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## A List of Anonymous Pieces Presented at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, 1767-1800

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TERENCE A. TOBIN

A List of Anonymous Pieces  
Presented at the Theatre Royal,  
Edinburgh, 1767-1800<sup>1</sup>

A number of plays and playlets presented in the Scottish capital during the early years of its legitimate theater forms part of the corpus of ephemeral writing, which probably will remain anonymous. In the North it was necessary and later fashionable to publish profane endeavors anonymously. Since the playhouse was suspect, even during the Enlightenment, Scots almost never admitted contributing works for the stage.

Although Edinburgh had had some kind of theatrical entertainment every season since 1741, and had had a short lived resident troupe, reputedly under the aegis of Allan Ramsay, the Licensing Act curtailed dramatic presentations. Letters patent were not granted until May 20, 1767, when at last Edinburgh could boast of a legitimate playhouse. The Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, inspired local talents; more original pieces were produced in the decade after the theater became legitimate than had been presented in Scotland during the first half of the eighteenth century. There are a number of concomitant reasons for the proliferation of original theatricals: the 1757 success of John Home's *Douglas*, the relaxation of ecclesiastical and civil restrictions, and the popularity of the gentlemanly art of playwriting during the Georgian era. The legitimation of the theater in Edinburgh did give a certain recognition to the institution which had been labeled diabolical.

In the following alphabetically arranged register of dramas, the title, earliest recorded date of performance, and the dates of newspaper notices

<sup>1</sup>I wish to record my indebtedness to Mrs. Norma Armstrong, FLA, Librarian of the Edinburgh Collection, Edinburgh Public Library, for indicating to me many of the plays here entered. The information is drawn from her thesis "The Edinburgh Stage, 1715-1820: A Bibliography" which was presented to the Library Association.

in the *Edinburgh Evening Courant* are noted.<sup>2</sup> If no newspaper citation is given, the date of performance has been established by a playbill in the collection of the Central Library of Edinburgh.

This list of plays in no way represents a complete corpus of anonymous pieces presented on the Edinburgh stage. Not every theatrical presentation was advertised in the newspapers, nor were playbills printed for every performance. In a number of advertisements the name of the play was not given.

The pieces which are included in this list are not the works of Scots dramatists exclusively, although the local character of a number of the titles indicates that many of these dramas were the products of Northern writers. Because most of the pieces by native authors, which were presented at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, came out anonymously, only those plays which are not noted in standard sources are listed.<sup>3</sup> The overwhelming majority of these plays were afterpieces and farcical interludes, which had runs of several nights and were never revived. Rarely were such entertainments published in the North.

Some of these plays may have been given on the London stage or in other theaters in the provinces. There are pieces such as "Away for Leith Links, or A-Golfing We Will Go," that would have entertained only in Edinburgh. "Lingo's Itinerary; or, his Journey through Edinburgh" is almost certainly an alteration of Garrick's farce, which was quite popular in the North. It was not uncommon for the Edinburgh audience to see localized comedy, such as theater manager John Jackson's

<sup>2</sup> Although the *Caledonian Mercury* was published during the years encompassed by this list, an exhaustive search of both Edinburgh newspapers for theatrical advertisements and occasional criticism indicates that the *Courant* carried the vast majority of theatrical notices. At times the *Mercury* also printed the bills which the *Courant* ran, but the *Mercury* was more concerned with shipping news than social reportage.

*Edinburgh Evening Courant* is cited as *EEC* in all entries in the list of plays.

<sup>3</sup> The plays included in this list do not appear in the following sources: David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed, and Stephen Jones, *Biographia Dramatica; or, a Companion to the Playhouse*, 3 vols. (London, 1812); John Genest, *Some Account of the English Stage, from the Restoration in 1660 to 1830*, 10 vols. (Bath, 1832); Ralston Inglis, *Dramatic Writers of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1868); *The London Stage, 1660-1800. A Calendar of Plays, Entertainments, and Afterpieces, together with Casts, Box-receipts, and Contemporary Comment*, edited by George W. Stone (Carbondale, 1965); Allardyce Nicoll, *A History of English Drama 1660-1900*, 6 vols. (Cambridge, 1952-59).

Samuel Halkett and John Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Literature*, 9 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1928), as well as similar sources fail to note these plays.

"Tony Lumpkin's Rambles Through Edinburgh," which put the Goldsmith catalyst in Auld Reekie.

The fugitive nature of harlequinade is such that this farcical form has been excluded from the list, although in at least one instance, "Harlequin Highlander; or, a Trip to Roslin Castle," which opened April 15, 1773,<sup>4</sup> the slapstick entertainment seems to be indigenous.

This list is offered as a query about these forgotten anonymous pieces, most of which served as playbill filler in an era when audiences demanded a wide if not discriminating variety of divertisement.

Adventures in Edinburgh; or, The Taylor Distressed. April 22, 1782.  
*EEC*, April 17; 20, 1782.

The African Slave Trade. March 6, 1792.

This play may be an adaptation of [Neil Douglas], *The African Slave Trade; or, a short view of the evidence relative to that subject produced before the House of Commons, interspersed with such remarks as naturally flowed from it; all meant to evince the sound policy and moral obligation of its immediate and entire abolition* (Edinburgh, 1792).

Away for Leith Links; or, A-Golfing We Will Go. May 2, 1787.  
*EEC*, April 28, 1787.

The Battle of the Nile. January 31, 1799.  
*EEC*, January 28, 1799.

Belles Have at Ye All. April 24, 1784.  
 This piece was probably a monologue.

Britannia Triumphant; or, the Wreath of Peace. March 21, 1778.  
*EEC*, March 14; 16; 18, 1778.

British Valour; or, A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed. April 27, 1793.

Bucks Have at Ye All. March 4, 1765.  
*EEC*, March 7, 1765.

This piece was probably a monologue.

The Buck's Ramble Through Edinburgh; or A Trip to Comely Garden.  
 April 21, 1779.  
*EEC*, April 17, 1779.

Birnam Wood; or, The Highland Chief. March 16, 1793.

The Clock Case. March 30, 1776.

The Comic Mirrour. June 20, 1792.

<sup>4</sup>*Edinburgh Evening Courant*, April 17; 19, 1773.

- Comic Sketches; or, Natures' Looking Glass. May 19, 1792.  
*EEC*, May 14; 17, 1792.
- The Deserter of Naples. April 24, 1800.  
*EEC*, April 21, 1800.
- The Dramatic Phrensy; or, the Comical Tragedians. April 14, 1787.  
*EEC*, April 12, 1787.
- The Fall of David Rizzio; or, Mary Queen of Scots. June 9, 1796.  
*EEC*, June 4; 6, 1796.
- The Fortune Hunter; or, A Trip to the Lighters. April 6, 1782.  
*EEC*, April 3; 6; 13; May 1, 1782.
- Fun upon Fun; or, Wit at a Pinch. April 23, 1787.  
*EEC*, April 19; 21, 1787.
- The Ghost; or Affrighted Farmer. January 31, 1794.  
*EEC*, January 30, 1794.
- The Good Woman Without a Head; or, Diarmuch M'Finnan's Voyage to America. April 19, 1784.  
*EEC*, April 14; 17, 1784.
- The Greenock Landlady; or The Sailors of Port Glasgow. July 20, 1772.  
*EEC*, July 8, 1772.
- Half an Hour After Supper [by Rev. J. Rose?]. February 25, 1792.  
*EEC*, February 23, 1792.  
"Half an Hour After Supper" was advertised on the same bill with "A Quarter of an Hour Before Dinner" by Rev. J. Rose.
- The Highland Competition Prize; or Shely's Trip to Auld Reekie. April 21, 1790.  
*EEC*, April 19, 1790.
- The Highland Festival. April 21, 1779.  
*EEC*, April 17, 1779.
- Hooly and Fairly; or, The Highland Lad and the Lowland Lass. April 30, 1789.  
*EEC*, April 27; May 4, 1789.
- The Intriguing Footman; or, Fun upon Fun. April 17, 1788.  
*EEC*, April 12, 1788.
- The Italian Fantoccini. February 16, 1799.  
*EEC*, February 14, 1799.
- The Ladies' Wish; or, The Freemason's Secret. April 3, 1780.  
*EEC*, April 1, 1780.

The Leith Landlady. March 30, 1778.

*EEC*, March 25; 28, 1778.

Liberty Triumphant; or, an Emancipation from Slavery. January 13, 1780.

*EEC*, January 11; 23, 1790.

Lingo's Itinerary; or, his Journey Through Edinburgh. April 7, 1783.

*EEC*, April 2; 5, 1783.

The Mad Mechanics; or, The Political Barber. April 10, 1777.

*EEC*, April 5; 9, 1777.

The Manager's Last Stake, or, the Resurrection of Digges, Ross and Lancashire. March 5, 1796.

This play may have been a pamphlet printed in dramatic form and sold at the door of the theater.

The Parting Lovers; or the Highland Recruits. March 20, 1776.

*EEC*, March 17; 18, 1776.

The Patriotic Baker. April 30, 1788.

*EEC*, April 26; 28, 1788.

A Peep into Elysium: Interlude. April 27, 1785.

*EEC*, April 23; 25, 1785.

Peggy's Love. March 27, 1800.

*EEC*, March 24, 1800.

Penance for Having Two Wives at a Time. Interlude after Thelyphthora by Rev. [Martin] Madan. June 6, 1792.

*EEC*, June 2; 4, 1792.

The Perjured Clown. May 17, 1786.

*EEC*, May 13; 15, 1786.

The Press Gang Defeated. Performed by the Newhaven Fishwives. May 16, 1791.

*EEC*, May 14, 1791.

The Puppet Shew; or, The Pleasure of the Town. April 14, 1764.

*EEC*, April 9, 1764.

Quality Binding. May 28, 1794.

*EEC*, May 26, 1794.

Safe Moored; or, The Sailors Return to Leith. May 31, 1788.

*EEC*, May 29, 1788.

The Siege of Gibraltar; or, Spanish Disappointment. April 21, 1783.

*EEC*, April 16; 19, 1783.

The Sons of Auld Reekie; or, All in Good Humour. September 24, 1796.  
*EEC*, September 19; 24, 1796.

The Spirit of Contradiction. March 18, 1772.  
*EEC*, March 11, 1772.

The System of Lavater; or The Knights of the Past. July 31, 1797.  
*EEC*, July 27, 1797.

The Theatrical Hurricane, or All's Well Which Ends Well. March 28, 1767.  
*EEC*, March 23, 1767.

James C. Dibdin, *The Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (Edinburgh, 1888), pp. 141-3, quotes from a pamphlet entitled *The Theatrical Hurricane*, which he attributes to George Stayley, the actor who was embroiled in theater riots in 1767. This piece may have been performed, but the text as it appears in Dibdin is not suitable for dramatization.

Transformation; or, the Manager An Actor in Spite of Himself. April 29, 1789.  
*EEC*, April 27, 1789.

This piece is probably the work of John Jackson, the theater manager. Jackson does not mention "Transformation" in his *History of the Scottish Stage*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1793).

A Trip to Leith: Interlude. April 26, 1787.  
*EEC*, April 23, 1787.

The Virtuous Chambermaid of Auld Reekie: Interlude. April 30, 1787.  
*EEC*, April 26; 28, 1787.

Yeo, Yea; or, The Friendly Tars. May 17, 1786.  
*EEC*, May 13; 15, 1786.

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