

# Reclaiming Four Child Actors through Seven Plays in US Theatre, 1794-1800

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I've done my duty, and I've done no more.

Tom Thumb<sup>[1]</sup>

Despite the burgeoning of childhood studies since the early 1990s, few theatre historians have investigated the considerable achievements of child actors in early US theatre. As Shauna Vey argues, child actors should be re-conceptualized as wholly competent professionals capable of exercising their agency and rights.<sup>[2]</sup> Back in 1806, fifteen-year-old John Howard Payne asserted their dramatic competencies by publishing “an accurate list” of admired British and Irish “infant prodigies” in his own magazine.<sup>[3]</sup> Little did he know that well over thirty child performers had already graced US public stages since 1752 when Lewis Hallam involved his three children and one niece in what became the monopolistic Old American Company (OAC).

In this essay, I reclaim four child actors who performed extensively from ages six to twelve from 1794 to 1798 when new permanent theatres were built in several major cities.<sup>[4]</sup> Miss Mary Harding and Miss M. Solomon (I'll call her Margaret) originated or popularized substantive child characters, and Master Samuel Stockwell and Miss Harriet Sully also reenacted these classic roles. As US-born or newly naturalized citizens, these four actors were especially cherished in a nascent nation founded on moral virtues, democratic rights, and civic responsibilities. To illuminate their debuts, early careers, theatrical competencies, and subsequent lives, I offer four different case studies that exemplify how these and other child actors entered and left the profession. Throughout, I document which child actors earned substantial roles at major companies in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Norfolk, and Richmond and later discuss how actor-managers adopted age-appropriate casting as a traditional acting convention before the nineteenth century. Most importantly, given that primary and secondary theatre history sources are remarkably silent on the achievements of child actors, I argue that these four actors in particular and several more introduced here should be recognized and valued for establishing acting, singing, and dancing as viable and respected child professions before the nineteenth century, similar to the extraordinary Billy Elliots of today.

Given the lack of child-written records and scant accounts of their acting competencies, I examine the

inherent challenges involved in their performances of pivotal child characters in seven British plays that premiered in the US during the auspicious 1794-96 seasons as follows: The Boy and Girl in *The Children in the Wood*; the Page in *The Purse*; Edward in *Every One Has His Fault*; the title role in *Tom Thumb*; Juliana and Narcisso in *The Prisoner*; the titled Boy in *The Adopted Child*; and, Little Pickle in *The Spoiled Child*. Significantly, these seven plays premiered most often in Philadelphia, the temporary US capital until 1800, suggesting that two actor-managers introduced these works to spotlight child characters as palpable representations of young citizens. Moreover, frequent productions of these particular plays further indicated the extensive popularity of child embodiments on stages along the eastern seaboard.

As Jeffrey Richards proffers, the nine characters in these British dramas serve as a “fluid set of changeable signs whereby something British becomes American without being, exactly, either one.”<sup>[5]</sup> Their transnational and socio-economic identities signify transitional shifts toward middle and lower class children caught in familial conflicts within domestic contexts and away from such royal historical figures as the Duke of York in *Richard III*, Fleance in *Macbeth*, Prince Edward in *The Battle of Hexham*, and Gustava in *Gustavas Vasa*. As Romantic portrayals of late eighteenth-century childhood, the authentic naiveté of these nine varied characters serve to defy stereotypical tropes of childhood innocence through playwrights’ crafted mixtures of pathos and humor.

The fact that child actors most often embodied these nine characters, initially in the US capital, implicates them as potential socio-political players on US stages. Given that each text required small-bodied actors to effectuate its Romantic sentiments, these embodiments of divergent childhoods may have assuaged political divisiveness between wealthy Federalists who funded and populated new permanent playhouses and “middling” Republicans who demanded more democratic repertoires.<sup>[6]</sup> As a result, recurrent performances of these noteworthy plays provided appreciable opportunities for child actors to showcase their acting, singing, and dancing talents as well as any adult stock actor. An examination of the following four actors explains how they attracted and sustained the attentions of actor-managers and critical spectators, thereby fulfilling their professional duties as disciplined actors under the mindful tutelage of their parents and guardians.<sup>[7]</sup>

#### Four Child Actors

Margaret Solomon debuted as a singer at age four in Newport in February 1792, then Boston in October, and resurfaced in Baltimore in June 1793 with her strolling parents, Mr. and Mrs. [Nathan?] Solomon.<sup>[8]</sup> When the *Maryland Journal* announced that her mother would present “three interesting Reasons for her Claims on Public Patronage,” perhaps one reason included support of her aspiring daughter.<sup>[9]</sup> Although the family’s whereabouts remain unknown after November 1793, they reappeared in Newport to perform with Harper’s OAC contingent in May 1794. In October, the family united with Hodgkinson’s OAC forces at Philadelphia’s Southwark Theatre where Margaret first appeared as an Apparition with Mary Harding as Fleance in *Macbeth*. One month later, these two girls originated the title roles in *The Children in the Wood* fifteen times through January 1795.<sup>[10]</sup> In New York, one critic emphasized that “too much praise cannot be bestowed on Miss Harding [the Boy] and Miss Solomon [the Girl], who, in speaking, in singing, and in action surpassed all we could have conceived of children their age.”<sup>[11]</sup> Another reviewer in Philadelphia elaborated on Margaret’s performance for personating “the little girl with singular propriety and grace. Her manner is easy and natural; her voice strong and articulate, and in her singing remarkably clear.”<sup>[12]</sup> Over the next three years, each actress would add over twenty roles to her

repertoire, including various balletic pantomimes that required agile dancing abilities.

Although Harding's exact birth year, parentage, and citizenship remain a mystery, Dunlap described her as "Mr. Hodgkinson's ward, a pretty, innocent, black-eyed girl, looking as if she might be destined to a life of purity and happiness."<sup>[13]</sup> As a highly regarded actor-manager, John Hodgkinson determined her OAC casting and her \$10 a week salary through 1802, as well as critical attention regarding her progress.<sup>[14]</sup> For instance, when pantomiming little Horatio in Madame Gardie's *Sophia of Brabant*, a reviewer noticed that "Her action and expression of countenance were wonderful for one of her years" as a stage novice, and her "great improvement" as Little Pickle further justified his formative expectations.<sup>[15]</sup>

When the Solomon family defected to Thomas Wignell's Chestnut company in March 1795, Margaret extended her repertoire considerably through June 1796 in both Philadelphia and Baltimore. In June, her younger sister, Miss C. Solomon, made "her first appearance on any stage" as the Boy opposite her sister's Girl in *The Children in the Wood*.<sup>[16]</sup> The family then joined Boston's Federal Street Theatre where Margaret performed regularly from September 1796 through April 1799.<sup>[17]</sup>

Meanwhile, for the April 1795 performance of *The Children in the Wood*, the *New York Magazine* introduced Samuel Stockwell as:

A new candidate for public favour, in the person of a boy about six years old, who has taken the part of the *little girl*, since the departure of Miss Solomons [sic]. This child may really be considered as a phenomenon. He went through the part, though he had never before been on the stage, with surprising ease and propriety. The song of the 'Waxen Doll,' was sung with greater strength of voice, and with equal accuracy, as it had been by Miss Solomons; and we doubt not, that after being a little more accustomed to the stage, he will fully compensate us for her loss.<sup>[18]</sup>

"Little Sam," as he was called in a 1798 prelude that opened the Park Theatre, may have been the son of Constable Samuel Stockwell, initially hired to keep order at the John Street Theatre.<sup>[19]</sup> Over this small boy's extensive career with the OAC, he played at least a dozen recorded roles through 1798 and earned a weekly salary of \$4, the lowest salary among stock actors.<sup>[20]</sup>

In 1792, Harriet Sully, the youngest of Matthew Sully's nine children, made her stage debut at age three as her sister's "tiny foot page" in *Robin Hood* with West and Bignall's company in Richmond.<sup>[21]</sup> At "only five years of age," she sang an operatic song and probably pantomimed with her siblings in Charleston.<sup>[22]</sup> After her mother's death, she traveled with her sister, Charlotte, and her husband, Mr. Chambers, to perform with the OAC and Chestnut companies, as well as Rickett's Circus.<sup>[23]</sup> In Boston, she played the Girl to Harding's Boy in *The Children in the Wood* where she "appeared miraculously gifted. The sweet melody of her voice, and the justness and vivacity of her acting, were equally objects of wonder and applause."<sup>[24]</sup> Although southern cast lists remain incomplete, she performed at least ten known roles through 1798.<sup>[25]</sup>

### Seven British Plays

The remarkable acting careers of these four children were made possible by the US premieres of seven

British plays selected (and usually altered) by actor-managers and orchestral maestros. *The Children in the Wood* by Thomas Morton, with music by Samuel Arnold and additional songs by Benjamin Carr, initiated the first major vehicle that mandated two short-stature bodies for adults to carry and hug with kisses by kneeling down to their level.<sup>[26]</sup> Seeing these affectionate moments and watching the older Boy support his tired sister during a thunderstorm in the woods surely affected family audiences. This hour-long afterpiece never failed to delight and, despite having been “hacked out of its novelty” by 1809, its child actors reminded one critic “of those times when the talents of their parents were in a similar way exerted for the public gratification.”<sup>[27]</sup> From its premiere in 1794 through 1810 alone, this classic play was performed over 130 times in ten cities until the Civil War.<sup>[28]</sup>

Perhaps the fact that Morton was orphaned at age four attracted him not only to adapt but to revise this otherwise tragic story of a popular 1595 Norfolk ballad as a two-act comic opera for the stage. Rather than orphan two children, Morton keeps the parents alive (away in India) and joyfully reunites the family through the fortuitous heroism of Walter, a poor carpenter who kills the children’s would-be murderer, rescues the returning parents from ruffians, and critically wounds the evil, aristocratic, guardian uncle in the bargain. In addition to delivering dialogue within six scenes, this musical also required the Boy to sing one duet with Josephine, Walter’s fiancé, and the “very puny little” Girl to sing three solos (22).

Throughout the play’s tension-filled progression, the children’s honest naiveté undercuts the sentimentality of their otherwise tragic oppressions through constant juxtapositions of serious and comic situations.<sup>[29]</sup> For example, when Walter drops his sword while fighting Oliver, the henchman, the Girl instinctively retrieves it for him. After an offstage pursuit, Walter reenters:

Walter: I never knew I had so much pluck in me. Damme, how I laid his timbers. Come forth, my little tremblers, I am your champion.

Girl: Have you kill’d Oliver?

Walter: Dead as a door-nail.

Boy: Go kill him again.

Girl: Such a rogue as he cannot be too dead. (29)

Likewise, in the final scene when Walter joyfully rediscovers these “poor innocents” (29) reunited with their parents, the Girl simply says, “I’m very hungry” (53). To conclude the children’s emblematic journey, the adult chorus sings, “Have we sav’d this Girl and Boy? . . . Are we out of the wood, sirs?” (56-57).

These rhetorical lyrics appear to question whether Federalists and Republicans were able to save the nation’s children, especially during yellow fever epidemics that struck port cities in the 1790s. While dramatizing the triumph of innocence over villainy, seeing two children survive the treacheries of a sinister aristocrat likely affirmed the moral duty of both political parties to ensure children’s welfare at all costs. Moreover, the unlikely heroism of two children and a lowly carpenter may have fortified Republican’s defense of common laborers who were literally and figuratively building the nation’s prosperity.

While *The Children* presented an ordinary carpenter, *The Purse* by James C. Cross with William Reeve’s music, introduced Will Steady, the *Benevolent Tar* of the subtitle, who spoke in sailors’ own lingo,

thereby assuring its widespread popularity across the eastern seaboard.[30] This one-act afterpiece required the acting and singing services of our four actors as an eight-year-old Page. Considered the first nautical drama, productions also included Gothic scenic elements, having been based on “an incident said to have happened to a page in the service of the late King of Prussia.”[31] From its US premiere in January 1795 through 1815, over 160 performances were staged in major cities and towns.[32]

After an eight-year voyage at sea and their escape from an Algerian slaver, Will Steady returns home with Edmund, the Baron’s son who has been presumed dead. Once inside the castle, Will sees a boy sleeping, reads an affecting letter from his distressed mother, and decides to leave one purse of his money in the boy’s pocket to alleviate their poverty. Upon reuniting with his faithful wife, Sally, he learns that she has been cruelly separated from their son who dutifully serves as the Baron’s page at the castle. Meanwhile, the Baron’s wicked steward, Theodore, seeking to hide his embezzlements, accuses the Page of stealing the purse found in his pocket. Pleading for his innocence, the Page “sobs bitterly [and] bursts into a flood of tears” (26). Just before the infuriated Baron banishes him, Will arrives in the nick of time to reveal the truth with Sally and Edmund on his heels. When Sally runs to embrace the Page, Will instantly realizes the boy is his own son and “catches him in his arms” (28). Yet rather than exile the actual thief, the benevolent Page, “a true chip of [his father’s] old block,” urges the Baron to reconsider: “Though Theodore has been bad, my Lord, if you’d forgive him perhaps he’d mend, and love and thank you for it” (29). The Baron agrees, happily reunited with his own son who leads the final chorus with Will and Sally proclaiming “Our dangers [are] o’er” (31-32).

Indeed, as spectators well knew, had Will and Edmund not first escaped the actual US dangers of Algerian enslavements by Barbary pirates during this period, they would not have reunited with their families. Beyond this political premise, seeing a child-servant argue for clemency and overcome the dangers of an aristocrat’s misplaced blame may also have encouraged political partisans to practice benevolence toward their fellow citizens. The fact that a common sailor willingly shares his purse with less fortunate others could also have counseled elite spectators to share their privileged wealth more freely with hard-working indentured servants and sea-faring laborers.

A New York reviewer praised “this little piece” for its “well-executed” songs, especially those sung by Hodgkinson’s Steady and Harding’s Page that “were encored *loudly*.”[33] In Boston, one critic found Harding’s Page “delicate and affecting,” believing she “promises future excellence,” while others argued over Hodgkinson’s alterations of his renamed *American Tar*. [34] In 1796, while Margaret Solomon edified Bostonians in October, Harriet Sully and Fanny L’Estrange competed within two December days across a Philadelphian street.[35] Misses Hogg, Arnold, and Gillespie also delighted audiences, respectively in Norfolk, Charleston, and Philadelphia, and Samuel Stockwell opened the new Park Theatre with his New York rendition in 1798.[36]

*Every One Has His Fault* by Mrs. Elizabeth Inchbald spoke more directly to aristocratic Federalists and Revolutionary War veterans by situating Britain’s and America’s failure to care for the worthy poor as a domestic matter in order to remedy economic inequalities.[37] Against a comic backdrop, this long-running, five-act tragi-comedy provided another cross-dressed opportunity for Harding, Solomon, and Sully to enamor audiences as Edward, a nine- to ten-year-old boy.[38] Its ensemble of domestic characters appealed to US spectators for its “faithful picture of the varied scenery of life” and its “judiciously alternate scenes of pathos and merriment.”[39]



True to its title, each character displays his and her personal and social faults within contested marriages. Inchbald's back story of a wise child, not without his own faults, presses the need for benevolent compassion among unforgiving aristocrats. Lord Norland has disinherited his daughter, Lady Eleanor, for marrying an impoverished Captain Irwin and vows never to pardon her. Nevertheless, eight years ago, he adopted a "half-starved boy," his own grandchild, who was "forced" upon him by the child's nurse (39). Before she died, she told Edward he was Norland's grandchild, but Norland forbids him to speak of his parents. When Mr. Harmony remarks how much the boy is like his mother, Edward vaguely remembers her "kissing me, when she and my father went on board of a ship; and so hard she pressed me—I think I feel it now" (60).

After their nine-year banishment in America, Edward's parents return to London only to find that Captain Irwin's gentrified friends refuse to lend him money to support his wife and other (offstage) children. Desperate to maintain his social status, Captain Irwin robs his father-in-law at gun point. Upon his capture, Edward reports to Norland that the deranged man's "poor wife" begs him for mercy; but Norland rejects Edward's "false conclusion" of equating the virtues of mercy and justice (61-62). To help the man's wife, Edward exposes his fault by giving Lady Eleanor the retrieved pocketbook of banknotes he has taken from Norland's table and divulges his secret as Norland's grandchild. Upon discovering her own lost child, Lady Eleanor begs her father's forgiveness; but Norland, still cold-hearted, forces Edward to choose between them. After a moment's hesitation, Edward takes his grandfather's hand: "Farewell, my lord, —it almost breaks my heart to part from you; but if I have a choice, I must go with my mother" (76). Only after Harmony has reconciled others' marital faults does Norland finally forgive his daughter, son-in-law, and grandson with joyful embraces. Having spread polite but contradictory falsehoods regarding each person's opinions of others, Harmony has succeeded in restoring domestic peace, and "notwithstanding our numerous faults," he sincerely wishes "that the world may speak well of us all—behind our backs" (88).

Overall, this play reminded spectators that everyone has personal faults, regardless of age, class, and politics. Beyond this broad moral, hearing a virtuous child urge a callous aristocrat to practice merciful justice offered politicians a poignant model of striking compassion. Seeing this child give the aristocrat's money to a distraught woman may have also struck spectators who knew of Revolutionary War officers' inadequate pensions. By choosing his mother over a grandparent, this child's decision also verified the strong maternal bonds of Republican motherhood.

In New York, after "a young gentleman" attempted Edward in April 1794, Harding's rendering was deemed "truly charming" in January 1795.<sup>[40]</sup> Subsequently, Misses Powell, Sully, Solomon, L'Estrange, and Gowen portrayed him, as did Masters Warrell and Shaw through 1798.<sup>[41]</sup> Upon seeing this "very excellent Comedy" in Baltimore, William Osborn Payne wrote that "Little Miss Hardinge [sic] as Edward played elegantly & astonishingly for so small a Child."<sup>[42]</sup>

The next child vehicle came from Henry Fielding who dramatized the Arthurian *History of Tom Thumb* as *The Tragedy of Tragedies* (1731), a literary satire on heroic dramas.<sup>[43]</sup> Long after eleven-year-old Adam Hallam introduced this folkloric dwarf to the colonial stage in 1753, Solomon, Stockwell, and Harding each starred in Fielding's farce and/or Kane O'Hara's more condensed burletta (1780) from April 1795 through February 1798.<sup>[44]</sup> As Phyllis Dircks explains, the burletta's success resulted from O'Hara's "outrageous exaggeration, the clever use of literary and musical allusion, and unexpected comic bathos."<sup>[45]</sup> By 1815, over seventy performances of *Tom Thumb the Great* had been staged across the

north and south.[\[46\]](#)

Unlike chapbook versions of this nursery tale, Fielding's and O'Hara's plot foregrounds love triangles sparked by tiny Tom's impending marriage to a full-size princess, aptly named Huncamunca. Having captured Glumdalca, Queen of the Giants, King Arthur welcomes Tom back to court and grants his desire to marry Huncamunca as a reward. Yet Queen Dollalolla loves Tom secretly and conspires with Lord Grizzle to prevent the unimaginable match. This rebellious suitor, already enraged that "Arthur wrongs me [and] cheats me of my Huncamunca!", readily agrees to stop Tom at all costs (O'Hara, 9). When Tom learns that Huncamunca is promised to Grizzle, he vows to kill him; for "I tell thee, Princess, had I been thy help-mate, We soon had peopled this whole realm with Thumbs"; to which Huncamunca replies, "O fie! I shudder at the gross idea!" (O'Hara, 14; cf. Fielding, 66). Bathetic comedy ensues when, during a climactic battle, Tom kills Grizzle (who has just killed Glumdalca) and declares, "Rebellion's dead, and now—I'll go to breakfast" (O'Hara, 19; Fielding, 90). However, as the Ghost of Gaffer Thumb has foretold, Noodle announces that a huge red Cow has devoured the great Tom Thumb; whereupon each thwarted lover kills another for revenge in quick succession, leaving the stage in a ridiculous heap of dead bodies.[\[47\]](#) O'Hara's burletta adds a happy ending, inspired by *The Opera of Operas* (1733) by Eliza Haywood and William Hachett, in which Merlin conjures Tom out of the Cow's mouth and raises the dead.[\[48\]](#) In a final gleeful "vaudeville," Tom sings another sexually provocative verse:

Come my Hunky—come my Pet,  
Love's in haste, don't stay him;  
Deep we are in Hymen's debt.  
And 'tis high time we pay him. (21)

While the sexualized characterization of this lilliputian man-child counters the presumed sexual innocence of child actors, audiences readily accepted the common convention of casting children as Cupids.[\[49\]](#) Rather than remark upon Tom's sexual innuendos, a Philadelphian critic observed how "Miss Solomon as *Tom Thumb* excited astonishment at her memory and the ease with which she went through the part," while Elihu Hubbard Smith found Stockwell's portrayal "admirable."[\[50\]](#) Despite Tom's voracious sexual appetite, girls represented him in breeches opposite older women playing Huncamunca. For instance, Margaret was paired with Mrs. Oldmixon, Miss Willems, and her mother; while Mary and Samuel flirted with Miss Arabella Brett (Mrs. Hodgkinson's youngest sister), whom Dunlap characterized as "a child in years, but a woman in appearance."[\[51\]](#) To heighten and widen physical proportions further against a child's diminutive size, grotesque men often embodied the giant Glumdalca. As one Baltimore reviewer observed, "the large masculine form of [William] Rowson, in female habiliments, his full manly voice, whining out love for the dwarfish conqueror" also provoked considerable laughter.[\[52\]](#)

Thus, Tom Thumb's very character necessitated casting child actors to effectuate the ludicrous humor of this afterpiece to its greatest advantage. From his first entrance when Arthur lifts up this "tiny hero [and] pigmy giant queller" and then "sets him down" (O'Hara, 7) to his preposterous exit from an artificially constructed "Cow's Mouth" (O'Hara, 20), Tom's fictional presence as an actual child layered the play's metaphorical meanings. As a socio-political capstone, O'Hara's final chorus urged quarrelsome couples to:

Let Discord cease,  
Let all in peace  
Go home and kiss their spouses. (22)

In these ways, stagings of little Tommy Thumb affirmed his place in children's nurseries as the narrative author of numerous other tales well into the nineteenth century.

Watching a small child perform Tom Thumb's heroic feats may have suggested that, no matter one's size, each citizen held a moral duty to help solve the nation's gigantic problems, particularly as refugees fled revolutionary rebellions occurring in France, Saint-Domingue (Haiti), and Ireland. O'Hara's closing lyrics may have urged both political parties to cease their discordant debates over trade relationships with Britain and Caribbean colonies. If revenge-seeking spouses symbolized wars between Britain and France, then better to maintain US neutrality to ensure domestic peace at home.

Having acquired Margaret Solomon, an invaluable child actor, the Chestnut company premiered John Rose's *The Prisoner; or, Female Heroism* with Thomas Attwood's music in May 1795.<sup>[53]</sup> To counter-balance its sentimental love triangles, this three-act musical romance featured the plucky heroism of the jailor's children, Juliana and her younger brother, Narcisso, of unspecified ages. Wignell initially paired Margaret with "a young gentleman," whereby her "astonishing powers never shone more conspicuously than as *Juliana*."<sup>[54]</sup> The latter amateur was later exchanged for Miss Cassandra Gilaspie (or Gillespie), a petite, "little airy" dancer who had already played the Boy to Margaret's Girl in *The Children*.<sup>[55]</sup> One year later, Mary teamed with Samuel in New York, and Miss Hardinge played with Harry Warrell in Philadelphia in 1798.<sup>[56]</sup> Although performed less than twenty times, primarily in northern cities, this afterpiece allowed child actors to showcase their physical prowess and strengthen their singing skills in three songs.<sup>[57]</sup>

Within an unspecified military context (possibly some Spanish colony), Bernardo has imprisoned Don Marcos for two years for attempting to free "mutinous slaves" (1). Bernardo's sister, Theresa, begs the jailor's children to free her beloved Marcos from prison before her brother seeks his death for denying his marriage to Clara, Marcos's sister. While their besotted French-speaking father, Lewis, preoccupies himself with more wine in a room adjoining the dungeon, the children steal his keys and release Marcos during a physically energetic scene done in pantomime (19). Upon recapturing Marcos and his servant Roberto, Bernardo discovers his beloved Clara and her servant, Nina, disguised as soldiers, and both men agree to exchange their sisters in marriage. In the final jubilant chorus, the two sibling cupids sing the following lyrics:

Good humour, peace and glee return,  
Let each enjoy the rising bliss;  
And brushing up his ruby lips,  
Prepare alike to sip and kiss. (27)

Watching children free a self-purported abolitionist may have resonated with northern spectators, particularly in Philadelphia and Boston, where slavery had been abolished since the early 1780s, and in New York where free and enslaved African Americans fought for their freedoms with white citizens. The



unbridled patriotism of children freeing a wronged prisoner to unite him with his beloved may have affirmed abolitionists' desires to keep African American families intact. In addition to Juliana's heroism, seeing two young women disguised as soldiers could also have reminded spectators of women's heroic roles at various encampments.

Like previous lost-and-found-child dramas involving a lowly carpenter, a common sailor, and an impoverished captain, *The Adopted Child* featured Michael, a selfless fisherman who adopted a shipwrecked boy as his wealthy father, Sir Edmund, lay dying eight years ago. For this two-act musical drama by Samuel Birch and Thomas Attwood, Harding originated the titled child in May 1796, followed by Misses L'Estrange, Arnold, Solomon, Westray, Gillespie, and Sully through 1800.<sup>[58]</sup> Fifteen years later, this popular afterpiece had enjoyed well over 100 performances.<sup>[59]</sup>

Like *The Children* and *The Purse*, this drama establishes its premise inside a Gothic castle where Mr. Record, an old steward, and a "childish" maid prepare for the arrival of Edmund's suspicious relation to claim this titled estate. When Sir Bertrand and his steward, Le Sage, arrive at Michael's ferry, Michael rejects their bribed offer to educate his already literate son who learns "Nature's independence" through a seaman's honest labors (17). Knowing that the Boy's "life is fought secretly," he finally divulges his eight-year-long secret to his wife, Nell, of how he came to adopt the "little boy" by promising not to open his trunk until Edmund's officially declared death (13). Once Record confirms the baron's death, Michael unlocks the trunk and reads a paper revealing his adopted son's lawful claim to the estate.

Upon learning that the evil-doers have stolen the Boy, Michael searches the forest and hears his son singing inside a convent, where Clara, Edmund's daughter, has been "secluded from the hated passion of Sir Bertrand" (9) with her maid and now protects the captured Boy. He then procures Le Sage's letter from the Boy's would-be smuggler, dons his coat, and shows the letter to Clara, proving Bertrand's deceitful plan. Before leaving with Michael in his "diabolical" disguise, the fearless Boy asks, "Where are we going? If you mean to kill me, let me tell my beads [his father's rosary] first—" ; to which Michael answers, "Kill you!—O, No!" (34) as they head for the castle. Upon reading the paper that Michael has accidentally dropped, Clara discovers the Boy to be her long-lost brother. Inside the castle's chapel, she confronts Bertrand with her father's will on behalf of her brother's "injur'd innocence" (35) and embraces the Boy, while Michael justifies the trunk's additional documents delivered by Nell. In the play's final moments, Record "asserts the right of our new Baron against injury and oppression" (38). With a metaphorical nod to political partisans, Michael reminds Nell: "it is enough for us to reflect that we have done our duty, and bore up so steadily against wind and tide to port, that we shall always find anchorage sure, and shelter from the storm" (38). The final obligatory chorus reinforces his analogical meanings "As loud huzzas unite" with spectators' applause (38).

Losing parents in recurrent shipwrecks forced many surviving orphans to wander port cities until wealthy citizens founded orphanages. Yet as Republicans well knew, common laborers also housed and educated orphans as apprentices in their respective trades. The Boy's astute dialogue and songs not only substantiated his literacy and religiosity but also forecast his future independence as a virtuous democratic citizen.

Finally, *The Spoiled Child*, a wildly popular, two-act farce by Isaac Bickerstaff, presents the outrageous antics of Little Pickle who wreaks havoc while home from his school holiday.<sup>[60]</sup> Miss Pickle chastises her widowed brother for failing to severely punish his son. Even after killing her parrot and crippling his

father's mare, Little Pickle always has some virtuous reason to explain his vicious actions and win back Pickle's heart. When Miss Pickle threatens to leave her fortune to Mr. Tagg, Pickle agrees to her scheme—Little Pickle must be exchanged for Tommy, because his former nurse, Margery, has supposedly “confessed” to switching them at birth (15).

Yet after colluding with Margery, Little Pickle reappears back home disguised as Tommy, a returning sailor wearing a carrot-colored wig. He resumes his insults toward his “granne” aunt (22) and plots further revenge with his younger sister, Maria, who agrees to play-act his lover. Upon discovering the young couple, Pickle disclaims Tommy to stop their unthinkable courtship, locks Maria in her room, and then receives his son's letter of hearty repentance. Meanwhile, Little Pickle overhears Tagg plot his elopement with Miss Pickle to obtain her casket of jewels and surreptitiously sews their clothes together, forcing a farcical rupture when Tagg exits quickly to escape Pickle's entrance and Miss Pickle leaves to retrieve her jewels. As Pickle conceals himself, Little Pickle returns in the guise of Tagg wearing a long cloak. As he about to take the casket from Miss Pickle, Pickle stops them; whereupon Little Pickle throws off his disguises and again wins his father's forgiveness for having prevented his aunt's elopement. However, in a brief Epilogue, Little Pickle confides to amused spectators that “I shall be tempted again to transgress” (36).

As Anne Varty aptly deduces, “[Little Pickle's] behaviour, governed by greed for instant gratification of desires, is a perfect model for the justification of Evangelically inspired notions that children manifested original sin and that their defiant will had to be broken to secure their redemption and their divinely ordered subservience to their parents.”<sup>[61]</sup> These themes likely resonated among US evangelists who baptized their children during the Second Great Awakening. Even among secularists, Little Pickle's farcical frolics confirmed the inherent difficulties involved in raising dutiful children as virtuous citizens.

In sum, the nine child characters in these seven plays evidenced divergent portraits of childhood that incorporated oppressed innocents, benevolent exemplars, moral philosophers, sexual lilliputians, patriotic heroes, recuperated barons, and scheming tricksters with overlapping traits. As suggested above, these child roles may have impacted adult spectators, based on concurrent socio-political events that affected children's livelihoods during the 1790s. Above all, these British transplants cultivated emerging ideals of US democracy and greater equity among socio-economic classes with requisite poetic justice. After weathering dark and stormy conflicts, each text ended with calls for unified peace, harmonious love, and merciful justice for those individuals whose human faults earned them forgiveness. Significantly, the true identities of six lost-and-found children were restored and reclaimed by their rightful families, while the other three children united lost-and-found couples with warm embraces and blissful kisses. In turn, these familial themes counseled biological parents and adoptive guardians to protect and nurture US youth against all socio-political odds.

To effectuate these sentiments, child actors needed to memorize and articulate pages of dialogue, master eighteen songs in six musical afterpieces, and prove their physical agility with disciplined ease—all before hundreds of spectators in cavernous playhouses. Somewhat patronizing reviews of their performances reveal astonished observers who simply could not believe that children could accomplish such feats. Yet achieve these successes they did, largely because adult actors, former novices themselves, firmly believed in and nurtured their competent capabilities.

### **Cross-Gender and Cross-Age Casting Conventions**

Tracking the casting conventions used in these plays further explains the circumstances in which child actors earned their opportunities in relation to women. In 1759, when Lewis and Adam Hallam outgrew boys' roles, their seven-year-old cousin, Nancy Hallam, introduced England's breeches convention by playing two Shakesperean boys.<sup>[62]</sup> Thus, as boys' voices changed upon reaching puberty, boys deferred to girls whose higher voices, and presumably shorter bodies, made them more suitable for particular child parts. With the rare exceptions of Masters Stockwell and Gray who played the Girl with her waxen doll in *The Children*, boys seldom embodied female characters.<sup>[63]</sup> For instance, in respective productions of *Gustavas Vasa* in Baltimore and Boston, Susan Wall and Cordelia Powell portrayed Gustava, the hero's sister; but in Norfolk, Master Gray was renamed "Austava."<sup>[64]</sup> For male servants in O'Keefe's comic operas, Masters most often performed the Irish messenger in *The Poor Soldier*, Benin ("a Black") in *The Highland Reel*, and Goliah in *The Young Quaker* until 1796 when Margaret and Mary assumed the latter two roles before Samuel earned Goliah in 1797.<sup>[65]</sup> Although Master Walsh first embodied the Adopted Child in London, it does not appear that boys assumed his role until 1803, when Master Joseph Harris represented him, ironically under the adoptive care of Mr. and Mrs. Francis.<sup>[66]</sup>

For other boy roles, casting was often determined by the Jordanian demands of Mrs. Thomas Marshall, thereby denying advantages to some children. After twenty-nine-year-old Dorothy Jordan created a sensation in Dublin by making Little Pickle her signature role in 1790, actor-managers treated such "romps" as a virtual line of business solely for more experienced actresses. Charles Durang described Mrs. Marshall as an attractive, very petite, five-foot-tall woman "having a round face, an arch and sprightly expression of features, with sparkling eyes . . . . She possessed a melodious powerful and extensive soprano voice, which she used with skill and musical precision."<sup>[67]</sup> Therefore, for the US premiere of *Every One Has His Fault* in March 1794, she initially adopted Edward at the Chestnut.<sup>[68]</sup> After Master Warrell played Edward in June for unknown reasons, Durang remarked that "It became necessary to change the performer to Mrs. Francis. Mrs. Marshall subsequently made a great sensation" in this role, because "The beauties of her *Edward* . . . were dwelt upon . . . as the perfection of the art. The impressiveness of the affecting scene between *Lady Eleanor Irvine* [sic] and *Edward* . . . drew tears from the most enlightened audience."<sup>[69]</sup> Despite such plaudits for this "peculiarly affecting" scene, "Roscius" chastised the actress for a "defect in her attitude" by not walking "sufficiently erect" in a more dignified manner, perhaps "imputed to her bashfulness in appearing in male habiliments."<sup>[70]</sup>

After eight-year-old Miss Menage originated the Page in London, Mrs. Marshall donned his apparel for the US premiere of *The Purse* in Philadelphia in January 1795, one month before Mary introduced him to New Yorkers.<sup>[71]</sup> In July, Margaret appropriated the part from Mrs. Marshall, having proven her mettle to Wignell.<sup>[72]</sup> In addition to five other girls and two boys, Harry Warrell also earned this androgynous role in Baltimore in 1798.<sup>[73]</sup>

While child actors sustained these parts, the titled boy of *The Spoiled Child* literally spoiled casting opportunities for at least three girls. Once again, the indomitable Mrs. Marshall premiered Little Pickle in March 1794 and controlled her "unequaled performances" through 1812 as Mrs. Wilmot.<sup>[74]</sup> When Margaret finally wrested this prize in June 1796, Mrs. Rowson's prologue exhorted audiences to "Forget for this night the charming Mrs. Marshall."<sup>[75]</sup>

Yet Solomon and Eliza Arnold faced another Jordanian competitor in Mrs. Williamson who ruled Little Pickle from her US debut in Boston at age twenty-four in January 1796 through her untimely death in October 1799 under her husband's management. When the Williamsons left Boston in April 1797, Mrs.

Marshall resumed *Little Pickle* in May, although Margaret held onto *Edward and the Page*.<sup>[76]</sup> As for nine-year-old Eliza, she had recently played *Little Pickle* in Portland under her mother's tutelage. Here, an observer felt astonished by the powers of "her youth, her beauty, her innocence."<sup>[77]</sup> Despite such raptures, manager John Sollee cast Mrs. Williamson as *Little Pickle* and relegated Eliza to *Maria* for his northern company.<sup>[78]</sup>

Beginning in August 1797, a contentious "war" erupted at two New York theatres between Sollee at John Street and Wignell at Greenwich Street a few blocks away.<sup>[79]</sup> Based on Odell's extant cast lists, it appears that Sollee used Eliza very little, other than for a walk-on in his production of *The Battle of Bunker Hill*. Previous performances by Wignell's child actors suggest that Harry Warrell may have played *Tom Thumb*, and Fanny L'Estrange likely repeated the *Adopted Child* and the *Page*.<sup>[80]</sup> However, Sollee did not cast Eliza in these latter two roles until his retreat back to Charleston. At the end of this bitter New York season, Mrs. Marshall reclaimed *Edward* to benefit Philadelphia's yellow fever sufferers, and Miss Hardinge [sic] made her US debut as a page in *The Orphan* and may have been paired with Harry or Master Warren in *The Children*.<sup>[81]</sup> Only when a group of rebellious actors left Sollee to play in Wilmington and a renegade Charleston company was Eliza able to reprise *Little Pickle* under Mr. Edgar's management.<sup>[82]</sup> Unlike Margaret and Eliza, Mary evaded these competitions, given Hodgkinson's stalwart casting in which she maintained *Little Pickle* over his wife from March 1795 through 1804.<sup>[83]</sup>

Meanwhile, across southern circuits, Mrs. Ann [Bignall] West held *Little Pickle* until Mrs. Williamson arrived in Charleston in November 1797.<sup>[84]</sup> When Mr. and Mrs. Chambers returned from Ireland in July 1799, Alexandre Placide hired them for his Charleston season and cast Harriet as *Edward* and the *Girl* in *The Children* later that winter.<sup>[85]</sup> In December, after playing *Little Pickle* in Philadelphia, Mrs. Marshall abruptly left the Chestnut over a casting dispute and assumed the roles Mrs. Chambers had taken after Mrs. Williamson's death.<sup>[86]</sup> The following year, Harriet watched Mrs. Marshall play the *Adopted Child* and *Little Pickle* in January and February, until Placide cast her in these roles in March, perhaps with Marshall's coaching.<sup>[87]</sup>

With the exception of these contested roles, only plays calling for male and female siblings guaranteed the casting of child actors over older women, as in the cases of *The Children* and *The Prisoner*. In 1798, Stockwell and Miss Hogg played Mrs. Bland's children in Dunlap's short-lived production of *André*; and, for his more successful adaptation of Kotzebue's *The Stranger*, they were accompanied by four-year-old George H. Barrett.<sup>[88]</sup> In early 1800, Sully and Stockwell initiated Cora's "infant" boy as a novitiate role for countless child actors in adaptations of Kotzebue's *Pizarro in Peru* that never failed to inspire pathos for over six decades.<sup>[89]</sup>

### Subsequent Lives and Legacies

Based on casting decisions initially made by Hodgkinson and Wignell, these acting conventions explain how and why Harding originated the *Boy* in *The Children* and the *Adopted Child*; while Solomon initiated the *Girl* in *The Children*, *Juliana* in *The Prisoner*, and revived *Tom Thumb*, with affirmative support from Stockwell and Sully. After successful portrayals of *Edward*, the *Page*, and *Little Pickle*, child actors added more solo and sibling roles to their repertoires in 1800. In these ways, our four actors established foundational legacies for concomitant and successive child performers into the nineteenth century. Having been tutored assiduously by their parents or guardians as salaried apprentices, they

advanced their theatrical careers into adolescence.

In early 1799, Mr. Solomon left his family to perform in Charleston, while Mrs. Solomon and her two daughters played in Boston through April and then rejoined Wignell's company in December through November 1802.<sup>[90]</sup> In February 1803, Margaret reunited with her father in Charleston where she made her first appearance there as the Adopted Child.<sup>[91]</sup> She rejoined the Chestnut company in December for performances in Annapolis, Philadelphia, and Baltimore at least through June 1804 when she reprised Tom Thumb.<sup>[92]</sup> Whether she left the stage thereafter at or after age sixteen, possibly to marry, remains an ongoing mystery.

Mary Harding remained in Hodgkinson's household through mid-August 1802 until she married Mr. G. Marshall.<sup>[93]</sup> She later joined Placide's company in Charleston under Hodgkinson's management.<sup>[94]</sup> For her first appearance there in February 1804, Carpenter described her as a person who has "that delicate fragility which never fails to interest the male sex. Her face is expressive and strongly marked by the hand of Thalia. She seems to be adept (for her age) in lively comedy, and received and deserved the applause due to good acting."<sup>[95]</sup> Sometime after Hodgkinson's death from yellow fever in September 1805, she returned to the Park where his two daughters, Fanny and Rosina, memorialized him in *The Children*.<sup>[96]</sup> After meeting William Clark, a fellow actor, she married him in Charleston in January 1807; and, in June 1809, their daughter, Phoebe, debuted as Cora's child in Norfolk.<sup>[97]</sup> In 1811, one month after Phoebe played Gustava at the Richmond Theatre, a disastrous fire erupted there on December 26, but the couple managed to escape through a backstage door and survived this tragedy.<sup>[98]</sup> Two years later, the family returned to the Park, where Phoebe played the Girl in *The Children*, and they continued to perform in various cities at least through 1823.<sup>[99]</sup>

After playing numerous supportive boys in New York, Samuel was announced as Mr. Stockwell in 1806, while Fanny Hodgkinson played Tom Thumb.<sup>[100]</sup> He then joined Mary for two seasons in Charleston and subsequently performed in Providence and Boston.<sup>[101]</sup> In 1810, he married Catherine Henry in Boston; and their son, Samuel B. Stockwell, played Tom Thumb in 1824, among other child roles, and became a highly regarded scenic and panoramic painter.<sup>[102]</sup>

From November 1799 through July 1800, Harriet Sully performed classic child roles in Charleston and Norfolk and again sang "I Never Will be Married" at age twelve.<sup>[103]</sup> Ironically, after spending time in Antigua with her sister, she returned to Norfolk in 1801 to live with her Aunt Margaretta Sully West "until she could be married."<sup>[104]</sup> After performing there for another season, she announced her retirement from the stage in June 1802 at age fourteen and married Dr. Joseph Porcher three years later.<sup>[105]</sup>

## Conclusion

Reclaiming the professional achievements of four major child actors validates their crucial significance not only as theatrical exemplars of late eighteenth-century childhood and performance but also as dramatic socio-political participants in US democracy. Despite childist or prejudicial attitudes toward children, child actors should be touted as equally important stars in US theatre. The foundational evidence in these four, necessarily detailed, case studies offers historians a dynamic model for investigating the continuities of successive child actors and other disruptions of age-appropriate casting through US premieres of additional dramas into the nineteenth century.



Notably, this microhistory corroborates Dunlap's claim made in 1832: "By those who have consulted the actor's calling a good and reputable one, children have been trained to it, and are among the best and worthiest, as artists and members of society."<sup>[106]</sup> Based on the theatrical conditions of the 1790s, all stock companies could have been defined as Theatres for Young Audiences, given the work of numerous child performers, local supernumeraries, call-boys, and other young assistants and servants who labored on and off stages for child and adult spectators. As Durang asserted, "The theatre was then a school" and a close-knit "family" where highly respected actresses "cultivated intellect and polished manners" among young members in the green room.<sup>[107]</sup> Like humble but great Tom Thumbs, child actors had done their duties but ever so much more as significant players who should be remembered in the annals of US theatre as verisimilar justifications for age-appropriate casting today.

I extend my deepest gratitude to Heather Nathans for her astute scholarship and Caitlin Donnelly, Head of Public Services at KU's Spencer Research Library, who generously shared and extended our mutual enthusiasms for Miss M. Solomon.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Henry Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies; or, the Life and Death of Tom Thumb the Great*, ed. Darryl P. Domingo (New York: Broadview Press, 2013), 30.

<sup>[2]</sup> Shauna Vey, *Childhood and Nineteenth-Century American Theatre: The Work of the Marsh Troupe of Juvenile Actors* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015), 7-9.

<sup>[3]</sup> John Howard Payne, "An Accurate List of the Infant Prodigies. . . ." *The Thespian Mirror* 1, no. 8 (1806): 61.

<sup>[4]</sup> See also my previous companion essays "An Epoch of Child Spectators in Early US Theatre," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 10, no. 1 (Winter 2017): 21-39; and "Without Distinction of Age: The Pivotal Roles of Child Actors and Their Spectators in Nineteenth-Century Theatre," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 36, no. 2 (April 2012): 117-35.

<sup>[5]</sup> Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in the American New Republic* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>[6]</sup> Heather S. Nathans, *Early American Theatre from the Revolution to Thomas Jefferson: Into the Hands of the People* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

<sup>[7]</sup> All cast lists have been compiled from the following sources: George O. Seilhamer, *A History of the*

*American Theatre* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1969; repr. 1888-91), 3 vols.; David Ritchey, comp. and ed. *A Guide to the Baltimore Stage in the Eighteenth Century: A History and Day Book Calendar* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982); Eola Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII Century* (Columbia, SC: State Company, 1924); Mary Julia Curtis, "The Early Charleston Stage: 1703-1798" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1968); George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, vol. 1 and 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933); Mary Ruth Michael, "A History of the Professional Theatre in Boston from the Beginning to 1815" (PhD diss., Radcliffe College, 1941); Joseph N. Ireland, *Records of the New York Stage*, vol. 1 (New York: Burt Franklin, 1968; rpt. 1866-67); Martin Staples Shockley, *The Richmond Stage 1784-1812* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); Lucy B. Pilkinton, "Theatre in Norfolk, Virginia, 1788-1812" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1993); Richard P. Soddors, "The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide in Charleston, 1794-1812," 2 vols. (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 1983); J. Max Patrick, *Savannah's Pioneer Theater from Its Origins to 1810* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1953); Charles Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage between the years 1749 and 1855* (originally in *Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch*, 1854-1860); Gedde Smith, *The Brief Career of Eliza Poe* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1988); and, George O. Willard, *History of the Providence Stage, 1762-1891* (Providence: Rhode Island News Company, 1891).

[8] Heather Nathans investigates the Solomon family in *Hideous Characters and Beautiful Pagans: Performing Jewish Identity on the Antebellum American Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 89-97, 148-49. Although she cannot verify their Jewish identities with certainty, she speculates that Mr. Solomon may have been among the first Jewish American actors "from the South," having first performed in Charleston in April 1785. Pilkinton identifies his first name as "Nathan" when he performs with his wife in Norfolk in early 1791, 542. See also O. G. Sonneck, *Early Concert-Life in America (1731-1800)* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1907), 229, 146 and *Early Opera in America* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1915), 152.

[9] Ritchey, *A Guide*, 123, 25, in *Maryland Journal*, 16 July 1793.

[10] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3: 258-60, 105.

[11] "Theatrical Register No. 3," *New York Magazine* (January 1795): 1.

[12] *Aurora* (20 March 1795), qtd. in Susan L. Porter, *With an Air Debonair: Musical Theatre in America, 1785-1815* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 244.

[13] William Dunlap, *A History of the American Theatre from its Origins to 1832* (1832; repr., Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 199. Billy Harbin notes that Harding had been his ward "over a year previously" with no source, in "The Career of John Hodgkinson in the American Theatre" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1970), 151, note 5. If true, Harding could have played boy servants in earlier OAC productions lacking complete cast lists.

[14] John Hodgkinson, *Narrative of His Connection with the Old American Company* (New York: J. Oram, 1797), 15; Dunlap, *A History*, 277.

[15] “Theatrical Register,” *New York Magazine* 6 no. 1 (January 1795): 1; *Daily Advertiser*, 13 February 1795, qtd. in Odell, *Annals*, 1:402.

[16] Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 301.

[17] Michael, “A History of the Professional Theatre in Boston,” 2:67-117; Dunlap, *A History*, 146. As an apprentice, “Croaker” also recalled seeing the family perform for two weeks in Greenfield, MA, in the *Boston Courier*, 12 November 1849, note, 3.

[18] “Theatrical Register,” *New York Magazine* 6, no. 4 (April 1795): 194 (emphasis in original).

[19] William Milns, *All in a Bustle: or the New House* (New York: Literary Printing Office, 1798), 15; William Duncan, *The New York Directory and Register* (New York: Swords, 1794), 178, 238.

[20] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:323-24, 393, 395; Odell, *Annals*, 2:6, 21; Ireland, *Records*, 1:134; Dunlap, *A History*, 277.

[21] Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 64, 70, 76.

[22] Willis, *The Charleston Stage*, 217.

[23] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:222-24, 270-71; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 328; Michael, “A History,” 1:100-01.

[24] *Federal Orrery*, 12 November 1795, qtd. in Michael, “A History,” 1:109.

[25] Gaps in children’s performance records here and elsewhere may also be explained by their attendance at schools to learn literacy skills.

[26] Susan L. Porter, ed. *British Opera in America: Children in the Wood (1795) . . .*, vol. 1 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994), xv-xvii (hereafter *The Children* cited in text from the OAC’s 1795 publication).

[27] “Theatrical Register,” *New York Magazine* 6 no. 1 (January 1795): 1; “Theatrical Register,” *The Ramblers’ Magazine* (2 January 1809): 89.

[28] Porter, *British Opera*, xv.

[29] Barry Sutcliffe, introduction to *Plays by George Colman the Younger and Thomas Morton* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 32-36.

[30] J. C. Cross, *The Purse* (London: William Lane, 1794), in Literature Online at [www.literature.proquest.com](http://www.literature.proquest.com) (hereafter cited in text).

[31] *New York Magazine* (Feb 1795).

[32] Porter, *With an Air Debonair*, 413; Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity*, 284-86.

[33] *New York Magazine* (Feb 1795) (emphasis in original).

[34] *Federal Orrery* (5 November 1795), qtd. in Michael, "A History," 1:105, 103.

[35] Michael, "A History," 2:83; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 313-14.

[36] Pilkinton, "Theatre in Norfolk," 495; Smith, *The Brief Career of Eliza Poe*, 135; Ireland, *Records*, 1:174. Although Gillespie's performance as the Page in June 1796 was announced as "Being her last appearance upon any stage" (Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 301), she continued to perform over the next four years with Mrs. West's company before marrying Thomas C. West in 1800 (Pilkinton, "Theatre in Norfolk," 478-79).

[37] Mrs. Inchbald, ed. *Every One Has His Fault*, in *The British Theatre*, vol. 23 (London: Longman, et al., 1808) (hereafter cited in text); Katherine S. Green, "Mr. Harmony and the Events of January 1793: Elizabeth Inchbald's *Every One Has His Fault*," *Theatre Journal* 56, no. 1 (2004): 55-58.

[38] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:119, 347.

[39] *The Portfolio* (21 Feb 1801).

[40] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:119; *New York Magazine* (Feb 1795).

[41] Michael, "A History," 2:29, 45, 70, 490; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 215; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 349; Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 122. "Master Warrell" could have been James, the eldest of three brothers hired as dancers with their parents; or, more likely, Thomas who played around forty utility boys, including Augustus in Rowson's *Slaves in Algiers*, from 1794 to 1798. Thomas was announced as "Master" or "Mr. T. Warrell" irregularly in 1797. Beginning in June 1797, Harry performed Tom Thumb, the Page, and the Boy in *The Children* and Narcisso with Miss Hardinge [sic], after first appearing as Leo the Lion in a harlequinade two and a half years earlier (Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 235, 366-67; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 219-20, 227).

[42] *An Unconscious Autobiography: William Osborn Payne's Diary and Letters 1796 to 1804*, ed. Thatcher T. P. Luquer (New York: Privately Printed, 1938), 23.

[43] Fielding's potential source is no longer extant; in Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, 97 (hereafter cited in text).

[44] Seilhamer, *A History*, 1:61; Kane O'Hara, *Tom Thumb*, "A burletta . . . Altered from Henry Fielding," (London: Barker and Son, 1805), in Literature Online at [www.literature.proquest.com](http://www.literature.proquest.com) (hereafter cited in text). It remains unclear which version, or amalgamation, companies actually produced. Cast lists for the Chestnut's productions in Philadelphia include Cleora and Mustacha, Huncamunca's two maids, indicating Fielding's original (Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:184; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 248, 267, 278, 391). O'Hara renames them Frizaletta and Plum and reduces their dialogue to one line each. For subsequent Baltimore performances, Seilhamer indicates O'Hara's authorship (3:194) but

with a cast change for Mustacha (3:200); and, Ritchey specifies Fielding's "operatical farce" (*A Guide*, 298, 315) or "burletta" (218) with his named maids (153, 160, 182, 199, 219). In Boston, Michael specifies O'Hara's adaptation with Cleora and Mustachia [sic] ("A History," 2:89). A January 1798 advertisement in New York's *Weekly Museum* announces "a musical burletta," albeit with Fielding's full title (Odell insert after 1:476). See table inserts (n.p.) in Sonneck, *Early Opera*, which presume O'Hara's version with music by Arne and Markordt.

[45] Phyllis T. Dircks, *The Eighteenth-Century English Burletta* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 1999), 99-100.

[46] Porter, *With an Air Debonair*, 493; Willis, *The Charleston Stage*, 353; Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 185.

[47] See drawing in V. C. Clinton-Baddeley, *The Burlesque Tradition in the English Theatre after 1660* (London: Methuen, 1952), 60.

[48] Fielding, *The Tragedy of Tragedies*, 145-50.

[49] For example, when Harding recited an epilogue as Cupid, the *New York Magazine* thought "she looked indeed 'the little God of Love'" (February 1795), an observation probably true for Stockwell's Cupid in another pantomime (Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:324).

[50] Qtd. in Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:175; *The Diary of Elihu Hubbard Smith*, ed. James E. Cronin (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1973), 318.

[51] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:184, 200; Dunlap, *A History*, 151; Odell, *Annals*, 2:10.

[52] *Maryland Journal*, 17 August 1795, qtd. in Ritchey, *A Guide*, 29.

[53] John Rose, *The Prisoner* (London: Lowndes, 1792), in Eighteenth Century Collections Online at [www.galegroup.com](http://www.galegroup.com) (hereafter cited in text).

[54] *Philadelphia Gazette* (n.d.), qtd. in Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:175.

[55] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:183, 205-06, 209.

[56] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:323-24; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 366.

[57] Porter, *With an Air Debonair*, 480.

[58] Samuel Birch, *The Adopted Child* (Boston: Edes, 1798), in Eighteenth Century Collections Online at [www.galegroup.com](http://www.galegroup.com) (hereafter cited in text). To characterize relational appearances between a marriageable sister and her much younger brother, adolescent or married women portrayed Clara, including Miss Broadhurst, Mrs. Hodgkinson, Mrs. Warrell, Mrs. Graupner, Mrs. Placide, and Miss Ellen Westray in Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:323; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 333; Curtis, "The Early Charleston Stage," 398; Michael, "A History," 2:91, 98, 117; Pilkinton, "Theatre in Norfolk," 497, 546;



Sodders, 2:455.

[59] Porter, *With an Air Debonair*, 428.

[60] Isaac Bickerstaff, *The Spoiled Child* (Dublin: Booksellers, 1792), in Literature Online at [www.literature.proquest.com](http://www.literature.proquest.com) (hereafter cited in text); Porter, *With an Air Debonair*, 489-90.

[61] Anne Varty, *Children and Theatre in Victorian Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 114.

[62] Seilhamer, *A History*, 1:144; Elizabeth Reitz Mullenix, *Wearing the Breeches: Gender on the Antebellum Stage* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 35-38.

[63] Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 99.

[64] Ritchey, *A Guide*, 69; Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:235; Pilkinton, "Theatre in Norfolk," 481.

[65] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:327, 395; Michael, "A History," 2:73, 82.

[66] Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 43. Stockwell may have played this boy in December 1798, but Seilhamer, Ireland, and Odell do not provide cast lists.

[67] Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 40. Mrs. Marshall's birth year is unknown. See entry for Lydia Webb in Philip H. Highfill, Kalman A. Burnim, and Edward A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Actresses . . . in London*, vol. 15 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 314-17.

[68] Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 204. Sixteen-year-old Harriet Grist originated Edward in London, based on Mrs. Inchbald's recommendation, in James Boaden, *Memoirs of Mrs. Inchbald* (London: Bentley, 1833), 1:308.

[69] Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 40, 44; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 217, 224; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 132; and see note 41.

[70] *Minerva*, 20 February 1796.

[71] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:172, 183, 110, 115-16; Porter, *With an Air Debonair*, 480.

[72] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:193, 199.

[73] Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:290; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 227.

[74] Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 40; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 204, 206; Odell, *Annals*, 2:386.

[75] Qtd. in Seilhamer, *A History*, 3:204-05; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 203. In September 1796, Mr. and Mrs. Marshall were hired by John Williamson as first singers at Boston's Federal Theatre (Michael, "A

History,” 1:138-39).

[76] Michael, “A History,” 2:60, 70, 83, 87.

[77] Qtd. in Smith, *The Brief Career of Eliza Poe*, 27.

[78] Smith, *The Brief Career of Eliza Poe*, 33.

[79] Odell, *Annals*, 1:445-70.

[80] Ritchey, *A Guide*, 219; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 313, 333, 348.

[81] Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 356; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 229.

[82] Smith, *The Brief Career of Eliza Poe*, 39-42, 135.

[83] Odell, *Annals*, 1:385, 424; Soddors, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 2:551. Mary deferred to Mrs. Williamson for one Boston night in July 1797; Michael, “A History,” 2:512.

[84] Willis, *The Charleston Stage*, 206; Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 111; Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 786; Curtis, “The Early Charleston Stage,” 391-93.

[85] Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 252, note 43.

[86] William Wood, *Personal Recollections of the Stage* (Philadelphia: Carey Baird, 1855), 60-61; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 402; Curtis, “The Early Charleston Stage,” 392-93; Soddors, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 1:185-86, 2:551.

[87] Following Willis (441-42), Soddors incorrectly identifies “Miss Sully” as thirty-year-old Elizabeth, who had eloped with Middleton Smith five years earlier (Willis, *The Charleston Stage*, 191), rather than Harriet, for child roles this season (“The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 2:435, 439, 443, 446, 448, 451, 455), per Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 252.

[88] Odell, *Annals*, 2:18, 43.

[89] Soddors, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 1:187-88, 2:448; William Dunlap, *Pizarro in Peru* (New York: Hopkins, 1800), in Literature Online at [www.literature.proquest.com](http://www.literature.proquest.com).

[90] Soddors, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 1:165-66; Michael, “A History,” 2:101, 105, 106, 109, 111, 114, 115; Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 63, 68, 70.

[91] Soddors, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 2:518.

[92] Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 73; see Early American playbills, 1750-1812: Guide, Harvard University Library at <http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~hou01711>.

[93] Dunlap, *A History*, 298; Odell, *Annals*, 2:146. At this point, two Marshall couples create confusions. Patrick incorrectly claims that “Mrs. G. Marshall” played in Savannah in late 1800 when she was still in New York as Miss Harding (Patrick, *Savannah’s Pioneer Theater*, 38; Odell, *Annals*, 2:99-106). Lydia Marshall was in Europe during the 1803-04 season (Sodders, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 1:250), not Boston (Michael, “A History,” 1:350, 2:191). She reappeared as Mrs. Wilmot with her second husband in Washington in 1805 (*National Intelligencer*, 19 July 1805) and then in Richmond (Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 213).

[94] Sodders includes Mrs. G. Marshall in casts beginning in February 1804, but Harbin claims she did not join Hodgkinson until October (“The Career of John Hodgkinson,” 230).

[95] *Charleston Courier*, 12 February 1804, qtd. in Sodders, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 246.

[96] Ireland, *Records*, 1:232.

[97] “Marriage and Death Notices from the City-Gazett [sic] and Daily Advertiser,” *The South Carolina Historical and Genealogical Magazine* 30, no. 4 (October 1929): 244; Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 460; Sodders, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 2:730.

[98] Shockley, *The Richmond Stage*, 345, 355, 375.

[99] Odell, *Annals*, 2:413, 424, 435, 438, 441; Ireland, *Records*, 1:120; *Augusta Chronicle* (6 February and 2 April 1823). I am unable to verify further accounts of Mary’s life, but see “Great Trial for Adultery, Divorce, &c.,” *New York Herald*, 24 November 1841; *New York Daily Tribune*, 11 January 1845; *New York Times*, 23 January 1862; “Died,” *New York Times*, 15 June 1870.

[100] Odell, *Annals*, 2:261.

[101] Sodders, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 2:626; Willard, *History of the Providence Stage*, 36; Michael, “A History,” 1:585.

[102] Massachusetts Town Clerk Vital and Town Records, Marriages 1800-1849, vol. 2, K-Z, 282; “Green Room Intelligence,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 4 December 1824; “Letter from ‘Acorn,’” *Spirit of the Times*, 14 October 1854: 410; Ireland, *Records*, 1:134, 444.

[103] Sodders, “The Theatre Management of Alexandre Placide,” 2:435, 443-55; Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 546; Ritchey, *A Guide*, 209.

[104] Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 546, 550; *Norfolk Herald*, 25 April 1801, 1315, 1484.

[105] Pilkinton, “Theatre in Norfolk,” 547; Willis, *The Charleston Stage*, 191.

[106] Dunlap, *A History*, 407.

[107] Durang, *History of the Philadelphia Stage*, 60. Durang also describes “two green rooms.” “One

green room was used for musical rehearsals, dancing practices, &c., and it was a place where the juvenile members of the corps might indulge their freaks unrestrainedly.” The principal green room was a “polished drawing-room” where “perfect etiquette” was “always preserved” (34).

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