

Newly Discovered Biographical Sources on Ira Aldridge

by Bernth Lindfors
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The British Newspaper Archive continues to offer a fruitful research tool for scholars wishing to study reviews of performances by actors on the British stage. I used this remarkable resource extensively when preparing biographies of the famous Black performers Ira Aldridge and Samuel Morgan Smith,^[1] and I go back to it from time to time whenever new microfilms of old papers from the nineteenth century are added to it in order to see if there are any reports or anecdotes about these two actors that I might have missed. Sure enough, I have found two documents that shed some new light on Aldridge, and I offer them here in tribute to Errol Hill's pioneering research on black actors.

The first of these accounts appeared in London's *Weekly Dispatch* on February 10, 1828 as a contribution on "Metropolitan Oddities" focusing on "The African Roscius," the name ironically bestowed upon Aldridge by the London *Times* in its racist review of his debut in the role of Oronooko at the Coburg Theatre on October 10, 1825. Aldridge had made his initial debut in London at age seventeen five months earlier in a condensed production of *Othello* at the smaller Royalty Theatre in the East End, performing under the pseudonym of Mr. Keene, a deliberately playful allusion to the surname of Edmund Kean, one of England's greatest tragedians, famous for his portrayal of Othello. Aldridge kept this facetious stage name until the real Kean collapsed on stage while playing the Moor at Covent Garden Theatre on March 25, 1833, and managers called upon Aldridge to replace him in the same role in the same theatre two weeks later. He was then billed both honestly as Mr. Aldridge and dishonestly as "a Native of Senegal," possibly a ploy to validate his identity as a true African performer. This charade led to a controversy so bitter that it kept Aldridge off the London stage for the next fifteen years. He had already spent eight years seeking to turn what was meant as a racial insult into a praise name, and he persisted in assuming this honorific title alluding to Roscius, a great Roman actor, for the remainder of his career.

When he started appearing at the Royalty Theatre, advertisements described him as a "Gentleman of Colour from the New York Theatre,"^[2] and press reports on his subsequent provincial tours spoke of him as having "attained considerable celebrity in America,"^[3] a gross exaggeration. One playbill in Bristol went so far as to claim erroneously that he was "known throughout America by the appellation of the African Roscius, a performer of Colour, whose flattering reception at New York and throughout all the principal Theatres in America has induced him to visit England professionally."^[4] This was more media puffery. Later in 1826, when he was finding it difficult to secure engagements and had become nearly destitute, *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post* and the *Theatrical Observer; and Daily Bills of the Play* actively sought to solicit funds that would enable him to return to America.^[5] In these early years he was known to have moved to England from the New World, not directly from Africa.

So the article in the *Weekly Dispatch* two and a half years later purported to clear up some of the confusion surrounding this unusual stranger. It may have been the first biographical article published on him in Britain and deserves to be remembered both for its errors as well as its truths. The author of this piece, identified only by his initials—W.L.R.—was William Leman Rede, the younger brother of Leman

Thomas Rede, author of *The Road to the Stage* (1827). Both brothers enjoyed active careers in the theatre, William initially as a young actor and journalist who “speedily established himself in high favour as a critic on all matters connected with the drama. None better could distinguish between talent and pretension; none better adjust the intricate balance between the practiced charlatan and the unpractised man of promising merit.”^[6] He had written a few early plays and novels and later became a very prolific playwright, specializing in popular farces and melodramas. At the time he wrote about Aldridge, he was only twenty-six years old, just six years older than Aldridge himself. Having seen so young an actor performed remarkably well in a variety of roles, Rede went to interview him in order to collect information on his background and previous experience. Here is his scoop on this surprising American African:

THE AFRICAN ROSCIUS

The London Stage has alternately presented every novelty that Europe can afford—we have had rope-dancers and wire-walkers, that performed all sorts of apparent impossibilities—we have had men-monkeys, real dogs, horses, and elephants—even the less civilized quarters of the globe have supplied us with the phenomens [*sic*], and those lofty domes in which they profess to “hold the glass up” to nature, have been made the arena for tumblers. Novelty and merit are *not* twins, yet they are sometimes simultaneously produced, and the subject of my present article is one instance of this desirable conjunction. The visitors [*sic*] of the Coburg must all remember the *genuine* Oronooko [,] Gambia, &c., who appeared there about three years since—his late efforts have been made in the provinces, and, as it is said, he is shortly to appear at Covent Garden Theatre, a sketch of him and his adventures may prove acceptable.

FREDERICK WILLIAM KEENE (the African Roscius) is the son of the Rev. W. Keene, who, though an African by birth, is a Protestant Minister in New York, and has the care of the souls of a large number of blacks; his wife (my hero’s mother) was a Creole, and the Roscius, I believe, the “first fruits” of their union, was born in New York (24th July 1807). His early days it would be difficult to describe, unless my readers were acquainted with the pastimes followed by the juvenile in the United States. At an early age, he shewed a predilection for the drama, and when about 15, joined some Gentlemen “of his own rank and complexion,” in a Theatrical scheme; they were a sort of a chess-board company—half black half white. The theatre was situated in Green-street, New York, and their first play was *Richard the Third*, the principal characters by four blacks, *i.e.* *Duke of Gloster* [*sic*], by the Roscius; *King Henry*, by Mr. Bates; *Richmond*, Mr. Hewlett; *Buckingham*, Mr. Jackson; *Lady Anne* (the fair Lady Anne)! by a *negress*, called Miss Sukey Stevens; and the *Queen*, by a brown fair one yclept Miss Dixon. These performers of colour were set off by the appearance of a *white Tressel*—(Mr. Lamb). The Roscius made a decided hit, and, after a few more trials, set out on a starring tour in Boston—where he played *Othello*, with a *black Desdemona* and a *white Emilia*. He then returned to New York and appeared at the Park-street Theatre as a *star*; he ran through a round of characters in different parts of the United States, and then embarked for England—but, ere I follow him thither, another word of the Green-street Theatre. It was a *desideratum* in New York—where a large portion of the inhabitants are virtually, if not actually, excluded from the other playhouses on no plea but their colour; the prices were as follows—Boxes, 8s., (5s. English)—Pit, 4s.—Gallery, 2s. The company were most respectable—unlike some damsels of our drama—amid the black ladies there were no light characters. Mr. Mathews, in his piece of pleasantry, entitled “A Trip to America,” has described

the performance of *Hamlet* at this theatre; now

“I have been most accurate in my researches;”

and finds that this story has only one fault; i.e.—that it is not true *Hamlet* was never performed at Green-street; it was, indeed, rehearsed for a Miss Johnson’s benefit, but never played. When Mathews visited the theatre, *Pizarro* was the play, and my hero was *Rolla*. One anecdote will suffice to show the genuine innocence (call it not ignorance) of the company. *Fortune’s Frolic* was got up, and Robin Roughhead (a Yorkshireman) played by a negro, who studied it from an Irishman, and went through the part with a fine Cork brogue: In this farce, there is one character who delivers some eight or ten lines—this part is marked in the cast as “a clown”—Messieurs of the somber hue, who had no notion of any clown but a pantomime one, such as they had seen at Price’s theatre, absolutely dressed this character *a la* Grimaldi! Some of the technical phrases of the drama, and portions of the texts, were perversely retained by them, though, in their mouths, they sounded paradoxical; for instance, *Othello*, bending over a *Desdemona*, as black as a crow, exclaimed—

“Yet I’ll not shed her blood, nor scar

That whiter skin of her’s than snow.”

Let me return to the Roscius—he came to London, and drew crowded houses at the Coburg, where a piece, called *The Negro’s Curse*, was prepared for him by Milner. Since then he has been at Edinburgh, Glasgow, Bath, and Bristol—at Manchester and Liverpool seven times, and he is now in Birmingham. Whilst in Scotland he met Mr. C. Kemble, who, I am informed, undertook to procure him an opening at Covent-Garden. The strongest point of his acting is intense feeling—not violent, but deep—there is a pathos even in his colloquial tones peculiar and affecting. Our first meeting was in High Holborn, where he had collected a mob round him by his extravagant laughter at the braying of a donkey, an animal he had never seen in America—*Othello* and *Zanga* are his favourite parts—but *Mungo* is, perhaps, his *chef-d’oeuvre*—his style of humour is totally different from that of any other performer—his drunken scene is a thing by itself—the very personification of liberty run mad—and presents a lively image of what we might conceive to be the folly of the Spartan slaves, when they had their *one* day of unrestrained freedom, both in speech and diet. The African Roscius (notwithstanding his faults and mannerisms) is an actor of great natural powers; he practices no tricks to catch applause, and rather under than over acts. His talents, and the singular circumstances in which he stands in the profession he has chosen, are claims upon kindness. His line is a limited one; and, I trust, if any prejudice arises on his appearance, it will be one favourable to him. He is a stranger, untaught, unaided, totally friendless in this country, and, with nothing to rely on but his talent, which is of an order that practice in the metropolis will render great.

Some of the biographical details given here are known to be accurate; for instance, Aldridge’s date of birth, his father’s profession, his own predilection for the drama at an early age, and his involvement in a multiracial “Theatrical scheme” in New York. But his father’s name was Daniel, not a name that began with a W, and Rede wrongly assumed that Aldridge was the firstborn child in his family (he had a

brother, Joshua, born seven years earlier).[7]

However, Rede's article contains one fact that has never before been mentioned by others: that Aldridge's mother was "a Creole." In those days the term spanned a range of different meanings. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a Creole could indicate someone white, black, or a person of mixed racial ancestry. A *creole white* was usually "a descendant of European settlers, born or naturalized in those colonies or regions [of the West Indies or America] and more or less modified in type by the climate and surroundings." A *creole negro* was "a negro born in the West Indies or America, as distinguished from one freshly imported from Africa." [8] Since the *Manhattan Death Libers* records that Aldridge's mother Luranah, mistranscribed in this source as Lavinia, was born in Delaware and buried in the cemetery of the black church her husband served, theatre scholars may assume that she belonged in the latter category of creoles, but cannot be certain that she had no mixed blood. [9] After all, Aldridge himself, during his initial performances at the Royal Coburg, was often described as not very dark-skinned. The *Times* said "The gentleman is in complexion the colour of a new half-penny, barring the brightness." [10] The *British Press* confidently declared "Mr. Keene is a Creole." [11] And when he came back to London to appear at Covent Garden, there was a good deal of commentary on his color being light brown or dark olive, and of an "oily and expressive mulatto tint" which "seems to show that he has European blood in his veins." [12]

Rede had never been to New York, but he knew a little about the "African Theatre" where Aldridge had made his start as a professional actor because a year earlier he had watched the comedian Charles Mathews mock and mimic a ludicrously inept "African Tragedian" he claimed to have seen butcher the role of Hamlet there. This was one of the most memorable satirical character sketches he performed in his popular one-man show *Trip to America*, which opened at the English Opera House on March 25, 1824.

Mathews's African was not a caricature of Aldridge in performance. Rather, it was a parody of the acting style of James Hewlett, the principal actor at that theatre. But when Aldridge started performing at the Coburg, some theatergoers went there expecting to see the actor Mathews had famously lampooned. Rede knew better, having spoken with Aldridge, but for more details on his acting career, he had to rely on whatever Aldridge told him, some of which was more fanciful than factual.

There has been some good research done on New York's African Theatre in recent decades, including studies by Errol Hill, George Thompson, Shane White, and Marvin McAllister. [13] By comparing what these scholars have said with what Aldridge told Rede, contemporary scholars may gain a better understanding of how Aldridge chose to present himself to the public and how that public responded to what they saw in him.

The African Theatre originally grew out of the African Grove, a cabaret or "public garden" intended for the enjoyment of New York City's black community. Opened in the summer of 1821 by William Alexander Brown, a West Indian, it offered drinks, music, and dramatic entertainments to its patrons, who initially met at Brown's Thomas Street home in Lower Manhattan. After neighbors complained about the noise, Brown moved thirteen blocks further north to his home at the corner of Bleeker and Mercer streets a few months later.

However, the space offered seating for only fifty people and audiences proved thinner, so in November or December of 1821, Brown decided to move his troupe again, this time south to a tavern or hotel in Park

Row facing City Hall Park and next door to the well-established Park Theatre. Unfortunately for Brown, Stephen Price, the business manager at the Park Theatre, did not like having such competitors on his doorstep, especially since they were now performing three times a week and drawing white as well as black audiences. He sent in hecklers to disrupt performances by throwing firecrackers onto the stage and even arranged for police to raid the theatre one night and arrest all the actors. In order to be released, the actors had to promise that they would never act Shakespeare again.

This kind of harassment led Brown to lease an empty lot on the east side of Mercer Street near Broadway and build a proper playhouse with seating for hundreds that opened in mid-July 1822. (Greene Street, mentioned by Rede, sat one short block west of Mercer.) Unfortunately, the harassment resumed almost immediately. On August 10th, a mob of white ruffians interrupted a performance, assaulted the actors, and vandalized the playhouse. Brown and his actors boldly fought back. Police arrested and charged eleven of the white rioters, some of them circus workers in the city, but the case against them was eventually dismissed.

To make matters worse, a severe yellow fever epidemic had started to spread throughout the city, and by early October Brown's theatre, now called the American Theatre, had to close. Brown took his players to Albany, where they performed for the rest of the year. Surviving playbills indicate that several performances were mounted at Brown's new theatre in the spring and early summer of 1823, but by mid-July Brown was bankrupt. Several members of his troupe stayed together and gave scattered performances in 1824, but they had to find other venues for their entertainments.[\[14\]](#)

What was Aldridge doing during these three years? At what point did he join the African Theatre company and take part in their performances? Theatre scholars cannot confirm this precisely. His name does not appear in any of the documents concerning the company, but he may have performed under a pseudonym since his father did not approve of such sinful behavior and wanted him to be a preacher rather than an actor.

But statements made by others who knew him and also by Aldridge himself suggest that he was indeed attached to Brown's theatre company for a time. Philip A. Bell, one of his classmates at the African Free School, recalled some years later that Aldridge left school in 1822 and joined Brown's American Theatre in 1823 after seeing a Shakespeare performance there.[\[15\]](#) In an autobiography Aldridge published around 1848, he claimed that his first visit to a professional theatre, specifically the Park Theatre, had "fixed the great purpose of his life, and established the whole end and aim of his existence. He would be an actor."[\[16\]](#) So he "fell to work and studied the part of Rolla, in the play *Pizarro*, and in that character he made 'his first appearance on any stage.' This was at a private theatre, where he was singularly successful, and all his fellow-performers were of his own complexion"[\[17\]](#)—in other words, Brown's theatre. Brown's troupe produced *Pizarro* at the Hampton Hotel next door to the Park Theatre in the winter or spring of 1822, but James Hewlett played Rolla (not Aldridge). However, a second performance of *Pizarro* staged by Brown's company in Albany on December 19, 1823 may have given Aldridge the opportunity to replace Hewlett in that heroic role.[\[18\]](#) So Bell and Aldridge's accounts may contain some elements of truth. Aldridge also reported that he had also once played a love-sick Ethiopian Romeo opposite an Ethiopian Juliet with the same supporting cast, but there remains no hard evidence in the extant literature on the African Theatre to support this claim.[\[19\]](#)

How reliable was the information that Aldridge gave Rede? *Richard III* was among the first plays ever

performed at the African Grove, the pleasure garden that Brown had created for the black community. Brown staged it three times in September and October 1821 and a fourth time in January 1822, but in at least two of the performances Hewlett played the leading role supported by Mr. Bates and Mr. Jackson but not by any of the other actors and actresses Rede names in his account. In fact, none of the female performers, except Miss Dixon who later appeared in *The Poor Soldier*, appear to have been employed by Brown, and it seems extremely unlikely that Aldridge (thirteen years old and still at school at that time), would have been recruited to play a major role in a Shakespearean play.

However, he *could* have become an active member of the troupe while still young, for James McCune Smith, who also had gone to school with him, reported years later that upon graduating, Aldridge, “being of a roving disposition,” had briefly shipped out on a brig. “Shortly after his return home, Brown’s theater was opened, and Ira, with his brother Joshua, took to the stage; but their father, finding it out, took them away from the theater.”^[20] It remains tempting to speculate that the two actors, listed as Hutchington and J. Hutchington, performing as Buckingham and Lord Stanley in at least one of the African Theatre’s productions of *Richard III*, might have been these two delinquent youths. Hutchington also earned a part as a Castilian Soldier later in the African Theatre’s first performance of *Pizarro*.^[21] In any case, Aldridge subsequently defied his father and rejoined Brown’s troupe.

The rest of what Aldridge told Rede about his career in the United States appears the kind of inflated fiction that P.T. Barnum famously called Humbug or Bunk. He had never performed before Charles Mathews at the African Theatre. In fact, Mathews had never attended a production there; instead, James Hewlett had performed privately for him in the spring of 1823, inspiring Mathews’s skit of an ignorant African Tragedian in *Trip to America*. Aldridge also never appeared as a star at the Park Theatre, nor is there any record of him playing Othello in Boston or running through a round of characters in different parts of the United States. Aldridge could tell funny stories about other black actors at Brown’s theatre, one of whom had imitated a Yorkshireman with an Irish brogue, and another who botched lines as Othello, but these too may have been little more than highly embellished anecdotes.

But Rede’s recitation of Aldridge’s impressive string of previous appearances on stage on his provincial tours seems very accurate. Indeed, over a twenty-month period after leaving London in December 1825, Aldridge had performed not only at Brighton, Bristol, Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and Birmingham—the major cities Rede mentions—but in at least seventeen smaller towns and villages along the way. During this time, rumors circulated that he planned to appear at Drury Lane and Covent Garden in London, but in mid-1826 his nemesis Stephen Price had become lessee of Drury Lane and remained there for the next four seasons, depriving Aldridge of that opportunity. Charles Kemble ran Covent Garden as an actor-manager and proprietor, but from 1826 to 1829 the theatre struggled with serious financial difficulty, so he probably could not have afforded to take a risk on a black actor. Rede’s article suggests that he saw that this young actor had talent and merited public attention.

The last paragraph of Rede’s report in which he describes watching Aldridge perform offers a shrewd, insightful assessment of his salient abilities and minor defects. Later eyewitnesses confirm Aldridge possessed “great natural powers” as a tragedian and comedian, and one who might with further practice become still greater. But Rede need not have pitied him for being “totally friendless in this country” because Aldridge was happily married to a British woman, and two British actors he had met in New York, Henry and James Wallack, had encouraged him and helped launch him in London. Plus, by this time Rede himself had become his good friend.^[22]

Actually, Rede had already become so good a friend that when Aldridge announced his decision to experiment as the lessee of a theatre in Coventry on March 3, 1826 (three weeks after the publication of Rede's essay), he said he had invited Rede to serve as his stage manager. Their collaboration included acting as well as managing the motley crew of performers and musicians they hired. Their brave experiment in running a theatre lasted barely two months, for by the end of April and beginning of May each had moved on to performer elsewhere, Aldridge in Worcester, Rede in York.

I found a second source of new biographical information on Aldridge in the *Carlisle Journal* of April 16, 1889. It comes in the form of an amusing eyewitness report by a gentleman who recalled having seen Aldridge perform a scene from *Othello* at his school forty-one years earlier:

Looking last week over a collection of old play bills which was in the library of the late Mr. John Clarke Ferguson, I noticed one which referred to the performance of Ira Aldridge, "the African Roscius," in the Theatre Royal at Carlisle in the year 1848. Ira Aldridge was a man of colour—a veritable "black man"—who could assume the part of Othello without the use of burnt cork, and I have often laughed at an incident that occurred during his visit to Carlisle. He came to our school to give some recitations. It was a hot summer's evening, and the windows of the schoolroom, which looked upon the neighboring street, were thrown wide open for the purposes of ventilation, while the boys sat listening with rapt attention to the African Roscius while he gave some scenes from *Othello*. He was in the midst of his address to the Senate and describing the arts by which he had wooed and won the gentle Desdemona, when a noisy fellow in the street began a most terrible row by ringing a big bell and calling "Fresh herrings!" with a loud, hoarse voice. We tittered at the curious mixture of Shakespeare and costermonger; but Ira went manfully on. So did the fresh herring merchant.

My story being done

She gave me for my pains a world of sighs—

continued the tragedian. "All alive! Just come in!" vociferated the costermonger. Ira hesitated a moment, but resumed—

She swore, in faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange,

'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful,

"Fresh herrings! Fresh herrings!" came booming through the window once more. The "dusky Moor," already perspiring at every pore, with ill-concealed indignation made one final struggle—

She wish'd she had not heard it—

But the fresh herring man was noisier than ever— "All alive! Alive!" and the bell gave another loud clang. The blood of the African Roscius was now up. Unable longer to constrain himself he broke off in the middle of the sentence, rushed from the stage, and behind the wings we could hear him shouting—no longer the musical blank verse of the poet, but— "Stop that row, you rascal, or I'll come and choke you with a mutton chop!" The coster was evidently taken aback for a

moment by the apparition of the negro's head through the open door; but he soon recovered his equilibrium and his voice, and the altercation which ensued helped—to the school, at least—give an amusing turn to the entertainment.^[23]

This prompted a response in the *Carlisle Journal* on 24 April the following week by another former schoolboy who remembered the same incident but also provided additional information on the black actor:

A Kendal correspondent writes: — “Your notes on Ira Aldridge, the African Roscius, have interested me greatly as I knew that robustuous [*sic*] actor very well in Edinburgh many years ago when he played the part of Aaron, the Moor beloved by Tamora, in *Titus Andronicus*.^[24]

These remarks affirm that Aldridge made an indelible impression on audiences young and old. He could amuse schoolboys with a comical tirade and years later could remind them of the vigor with which he portrayed Aaron not as a villain but as a romantic hero. Such memories of Aldridge like the ones described in this essay, preserved in newspapers of the day, merit resurrecting and adding to the documentary record of his life and experiences.

^[1]My biography of Aldridge was published in four volumes by the University of Rochester Press between 2011 and 2015. The one I wrote on Morgan Smith was published by Africa World Press in Trenton, NJ in 2018.

^[2] There was no theatre by that name in New York City.

^[3] *Brighton Gazette*, 15 December 1825.

^[4] Playbill held at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin. The same notice appeared in the *Bristol Mercury*, 20 January 1826.

^[5] *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post*, August 31, 1826; *Theatrical Observer*; and *Daily Bills of the Play*, 2 September 1826.

^[6] “Recollections of Lemman Rede,” *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, new series 80 (1847): 102-09.

^[7] Bernth Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge: The Early Years* ((Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2011), 21.

^[8] These definitions are drawn from *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 601.

^[9] Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge*, 20.

[10] *London Times*, 11 October 1825.

[11] *British Press*, 11 October 1825.

[12] *English Chronicle*, 11 April 1833; *Morning Chronicle*, 11 April 1833; *Town Journal*, 14 April 1833; the direct quotations are taken from the *Globe and Traveller*, 11 April 1833, and the *Observer*, 11 April 1833, respectively.

[13] One of the first reliable accounts was given in Errol Hill's *Shakespeare in Sable: A History of Black Shakespearean Actors* (1984). Then came *A Documentary History of the African Theatre* (1998) by George A. Thompson, Jr., a New York City librarian who tracked down 134 published and unpublished sources that told much of what was happening there. Next was Shane White's *Stories of Freedom in Black New York* (2002) and Marvin McAllister's *White People Do Not Know How to Behave at Entertainments Designed for Ladies and Gentleman of Colour: William Brown's African and American Theater* (2003). Each provides insightful commentary on the significance of Brown's theatre, White writing as a historian of black New York, McAllister as a theatre historian and performance theorist.

[14] I have been following George Thompson's chronology throughout this portion of the narrative.

[15] Philip A. Bell, "Men We Have Known: Ira Aldridge (1867)," *Elevator* (San Francisco), 2, and reprinted in *Ira Aldridge: The African Roscius*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2007), 49.

[16] *Memoir and Theatrical Career of Ira Aldridge, the African Roscius* (London: Onwhyn, [1848]), and reprinted in *Ira Aldridge: The African Roscius*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2007), 13.

[17] *Ira Aldridge: The African Roscius*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2007), 14.

[18] H.P. Phelps, *Players of a Century: A Record of the Albany Stager* (Albany: Joseph McDonough, 1880), 56.

[19] *Memoir and Theatrical Career of Ira Aldridge*, 14.

[20] James McCune Smith, "Ira Aldridge," *Anglo-African Magazine*, 2, no. 1 (January 1860), 27-32, and reprinted in *Ira Aldridge: The African Roscius*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Rochester: Rochester University Press, 2007), 37-47.

[21] See George A. Thompson, Jr., *A Documentary History of the African Theatre* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 70 and 228, for further details.

[22] For further information on Aldridge's theatrical activities in New York, London, and on his first tours of the British provinces, see Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge* and the books by Hill, Thompson, White, and McAllister cited in footnote 13.

[23] *Carlisle Journal*, 16 April 1889.

[24] An Edinburgh playbill shows that Aldridge performed as Aaron there on 24 July 1850.

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