*Ibid.*, Dec. 27, 1844.
- ²¹*Journal*, April 4, 1845.
- ²²*Ibid.*, April 25, 1845.
- ²³*Ibid.*, May 16, 1845.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, January 31, 1845.
- ²⁵*Ibid.*, Feb. 7, 1845.
- ²⁶*Journal*, Oct. 30, 1846.
- ²⁷*Ibid.*, Oct. 23, 1846.
- ²⁸*Ibid.*, Nov. 6, 1846.
- ²⁹*Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1847.
- ³⁰*Tri-Weekly Commercial*, May 24, 1848.
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- ³⁴*Ibid.*, Sept. 20, 1851.
- ³⁵*Ibid.*, Dec. 6, 1851.
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- ⁵⁹*Ibid.*, Jan. 17, 1854.
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- ⁷³*Ibid.*, May 5, 1856.
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- ⁸⁰*Ibid.*
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