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I. V. STUPNIKOV

# THEATRE ART OF GREAT BRITAIN

## ENGLISH READING BOOK

*Textbook*

Second edition, revised



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И. В. СТУПНИКОВ

# ТЕАТРАЛЬНОЕ ИСКУССТВО ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ

КНИГА ДЛЯ ЧТЕНИЯ  
ПО АНГЛИЙСКОМУ ЯЗЫКУ

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The book, which aims to expand students knowledge of English culture, contains texts on the history of the theatre of Great Britain and outstanding figures on the British stage of the past and present.

The texts are supplemented with historical and linguistic commentaries. There is an alphabetical index which includes the names of all individuals together with the titles of operas, ballets and dramatic works mentioned in the book.

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Книга содержит тексты, посвященные истории театрального искусства Великобритании, а также выдающимся деятелям английского театра прошлого и современности. Цель пособия – расширить знания студентов о культуре страны изучаемого языка.

Тексты пособия снабжены комментарием (историческим, бытовым, языковым). Справочный аппарат книги включает именной указатель и список встречающихся в текстах названий опер, балетов и пьес.

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**Обложка**  
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## ОТ СОСТАВИТЕЛЯ

**Д**анная книга составлена в соответствии с программой по английскому языку для педагогических вузов и может быть использована в качестве материала для дополнительного чтения студентами педагогических вузов, факультетов английского языка университетов. Она может также представлять интерес для студентов вузов искусств. Тексты пособия различны по объему, это позволит преподавателю легко варьировать работу в аудитории и домашние задания по внеклассному чтению<sup>1</sup>.

Книга включает материалы по истории театра и сценического искусства Англии XVII–XX вв. В ней содержатся отрывки из мемуаров, документов различных театральных эпох, книг, посвященных театру. Английский театр представлен в книге тремя жанрами: драмой, оперой и балетом.

Перед большинством текстов помещены небольшие справки об авторе данной статьи, времени ее создания, объясняется, почему и для кого был написан данный материал.

За текстом обычно следует комментарий, цель которого — облегчить понимание текстов. В комментарии объясняются сложные грамматические явления, историко-искусствоведческие реалии.

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<sup>1</sup> Книга печатается по изданию: Театральное искусство Великобритании: Книга для чтения на английском языке: Учеб. пособие / Сост. И. В. Ступников. М.: Высш. шк., 1986. — *Прим. издательства.*

В книге есть список имен, упоминающихся в тексте, а также списки названий пьес, опер и балетов, о которых идет речь.

Список имен написан пространно с целью научить студентов простым и часто встречающимся выражениям типа: «начал свой творческий путь», «была одной из ведущих актрис труппы», «пользовался большим успехом у публики» и т. д.

## THE ROLES OF THOMAS BETTERTON

*by Colley Cibber*

Thomas Betterton (1635?–1710) — an English actor and the greatest figure of the XVII century stage. He was admirable in both comedy and tragedy, his Hamlet and Sir Toby Belch (from the *Twelfth Night* by Shakespeare) being equally admired. Though not perhaps so well suited to the requirements of comedy, he excelled in the high-flown rhetoric of the heroic drama of the day, and created many famous parts by well-known dramatists. Here comes the description of Betterton's famous roles by Colley Cibber, an English actor, dramatist and poet of the XVIII century.

You have seen a Hamlet<sup>1</sup> perhaps, who, on the first Appearance of his Father's Spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining Vociferation requisite to express Rage and Fury, and the House has thunder'd with Applause; tho' the misguided Actor was all the while (as Shakespear<sup>2</sup> terms it) tearing a Passion into Rags — I am the more bold to offer you this particular Instance, because of the late Mr'. Addison, while I sate<sup>3</sup> by him, to see this Scene acted, made the same Observation, asking me with some Surprize, if I thought Hamlet should be in so violent a Passion with the Ghost, which tho' it might have astonish'd, it had not pro-vok'd<sup>4</sup> him? for you may observe that in this beautiful Speech, the Passion never rises beyond an almost breathless Astonishment, or an Impatience, limited by filial Reverence, to enquire into the Suspected Wrongs

that may have rais'd him from his peaceful Tomb! and a Desire to know what a Spirit so seemingly distress'd, might wish or enjoin a sorrowful Son to execute towards his future Quiet in the Grave? This was the Light into which Betterton threw this Scene; which he open'd with a Pause of mute Amazement! then rising slowly, to a solemn, trembling Voice, he made the Ghost equally terrible to the Spectator, as to himself! and in the descriptive Part of the natural Emotions which the ghastly Vision gave him, the boldness of his Expostulation was still govern'd by Decency, manly, but not braving; his Voice never rising into that seeming Outrage, or wild Defiance of what he naturally rever'd. But alas! to preserve

this medium, between mouthing, and meaning too little, to keep the Attention more pleasingly awake, by a temper'd Spirit, than by mere Vehemence of Voice, is of all the Masterstrokes of an Actor the most difficult to reach. In this none yet have equall'd Betterton...

A farther Excellence in Betterton, was, that he could vary his Spirit to the different Characters he acted. Those wild impatient Starts, that fierce and flashing Fire, which he threw into Hotspur<sup>5</sup>, never came from the unruffled Temper of his Brutus (for I have, more than once, seen a Brutus as warm as Hotspur) when the Betterton Brutus was provok'd, in his Dispute with Cassius<sup>6</sup>, his Spirit flew only to his Eye; his steady Look alone supply'd that Terror, which he disdain'd an Intemperance in his Voice should rise to. Thus, with a settled Dignity of Contempt, like an unheeding Rock, he repelled upon himself the Foam of Cassius...

There cannot be a stronger Proof of the Charms of harmonious Elocution, than the many, even unnatural Scenes and Flights of the false Sublime it has lifted into Applause. In what Raptures have I seen an Audience, at the furious Fustian and turgid Rants in Nat. Lee's *Alexander the Great* For though I can allow this



Play a few great Beauties, yet it is not without its extravagant Blemishes. Every Play of the same Author has more or less of them... When these flowing Numbers came from the Mouth of a Betterton<sup>7</sup>, the Multitude no more desired Sense to them, than our musical Connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrate Airs of an Italian Opera<sup>8</sup>. Does this not prove, that there is very near as much Enchantment in the well-govern'd Voice of an Actor, as in the sweet Pipe of an Eunuch? If I tell you, there was no one Tragedy, for many Years, more in favour with the Town than *Alexander*...

Notwithstanding the extraordinary Power he shew'd in blowing Alexander once more into a blaze of Admiration, Betterton had so just a sense of what was true, or false Applause, that I have heard him say, he never thought any kind of it equal to an attentive Silence; that there were many ways of deceiving an Audience into a loud one; but to keep them husht and quiet, was an Applause which only Truth and Merit could arrive at: of which Art, there never was an equal Master to himself. From these various Excellencies, he had so full a Possession of the Esteem and Regard of his Auditors, that upon his Entrance into every Scene, he seem'd to seize upon the Eyes and Ears of the Giddy and Inadvertent! To have talk'd or look'd another way, would then have

been thought Insensibility or Ignorance. In all his Soliloquies of moment<sup>9</sup>, the strong Intelligence of his Attitude and Aspect, drew you into such an impatient Gaze, and eager Expectation, that you almost imbib'd the Sentiment with your Eye, before the Ear could reach it.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> a Hamlet — an actor in the role of Hamlet

<sup>2</sup> Shakespear = Shakespeare

<sup>3</sup> sate = sat

<sup>4</sup> to provoke — *here*: to excite, to incite emotions

<sup>5</sup> **Hotspur** — a character in Shakespeare's *Richard II* and *Henry IV* (Part I)

<sup>6</sup> **Brutus, Cassius** — characters in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*

<sup>7</sup> **a Betterton** — an actor of Betterton's talent and abilities

<sup>8</sup> **an Italian opera** — Italian opera and Italian singers were very popular in the London of the XVIII century

<sup>9</sup> **of moment** — of importance

## ENTER THE ACTRESS<sup>1</sup>

*by J. H. Wilson*

When studying the personnel of the English theatre of the second half of the XVII century, we find probably more of interest in the women than in the men. It is with the actresses that the period made its most characteristic break-away from the traditions of the older theatre where all female roles were played by boy-actors specially trained to perform this uneasy task. Whoever the first actress was, the fact remains that from 1660 we find the actresses fully established and the boy-actors vanished away. The women certainly made possible a more charming presentation of Shakespearean tragedy and comedy, shedding a fresh light on the Desdemonas and the Ophelias of the past. Here comes the description of an evening at the theatre when Mr. Samuel Pepys (1633–1703), an English diarist, saw a woman-actress on the stage for the first time in his life.

*A*t noon on January 3, 1661, Mr. Samuel Pepys dined on a leg of roast pork at Will's Tavern<sup>2</sup>, near the Exchequer<sup>3</sup> in Old Palace Yard. Afterward he set out for the new theatre in Vere Street, near Lincoln's Inn Fields<sup>4</sup>. There was no hurry; the play would not begin until half-past three<sup>5</sup>, and it was a fair day, hardly wintry at all. The sun shone, the ways were dusty, and even the rose bushes still held their autumn leaves. Mr. Pepys sauntered up King Street to Charing Cross, eastward along the Strand, and thence up through a maze of narrow streets toward Lincoln's Inn Fields. He quickened his pace in Clare Market, turned into a passage-way, and pulled up before the playhouse, a large, barnlike structure with a steeply pitched roof

and a row of windows high in the wall. At the door he paid a half-crown admission fee and entered. The shadowy theatre was already half-filled with men, with a few ladies in the side boxes and here and there in the pit a gaily dressed trollop flaunting a vizard, the sign of her trade.

Although to Mr. Pepys's wondering eyes it was "the finest playhouse that ever was in England", it was only Gibbon's old tennis court hastily turned into a theatre by Tom Killigrew, Master of the King's Company of Comedians, who had recently brought his troupe thither from the old Red Bull, an open air theatre in St. Johns Street, Clerkenwell. Here for three long years the players were to work in cramped, inadequate quarters while Killigrew was building a fine new theatre in Bridges Street, near Drury Lane<sup>6</sup>.

Gibbon's tennis court — the first Theatre Royal — had a level pit with rows of backless benches, galleries running around three sides, and a platform stage hung with rusty tapestries. There were no scenes and very few machines. The wooden seats were far from friendly. The light, especially on a dark day, was poor, even with the help of candles in sconces about the walls and in chandeliers over the stage; and, of course, there was no heat. The spectators sat with their cloaks wrapped tightly about them until the animal warmth of the noisy, restless audience tempered the chill a trifle. At the same time the animal effluvia, overlaid with the odors of musky foreign perfumes (handy substitutes for soap and water), produced an atmosphere thick enough to shovel. There were no toilet facilities, no bars, and no refreshments except the China oranges and seasonal fruits sold by the orange girls, who stood in the pit with their backs to the stage and cried their wares between the acts. To Mr. Pepys all this was splendor. He settled down on a bench and prepared to enjoy his half-holiday.

There was no music, a prologue, and the play began — Fletcher's sunny, romantic comedy, *the Beggars Bush*. Pepys lost himself in the action, savoring the play to the fullest. From earlier visits to the theatre he had become acquainted with the names and abilities of a few of the leading actors in the King's Company: Nicholas Burt, excellent as Othello; Major Michael Mohun, "said to be the best actor in the world"; and Edward Kynaston, "a boy" who acted women's parts and made a very lovely lady. When a woman shortly appeared on the stage, Pepys had to look twice to make sure it was not Kynaston in disguise. But there was no doubt about it; it was truly a woman, a lusty young wench, very handsome in flowing gown and laced petticoats, with her bosom and shoulders gleaming in the candlelight. One by one three more women appeared. The roles they played were small, and they were far from being polished performers, but they were women and their physical allure was undeniable. That night Pepys wrote in his diary that January 3, 1661, was "the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage".

This was Mr. Pepys's first glimpse into a brave new world. As a lover of beauty, and especially of beautiful women, he found thenceforth a double joy in playgoing. Except in his periods of self-discipline, when he bound himself by strict oaths to attend to his business and avoid all forms of pleasure, he was lured to the theatres by an almost compulsive ardor, delighting in music and spectacle, costume and dance — and the opportunity to rub elbows with the great.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> the title of the chapter is given in the form of a stage-direction, that is why the verb has no "s" at the end

<sup>2</sup> **Will's Tavern** — a London coffee-house frequented by poets, dramatists, men of letters

<sup>3</sup> **the Exchequer** — an office of state charged with the management of the royal revenue

<sup>4</sup> **Lincoln's Inn Fields** — a district of London

<sup>5</sup> **...until half-past three** — then a usual time for the beginning of a performance

<sup>6</sup> **Drury Lane** — a district of London

## MRS. ELIZABETH BARRY

*by Colley Cibber and Anthony Aston*

Betterton's leading tragic actress was Mrs. Elizabeth Barry (1658–1713). She celebrated her greatest triumphs as Monimia and Belvidera in Otway's *the Orphan* and *Venice Preserved*, and as Isabella in Southerne's *the Fatal Marriage* — parts in which she “forc'd Tears from the Eyes of her Auditory (Downes). Her artistic profile emerges from Cibber's and Aston's sketches:

*M*rs. Barry was then (by the end of the seventeenth century) in possession of almost all the chief Parts in Tragedy: With what Skill she gave Life to them, you will judge from the Words of Dryden, in his Preface to *Cleomenes*, where he says.

Mrs. Barry, always excellent, has in this Tragedy excell'd herself, and gain'd a Reputation, beyond any Woman I have ever seen on the Theatre...

Mrs. Barry, in Characters of Greatness, had a Presence of elevated Dignity, her Mien and Motion superb, and gracefully majestic; her Voice full, clear, and strong, so that no Violence of Passion could be too much for her: And when Distress, or Tenderness possess'd her, she subsided into the most affecting Melody, and Softness. In the Art of exciting Pity, she had a Power beyond all the Actresses I have yet seen, or what your Imagination can conceive. Of the former of these two great excellencies, she gave the most delightful Proofs in almost all the Heroic Plays of Dryden and Lee; and of the latter, in the softer Passions of Otway's Monimia and Belvidera. In Scenes of Anger, Defiance, or Resentment, while she

was impetuous, and terrible, she pour'd out the Sentiment with an enchanting Harmony; and it was this particular Excellence, for which Dryden made her the above-recited Compliment, upon her acting Cassandra in his *Cleomenes*. But here, I am apt to think his Partiality for that Character, may have tempted his Judgment to let it pass for her Masterpiece; when he could not but know<sup>1</sup>, there were several other Characters in which her Action might have given her a fairer Pretence to the Praise he has bestow'd on her, for Cassandra; for, in no Part of that, is there the least ground for Compassion, as in Monimia; nor equal cause for Admiration, as in the nobler Love of Cleopatra, or the tempestuous Jealousy of Roxana<sup>2</sup>. 'Twas in these Lights, I thought Mrs. Barry shone with a much brighter Excellence than in Cassandra. She was the first Person whose Merit was distinguished, by the Indulgence of having an annual Benefit-Play, which was granted to her alone, if I mistake not, first in King James's<sup>3</sup> time, and which became not common to others', till the Division of this Company.

\* \* \*

Mrs. Barry out-shin'd Mrs. Bracegirdle in the Character of Zara in the *Mourning Bride*, altho' Mr. Congreve design'd Almeria for that Favour. — And yet, this fine Creature was not handsome, her Mouth op'ning most on the Right Side, which she strove to draw t'other Way, and, at Times, composing her Face, as if sitting to have her Picture drawn. — Mrs. Barry was middle-siz'd, and had darkish Hair, light Eyes, dark Eyebrows and was indifferently plump: — Her Face somewhat preceded her Action, as the latter did her Words, her Face ever expressing the Passion, not like the Actresses of late Times, who are afraid of putting their Faces out of the Form of Non-meaning, lest they should crack the Cerum, White-Wash, or other Cosmetic, trowl'd on. Mrs.



Barry had a Manner of drawing out her Words, which became her... Neither she, nor any of the Actors of those times, had any Tone in their speaking, (too much, lately, in Use). — in Tragedy she was solemn and august — in Free Comedy alert, easy, and genteel — pleasant in her Face and Action; filling the Stage with variety of Gesture... She could neither sing, nor dance, no, not in a Country-Dance.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> **when he could not but know** — when he knew, of course

<sup>2</sup> **Roxana** — one of the leading characters in Nathaniel Lee's tragedy *the Rival Queens, or the Death of Alexander the Great*; Cleopatra — the heroine of John Dryden's tragedy *All for Love, or the World Well Lost* (a version of the Anthony and Cleopatra story; the action is simpler than Shakespeare's)

<sup>3</sup> **King James** — James II (1633–1701), reigned 1685–1688