JOHN B. WRIGHT'S STAGING AT
THE NATIONAL THEATRE, BOSTON, 1836 to 1853

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Master of Arts

By
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The Ohio State University
1959

Approved by:

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of Speech
John B. Wright
Stage Mgr. Fords Theatre
When Pres. Lincoln was shot by
J.W. Booth
Apr. 14, 1865

Fig. 1. John Burrows Wright
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The writer wishes to express her gratitude to Professor John H. McDowell for his aid in the preparation of the foundation for this study. For the accessibility of the prompt scripts the writer is indebted to Dr. George Freedley and his staff at the Theatre Collection of the New York Public Library. The writer is especially grateful to Professor Roy H. Bowen for his advice, encouragement, and time given in critical appraisal.

S.A.K.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ........................................ iii
LIST OF CHARTS ........................................ v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS ................................. vi

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION TO A PROMPT SCRIPT STUDY .... 1

II. THE MAN AND THE THEATRE .......................... 5

John Burrows Wright - A Sketch
The National Theatre

III. THE STAGING OF FOUR PLAYS AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE ............................. 17

Presumptive Guilt
The Carpenter of Rouen
The Carib Chief
Montrose

IV. "BLUE FIRE AND MYSTERIOUS MUSIC" ............ 65

V. A SUMNATION ........................................... 80

APPENDIX .................................................. 83

BIBLIOGRAPHY ............................................. 90
## LIST OF CHARTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chart</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Staging notes of Presumptive Guilt</td>
<td>23-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Staging notes of The Carpenter of Rouen</td>
<td>29-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Staging notes of The Carib Chief</td>
<td>39-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Staging notes of Montrose</td>
<td>51-54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>John Burrows Wright</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Title Page - Presumptive Guilt</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Programme of Scenery and Incidents</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sketch - The Square of Rouen</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Sketch - The Carpenter's Shop</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Title Page - The Carib Chief</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sketch - The Ruins of the Fort</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Title Page - Montrose</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Sketch - The Romantic Highland</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Sketch - The Hall of Darnlinvarach</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Sketch - Assembly of the Chiefs</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Sketch - The Dungeon</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO A PROMPT SCRIPT STUDY

John Burrows Wright was referred to by two theatre historians of his own time as a prompter whose work was unequalled by any one else in that capacity and also as the best stage manager in the United States. Despite this acclaim, most of the major theatre history books do not mention Wright and the few books which contain his name at all do so in the most inconspicuous manner -- usually his name is merely present on a reproduction of some playbill. Biographical anthologies pass him by.

The long theatrical life of J.B. Wright has little recognition today. This seems strange, since the George Beek Collection at the New York Public Library, which consists of a few over six-hundred nineteenth century prompt scripts from America and England, contains more than one-hundred and fifty prompt scripts representing J.B. Wright's work.

The review of this heretofore unexplored theatrical career presented here, has been pieced together from meagre hints and a few scattered dates. There is admittedly a lack of depth in the individual life story and there are many gaps in the chronology. Some conjectures made on the evidence of dates appearing in prompt scripts signed by J.B. Wright were substantiated
by brief notes in early American theatre history publications. On the strength of these verifications, other conjectures have been made providing a sketch of John Burrows Wright's life and theatrical career.

Prompt scripts are the major key to his career in the theatre. In the large collection at New York, those scripts connected with Wright can be divided into two general categories.

The first group, which is of the lesser importance to this undertaking, contains those scripts merely signed by John B. Wright. These scripts usually contain a few directorial comments or staging hints, but they are minor marks and probably just the first impressions and thoughts of the stage manager as he read the play for the first time while considering its production. Many of these scripts are in manuscript form and were presented to Wright by the author desiring production or by some theatrical producer who could not use the play at the time. An example of this type script is a manuscript of Under the Gaslight with the following inscription on the title page: "J.B. Wright from A. Daly, Grand Opera House." Most of these scripts are not dated and offer little help in finding whether or not they were ever produced by Wright. They probably came into Wright's hands when he was a stage manager at any one of the various theatres where he worked in
that capacity.

The second category of the available prompt scripts are those which Wright marked in his capacity as a prompter or assistant stage manager. Those prompt scripts written in the hand of J.B. Wright are fair records of nineteenth century staging. They reveal productions full of effects -- special colored lighting, a great use of stage traps and frequent music bridges. All those effects called for a prompter who was able to coordinate them with the actors to provide a smooth-running theatrical experience. Therefore, when we see a prompt script full of the details of many stage settings and special effects, written in by J.B. Wright, we can understand the responsibility which was his to put all this on stage efficiently.

The prompt script of any production is the lasting record of that production. Some of these records are more complete and detailed than others. Some contain merely cue warnings and others nothing but character placement. But others, those with which we will be concerned, contain staging notes, lighting effects and sound cues and are actual prompter's copies.

Compared to many others, the scripts selected for this study are richly appointed records of good early productions. John Burrows Wright was a prompter who
ran full productions and kept fair records. By analyzing these records we can get some ideas on nineteenth century staging and at the same time we can learn to know J.B. Wright by studying the conventions of the theatre under which he worked.
CHAPTER II

THE MAN AND THE THEATRE

John Burrows Wright - A Sketch

John Burrows Wright was born in Newburyport, Massachusetts, on October 1, 1814. Wright may well have worked in theatre in his home town, but his first recognized theatrical work was done at the Tremont Theatre in Boston. In 1833, young Wright started at the Tremont as a call boy. It was his duty, in this capacity, to call the actors to their entrances and run errands for the prompter. In 1836, only three years after he began his career as a call boy, Wright went to the newly named National Theatre, Boston, as a prompter.

In 1853, after Wright had been promoted to stage manager, William Clapp referred to him in his prompting position in the most gracious terms.

In his department, he has no superior in any theatre, and he has since, as stage manager, evinced the most excellent tact and taste, by the very superior manner in which plays have been produced at this (National) theatre.

Until the season of 1851 and 52, Wright, "by his industry and attention to business rendered himself at the National one of the most useful members of that

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establishment." During that season John B. Wright was promoted from his prompting position and became the acting and stage manager at the National. Mr. Wright was also a joint lessee of the theatre. The holders went under the title of Wright, Fenno and Bird.

The house was in every respect worthy of patronage while (the former were) in charge of the firm; and the public appreciated the efforts made to cater for an enlightened community.\(^2\)

The National Theatre burned April 22, 1852 and when the new cornerstone was laid July 6, 1852, John B. Wright was named acting and stage manager under the new owners.

Wright continued at the National Theatre through 1853 when he and the entire company were discharged. It was probably a good thing for all concerned because the manager at that time was not a good one and the theatre was falling from its former stature.

There is some evidence that Wright spent the next season (1853-54) in New York. This evidence is composed of four prompt books, three of which are dated 1853, while the remaining one is dated 1854. The date, and New York has been written in each script by Wright. It is doubtful that he actually worked in New York. Apparently he returned early in 1854 to Boston where he accepted the position of assistant manager of the

\(^{2}\) Ibid.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., p. 405.
new Boston Theatre.

Thomas Barry, lessee of this new theatre, traveled in Europe seeking a company for his enterprise and wrote Wright on May 19, 1854, to "act as yourself; whatever you do is right." 4

Opening night for the Boston Theatre was September 11, 1854 and Wright continued there through the season of 1857-58 as assistant manager.

During the week of May 25, 1857, this theatre presented a benefit performance for J.B. Wright. His mother had died in Boston on May 12 of that year. The following year, on August 11, Wright married Ann Francis Cushing. The same year of his marriage, Wright went to the Holliday Street Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland. This theatre was under the management of John T. Ford, who also had started Ford's Theatre in Washington.

J. B. Wright prompt scripts from the Holliday Street Theatre are available through 1860, but any specific information concerning his move from the Baltimore theatre to the Washington theatre can not be found in the accessible prompt scripts. It is a fact, however, that Wright was stage manager at Ford's Theatre on the fateful night of April 14, 1865, when John Wilkes Booth assassinated President Lincoln.

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There is little or no mention of the stage manager in the many accounts of the dramatic event. One of his actions on the afternoon of that day, however, caused one of the many controversies of that evening. As soon as the company was informed that the President was to be at the theatre that evening, John Wright rushed to the printers with the copy of a patriotic song written by the assistant to the leader of the music at the theatre. The verse of the song was to be inserted in the program and sung in honor of the great guest's appearance at the performance. Mr. Wright did not arrive at the printers until some programs without the verse had been run off. The printer added the verse to the remaining copies. Thus there were actually two different sets of programs used that evening.

Wright was again occupied with this same patriotic verse when the assassination occurred. Due to the late arrival of the President, the song was not sung at the appointed time and Mr. Withers, the Musical director, waited patiently and in vain for the prompter to cue him for the song. Finally, very shortly before Lincoln's fatal moment, Withers left the orchestra pit and went back stage where he "was giving the stage manager a piece

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of (his) mind."

William Ferguson, the call boy at Ford's Theatre, believes he is one of very few people who actually saw Booth shoot Lincoln. Ferguson was at the prompter's desk at the left first entrance -- which was just opposite the curtained box of the President. Ferguson has drawn a diagram of the positions of the company at the time the shot was fired. Wright was at the left second entrance and might have seen the incident had not Mr. Withers just left him after his tirade over the little verse. Mr. Withers, on his trip back to the orchestra pit, was brushed aside by Booth, who was making his exit through the left first entrance and running on past the left wings to a hall that led into the alley where a boy held his horse. Mr. Withers' coat suffered a cut from Booth's knife.

It was probably stage manager Wright who ordered the curtain closed for the last time at Ford's Theatre on that fateful night.

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Except for a few prompt scripts showing that John B. Wright was at the Varieties Theatre in New Orleans in the years 1868 and 1869, little can be found for the rest of this man's career. In his book, *The Golden Age of the New Orleans Theatre*, John Kendall lists the company for the Varieties Theatre for the season of 1868-69 and concludes with "...(Vining) Bowers (stage manager) was assisted by J. S. Wright." With certain evidence it does not seem amiss to question this point. James S. Wright had been an actor at the Varieties ten years before in 1858 and earlier in 1848. Other than this, little is said of this man in Kendall's publication. However, there is a John B. Wright prompt script available for the October 4, 1869 production of *Time Works Wonders* at the Varieties Theatre, New Orleans. Kendall lists this play as the opening performance for the season of 1869-1870 and he gives the date as October 4. Kendall may have confused the Wrights or they may both have been in the company. It seems a reasonable conjecture that John B. Wright would hold the position that is attributed to James S. Wright. The prompt scripts mentioned earlier provide a safe assumption that

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J. B. Wright was in the company of the Varieties Theatre in 1868 and 1869. There seems to be no evidence that James S. Wright ever did backstage work, though his name appears on play bills as an actor over the same years as J.B. Wright's career. It cannot be determined how long Wright was in New Orleans nor where he went from there. Other than this incomplete note of his work at the Varieties Theatre in New Orleans there is no more trace of John Burrows Wright's career from that night in 1865 -- at least no available trace.

The Folger Library in Washington lists Wright as the official prompter for Edwin Forrest and an obituary found in the New York Drama Mirror states "...he travelled with Edwin Forrest for a time." 9 Neither Wright nor any relationship between Forrest and an "official prompter" is included in several of Forrest's biographies. There are a few prompt scripts available which connect Wright and Forrest, but unfortunately they are not dated. An example of these scripts is one of William Tell which has the following inscription: "Marked from books as played by Edwin Forrest by permission of J.B. Wright."

John Burrows Wright died August 9, 1893 in Boston. He had been inactive in theatre for more than twelve years. With his theatrical career ending about 1880,

9 *New York Drama Mirror*, Saturday, August 19, 1893.
J.B. Wright spent nearly half a century working in theatres around the United States.

The most complete sequence of reminders of this career are the prompt scripts marked National Theatre or dated within the space of years Wright worked at that theatre.
The National Theatre

The successful years of the National Theatre and the early career of John Burroughs Wright were closely related. The National Theatre site was originally occupied by the American Amphitheatre which was built in 1832 for equestrian purposes. The Amphitheatre also contained a small stage where plays could be produced.

William Pelby leased the Amphitheatre shortly after its opening, changed the name to the Warren Theatre and opened a season on July 3, 1832. In 1836, Pelby enlarged and improved the theatre and re-opened the actually completely new structure as the National Theatre on August 15, 1836. It was at this time that J.B. Wright took the position of prompter under stage manager W.H. Smith.

William Pelby's chief concern in Boston was to compete successfully against the Tremont Theatre. The Tremont was the grandest theatre in Boston at the time. Pelby was a shrewd manager and his modest theatre did quite well. Hornblow remarks that the National possessed "a strong company and plays (were) produced in a manner even superior to their production at the Tremont." 10

Pelby claimed that the personnel at the Tremont had treated him unfairly, and the popularity of his theatre was his means to revenge. Apparently he was not happy just running a successful competition with the Tremont. Pelby went a little further:

Although he seldom succeeded in engaging first-class talent, he did attract a considerable amount of business and by bidding for the services of outstanding guest stars, he forced the Tremont to higher counter-bids than it could afford. 11

Though not all the first-class talent was obtained at the National, many favorites played there and the audiences were exposed to some of the best and most interesting of that time. Miss Jean Margaret Davenport, the eleven year old infant prodigy played at the National, opening as Richard III. J.B. Buckstone appeared at the National and W.C. Macready played there in 1843.

After William Pelby's death, Wright became acting and stage manager at the National and was a joint lessee of the theatre along with Fenno and Bird. But misfortune attacked this arrangement when the National, along with all its contents, was destroyed by fire on the night of April 22, 1852.

Clapp recorded the following conclusion to the National Theatre at the time of its destruction.

The standard of the theatre has been that of second class, but it has occasionally aspired above 'blue fire and mysterious music' and at times has been _the_ theatre in Boston.12

Mr. Joseph Leonard was responsible for the rebuilding of the National Theatre and on July 6, 1852, the new cornerstone was laid. John B. Wright retained his position as acting and stage manager under this new management.

Worthwhile talent was presented at the National under the new management, but unfortunately the first season was not a success. In the very beginning, a man by the name of Douglass Stewart made his American debut at the National Theatre as Dr. Pangloss. Mr. Stewart had come highly recommended to Mr. Leonard and it was said the actor would rival William Warren, who was playing at the Museum. But Stewart's debut was poor and his engagement at the theatre in Boston a failure. Mr. Stewart went on to New York, however, to succeed under the name of E.A. Sothern.

Of his appearance at the National, Sothern had the following to say:

> My failure in Pangloss was complete although the audience were kind enough because I was a stranger, to call me before the curtain.

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and so give me encouragement. ...I was ... dismissed for incapacity.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite talents like Edwin Forrest, the National Theatre suffered under Mr. Leonard. He had little background for his task and paid unnecessarily exorbitant fees for talent. His company would not work together and the theatre fell from its former popular position. Finally, after only one season, Wright and the entire company were dismissed.

Actually, the National Theatre prompt scripts available are full of notations of blue and red fire, complete with many kinds of music descriptions. From the viewpoint of those who never saw an actual nineteenth century melodrama in production, we may say the scripts are delightfully filled with such notations. These notations will be discussed later in an attempt to reproduce some idea of the original production.

CHAPTER III

THE STAGING OF FOUR PLAYS AT THE NATIONAL THEATRE

The charts in this chapter are compiled from prompt scripts signed and marked by John B. Wright. The scripts employed were all prompter's copies used at the National Theatre, Boston. The charts contain information derived from these scripts pertaining to the actual staging of the plays.

Nineteenth century American staging was chiefly composed of the standard wing and drop sets. Stage floors of the day contained grooves in which the wings were placed. The wings, then, were held erect in various ways. Wing and drop sets were easily changed by means of the grooves. It cannot be discerned from the scripts what method was used at the National.

The wings and drops contained the products of the stage painter's art. Great care was taken in painting details in these sets. Some of the details included forced perspective and the painting of permanent shadows.

Entrances and exits were generally made through the spaces between the wings. The entrances and the grooves were numbered from the front of the stage to the back with the first entrance being between the
permanent tormenter wing and the first groove.

Stock sets using the wing and drop system were widely used. There was little regard for actually placing the action of nineteenth century melodramas in a setting which suited the story. With equal disregard Shakespearean plays were produced in the same stock sets as the most trivial melodrama. Basically, the stock sets covered mountain scenes, wood scenes, a plain room, a castle hall, and a fancy room. Dungeons and shorelines were also often used. Nineteenth century American theatres could order sets of wings and drops for various scenes from a company advertised by French. Knowing the wide use of stock sets it is safe to assume that few sets were arranged with regard to the functions, both esthetic and practical, demanded by scripts. Of course playwrights complied by demanding little variation from scenes that could be covered by stock sets and contemporary staging conventions. However, sometimes practical elements had to be added to scenes. They were arranged to suit the scene and provide for a specific function set by the action. All theatres could not handle these special problems and in fact most of them made their stock sets serve.

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Nineteenth century plays were for the most part melodramas and other plays produced in most theatres were treated the same, complete with fire and trap doors. The theatre of the day was theatrical -- not in the exact sense we use the term today. In the nineteenth century theatricality consisted of all sorts of devices for emphasis, staging tricks, and a great proportion of action. Special effects filled in the gaps that the lack of imaginative staging left unfilled. Special effects will be treated in a later chapter of this study. We are now concerned with the staging of nineteenth century melodramas.

Prompt scripts often hold some of the information concerning what was used to produce a scene picture. This information derived from prompt scripts, however sketchy, is genuine. For instance, though units of staging are often merely mentioned without details as to placement and size, we know they did exist. We can learn, to some extent, with what the National Theatre made stage pictures.

The National Theatre was for the most part a typical example of the theatres of its day. Most of the exceptions to the typical theatres were in New York and are well known. Comparatively few people were able to enjoy these exceptions. Most people saw
the general run of stock set staging.

Though the National Theatre has been classified as second rate and put among the typical, its productions did rise above these classifications now and then. Close analysis of some National Theatre prompt scripts lead to this conclusion.

The National Theatre was able, upon occasion, to depart somewhat from the general run of stock sets. In the prompt scripts, we see that some of the scenery used could have produced a scene picture that gave some illusion of being an appropriate setting for the action.

In the charts derived from these prompt scripts, each scene of the plays is treated separately. The date of production at the National is given after the title of the play. The items noted in the charts are the scenic titles, groove notations, staging elements and set properties.

The scenic titles are quoted from the scene descriptions printed in the play books. These titles and descriptions were retained in the National Theatre productions. This is indicated by underlining the original descriptions and various directions conforming to them. The single exception is noted.

The second point of interest, headed by the single word "groove" is filled in with the number representing
the groove or grooves used in that scene. The number
gives us some idea as to the depth of the scene being
considered. In some instances the groove number is
contained in parentheses. In these cases the number
was not noted in the script, but has been derived either
from repetition of a scene, stage directions, or floor
sketches. In the latter cases the judgements are made
on the basis of entrance numbers noted. We can assume,
then, that the stage was at least as deep as the groove
beyond the farthest entrance noted.

"Staging elements" is the item that is the most
important to us and the least complete. The listings
under this heading are drawn from those hints and clues
found scattered through the scripts. Some of the units
are written at the beginning of the scenes, while know-
ledge of other elements has to be derived from acting
directions. Details are practically non-existent and
it is rare that a complete staging set-up is recorded
for any one scene.

The last category in the chart covers set proper-
ties. In these listings are included all properties
printed in the book which are a part of the main scene
picture and are underlined, those properties written
in scene sketches and those mentioned in acting direc-
tions. There are seldom any details of these properties
and scenic elements; thus no judgments can be made so far as authenticity or correctness are concerned. It is assumed that little attempt at these qualities was made because their absence was the general rule of stage settings at that time.

Parenthetical markings in the last two sections of the charts mean that the scene is a repeat. Each play will be discussed separately with regard to points to be emphasized and enlarged upon in an attempt to produce some ideas of the actual productions.

Abbreviations used in these charts and throughout the study are based on terminology adapted to the system of staging referred to earlier. G of course stands for groove and the number indicates the relative position. RH and LH indicates right hand and left hand. Sometimes the H is omitted. E means entrance and here again the number indicates the depth. U refers to upper. For instance, UERH means upper entrance right hand. The upper entrances were the farthest upstage and were not numbered. 2EL refers to the second entrance on stage left. If this terminology is kept in mind the abbreviations will be easily understood in the following charts and analyses.
## CHART 1. Presumptive Guilt - 1851

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Interior Court of ancient castle</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Gothic Hall</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Grand Gothic anti-room</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Set doors R &amp; L 2E Tormentor doors used R &amp; L IE</td>
<td>2 Gothic Chairs on R &amp; L 2G Tripod lighted C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>A Forest</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Wood cut and wood Bank on 2G RH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Exterior of Monastery</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Forest with Hut in Center</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
<td>A Wood 4G Cut wood 3G RH A Hut 4 ERH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Scenic Title</td>
<td>Groove</td>
<td>Staging Elements</td>
<td>Set Properties</td>
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<td>---------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act II</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>A Romantic Dell</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>Forest and Hut repeated</td>
<td>3 &amp; 4</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Act III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Exterior of Monastery</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>A Wood</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wood 1G</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>A Prison</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>Hall in Winchester Castle</td>
<td>4 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Throne on RH</td>
<td>Altar on LH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PRESumptive Guilt,

Fiery Ordeal;

A

GRAND MELO DRAMATIC SPECTACLE,

IN THREE ACTS:

By JOHN KERR, Esq.

PERFORMED AT THE REGENCY THEATRE OF VARIETY, WITH
UNIVERSAL APPROBATION, FOR THE FIRST TIME,
ON MONDAY, OCT. 13, 1817.

The Scenery Designed and Executed by Mr. Moore and Assistants—The
Machineries by Mr. Naylor—The Dressing by Mr. Voyer—The Light
by Mr. Stephen—and the Combats arranged under the direction of
Mr. H. Beverly.

THIRD EDITION:

London:

Printed by Hay and Turner, Newnams-Street, Strand; and
PUBLISHED BY DUNCORME, 13, LITTLE QUEEN-STREET, HOLBORN.

1818.

PRICE SIXPENCE.
Presumptive GUILT

Presumptive Guilt was classified by its author, John Kerr, as a "Grand Melo-Dramatic Spectacle." This spectacle was produced at the National Theatre in 1851.

This script seems to contain nothing that appears to be outstanding in nineteenth century staging. We can see in the chart that Wright has added very little in the manner of production notes. The script is important, however, because it illustrates the staging techniques that were used with a groove stage. The scenic descriptions could have easily been covered by the stock sets of the day and of course these sets were executed with wings and drops. This prompt script contains one of the most complete sets of groove notations of any of the scripts checked for this study. It is easy to see how the use of the deeper grooves was alternated with the more shallow stage settings.

The first scene of the play is the only one for which the groove notation is not available. The page has been torn enough to obliterate this information. If the alternations run true to form, however, we can assume that it was a deep set. The scene was a court stage.

---

15 John Kerr, Presumptive Guilt; or The Fiery Ordeal (London: Duncombe, 1818).
of an ancient castle and this would probably involve great spaces. The second scene is set in the first groove and from there we go to the fourth groove of the third scene which could have been set up during the previous shallow scene.

Between acts there is sufficient time to replace one deep stage setting with another and so Act II opens with the same depth as the first act closed. Then while the scene in the monastery (Act II, Scene 2) was being played in the first groove, the bank of the second scene of Act I is moved off the second groove and a hut is brought in at the fourth entrance on stage right. The wood and wood cut drops probably remained the same for all wood scenes. A wood scene was a much used stock set in melodramas. The romantic dell was probably the same wood scene with the fourth groove scenery containing the hut blocked at the third groove. A removal of this third groove block produced an immediate return to the forest and hut scene.

The first three scenes of Act III were played in a shallow area while the woods of the previous acts were being replaced by the throne and altar of the hall of Winchester Castle for the final scene of the play. Sets were arranged to facilitate quick changes with large area changes being masked by a shallow set drop.
It may be noted that the addition of a hut in the forest made another favorite stock set of the day. The hut was probably a wing profile and the practical door was merely set in a cut-out in the wing.
### CHART 2. The Carpenter of Rouen - 1847

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Square of Rouen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Plain room with window and door</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Open end of the Carpenter Shop</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Church and Steeple - 12 ft. flat</td>
<td>Bench and Tools Block - Coffin Pile of Boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Room in Madame Grander's House</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Table spread for breakfast 3 chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Same as Act I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
The Carpenter of Rouen (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act IV</td>
<td>Interior of a Convent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Practical window in flat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Gothic Chamber</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>The Crypt</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>A Gallery</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Walls at back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30
Fig. 3. Programme of Scenery and Incidents
THE CARPENTER OF ROUEN

This "romantic drama" by S. Jones may have had its first production at the National Theatre. This assumption is made on the basis of a cast referred to as "Original Cast National Theatre - Boston." The exact date of the production of this particular script is not certain, but it was in the year 1647.

There are two points concerning staging worthy of discussion in this script despite the fact that the chart reveals little.

In Act I, Wright has written: "Send coach on UPRH to center." Shortly after this direction the line "Hold my horses" is spoken. It seems a reasonable conjecture, then, to say that a live team of horses was used for the coach and that the stage was large and strong enough to accommodate this property.

The single scene of Act I is repeated in the second scene of the third act. It is the square of the city and it is safe to assume it was set in the fifth groove. In the script, a sketch of the scene is provided at the place where this locale is used for the second time. This sketch is reproduced in figure 4. The carpenter's shop

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32
is shown as the largest unit in the scene. The palace was probably a wing and the cross could have been painted on the back wall of the scene with a piece cut out of the flat and backed for the opening of the lower section (as designated in the sketch).

The action of Act III, Scene 2, which took place in the square was quite detailed by Wright. Lournay, a henchman of the oppressor Duke DeSaubigney comes with soldiers to arrest Marteau, the carpenter of Rouen and champion of the oppressed people. Wright records:

Soldiers seize Marteau, drag him into Palace RH. Others fight with citizens and off LH. One soldier falls on steps RH. As the peasants are about to kill him Child interposes.

Child

Stop! Don't strike a man when he is down. Fair play, soldier rises, Magistrate and Confrérie rush on UEL down Centre

Confrérie bring on a large beam ---some enter Palace RH while some place a large hook and (word omitted) the palace down. Marteau rushes on and fights Lournay, kills him C.

Grand fight between the Confrérie, citizens and soldiers.

Tableau

All the other scenes described in the chart for this play are shallow scenes requiring no more depth than the first or second groove with the exception of the second scene in Act II.
This is the scene of the unveiling of the Confrérie in the carpenter's shop which provided the audience with one of those 'recognition' scenes that are so common in melodramas. The scene involved a test for young Antoine, Marteaux's Assistant. He was tried, allegedly by the evil element. Antoine did not retreat from his principles. Just as his head was on the block and the ax was raised Wright reports that "The Magistrates throw off cloaks. The Banners are returned revealing who they are. Quick Act Drop." This must have been a tense scene ending with a thrilling reversal typical of the drama of the day.

In this scene Wright has provided another sketch showing the carpenter's shop with its properties running from third groove on the left up to the flat on the left. After studying the scene plot for the square of Rouen it would not seem amiss to say that the front of the carpenter's shop was at the third groove. The shop had to contain a large playing area to accommodate the many people in the scene. With all other scenes taking place in front of the third groove we can assume that the set pieces above that point were permanent throughout this play.

Then the next logical point to be made in this conjecture is that the scene entitled "Open end of the
Fig. 5. The Carpenter's Shop
Carpenter's Shop" was just that. The flats forming the front exterior wall of the shop were removed revealing the interior of the shop in its 'permanent' position. The depth within the shop would be two grooves because the largest area of this stage is set at the fifth groove. The notation states that the shop ran to the flat at LH but there could be space for exits and entrances above this flat. It can be noted in the script, however, that when large numbers are on the march in this play they enter from the right which is opposite the carpenter's shop. The horses and carriage entered from the right also and went off the same way. All this does not prove the conjecture of the staging plan as just put forth, but certainly, the points mentioned facilitate this conjecture that the front of the permanent carpenter shop unit was removed to reveal the interior to the audience.

The final scene of the play, set in the second groove, had a backing that may have been set in the third groove. This scene is described as a gallery and there is a great deal of chaos throughout. In the final moments Wright records the following:

Crash RH Walls at back fall and discovers gibbett with DeSaubinney hanging.
Shouts and red fire
Alarm bell etc.
Magistrate  
Tableau  
Marteau  
Madelone  
Antoine  

Curtain

The gibbett was apparently centered with the main characters who were left living arranged on the sides. Many acts and scenes of melodramas ended with tableaus or pictures such as the one plotted above.

There is an ironic twist to this last scene as Marteau, in his plot against the aristocratic duke, had built the coffin and gibbett for use in ridding the people of their oppressor. In a scene previous to the capture of Marteau, which has been detailed earlier, soldiers came to the carpenter to borrow the gibbett and Marteau learned that the duke planned to use the machine for the forced demise of the carpenter himself. It was only justice that Marteau should win his purpose and that DeSaubigney be hanged as planned.

The secret society of the Confrérie was a good melodramatic device for this play. Action swept back and forth between the rival forces. The audience should have been very pleased with the complete triumph over evil presented in this play.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>A Subterranean Cavern</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stone bank RH, Grated door L flat</td>
<td>Helmut and Armour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>The North headland overlooking sea</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Wild scenery</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Before the French fortress, a woody scene</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>A grassy space, sunset over the sea</td>
<td></td>
<td>Painted flat for background</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Maloch's tent, wild music</td>
<td>4 &amp; 5</td>
<td>Wood and cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene</td>
<td>Scenic Title</td>
<td>Groove</td>
<td>Staging Elements</td>
<td>Set Properties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act III</td>
<td>Quadrangle within the fort</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Montalbert's Apartment in fort</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Gothic Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Gothic Table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Before the fort Fire-battle</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Fort on HR on fire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>The vault under northern tower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>Montalbert's Apartment in fort</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Gothic table Gothic chair)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The Carib Chief (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Quadrangle in fort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Omreah's Tent</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rocky amphitheatre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act V</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Northern headland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>A narrow pass between rocks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Flat in LG</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Ruins of fort</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Altar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41
CARIB CHIEF:

A TRAGEDY,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY HORACE TWISS, ESQ.

FROM THE SECOND LONDON EDITION.

Marked as performed at the New-York Theatre.

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY THOMAS LONGWORTH,
At the Dramatic Repository,
Shakespeare-Gallery.
Feb. 1830.

Fig. 6. Title Page - The Carib Chief
THE CARIB CHIEF

The date affixed to this script by Wright is 1844. There are very few that have survived from the nineteenth century though manuscripts were turned out in great numbers during that time. The Carib Chief was typical of its day. This play is classified a tragedy by its author; however, it is a melodrama. Lines have been cut to be replaced by action and the play is helped along with many effects. The overall affect was probably a most vigorous one.

In the beginning it may be interesting to note that the sound of the clank of chains helped to set the first scene. The "subterraneous cavern" with its grated door and chain-clanking could have been the basis for an appropriate setting. Further study into many scripts seems to point out that mood was approached by music, sound and various degrees of lighting in the absence of proper stage settings. These and other special effects will be treated in the following chapter.

In the third scene of Act I in this play, it should be known that the bridge listed was practical, not painted as most scenery was, and carried at least twelve men.

This bridge became the center of attention early in the show when the approach of the Carib Chief, Omreah, is announced. A forerunner for the chief, says that Omreah has been declared an outlaw by the French and claims that "at every turn we apprehend an ambush." At this point Wright calls for "Omreah's March pp (wild) UERH." The forerunner continues: "Hark the music of his approaching march swells on the wind. His warriors cross the bridge and in the van the prince himself." Wright points this up with the following directions:

March forte till 1st 4 march off UEL with 1st Carib 4 march off UER with 2nd Carib 4 march off with Omreah down return rock LH and off LERH March forte

It may be noted that all this marching consisted of weaving on and off stage behind and in front of various rocks. When the great chief stood in center stage and spoke the music stopped.

This then was the grand entrance held off just long enough to build emphasis by the entrance of eight men before him. If the entrance was impressive, then the exit of the chief and his followers was also impressive in a boisterous sort of way. Omreah learns that the hated French are close at hand. In his restless impatience to be at work he challenges his men, "Why not strike this very night? There will be work enough still left for us
tomorrow...March!" On the opposite page from this Wright states:

At March!
(March behind UFR) 6 Caribs on Bridge L. 1st Carib march down return rock onto stage and go off 3 EFL. The other 6 on bridge RH. 2nd Caribs X bridge down return rock and follow the others 3ELH.

Both the entrance and this exit were accompanied by great "shouts and yelling."

The return rocks mentioned were apparently the bases of the bridge and were as strong as the bridge.

There are no groove notations for this scene but, since the action calls for large numbers and the directions call for exits in the third and fourth entrances, it must have been set in the fifth groove with the bridge at the uppermost part of the stage.

At the time of this production and the others to be considered in this study painted scenes were the chief means to setting a stage picture, but a "drop" is not referred to in any of these scripts. Since stock scenery was the order of the day, however, we may assume that in the case of the first scene in Act II, when the author completes his scene description with "a woody scene," the stock drop for such pictures was used. On the other hand, in Act II, Scene 2 of The Carib Chief, when a character says the words "...where yonder little hillock swells" and is told by printed directions to
point to the spot, Wright has reported that the spot was "painted on R flat." If a drop was used for this scene, it may well have been a sky drop because distant points seem to have been on the flats in this set. Another explanation of this lack of common description is that a wall of flats was used in the place of the drop to back the wing set. These flats would have been unwieldy to move and change and would have been a poor substitute for the unmentioned drop.

Act II, Scene 3 was a wild, noisy scene with a bit of action that may have been executed smoothly. When the two factions of Caribs meet at Maloch's tent there is great shouting and Omresh's march is heard again. Omresh learns that Maloch is a little soft toward the French. Therefore, when D'Arcy, the Frenchman, and four of his soldiers come down center to talk with the Caribs, Wright records that at the "same time 4 Caribs come down cautiously behind the French soldiers and stand ready to seize their guns at cue." The audience is probably a little surprised by Omresh's calm attitude toward the French and if the four stealthy Caribs do their part well, the following line with its conclusion would be delightful. Omresh discourses: "Evening begins to close; the dew are damp, and lest they chance to chill you, 'twil be fit you rest here to-night. You are
our prisoners." At the close of the line Wright tells us: "Omreah Xes to R. Caribs rush forward and seize the 4 French soldiers and D'Arcy."

Shortly after this incident, the Carib Chief challenges, "Up ye hardy spirits (Caribs rise & yell R&L) that own me for your leader!...Break up I say and follow!" At this point Wright reports the "March begins forte, Caribs from R & L meet in C and up C and UEL shouting and yelling as Drop Descends."

Act III of this play begins with a scene in the quadrangle of a fort and the change for the second scene was partly executed by two men playing French soldiers. Scene 2 of the third act takes place in an apartment in the fort. This latter set was shallow (first groove) and it is noted that "3 French soldiers bring on a Gothic Table containing maps, books and 1 Gothic chair from LER." At the end of the scene 2 soldiers cleared the stage also. This may have constituted the entire change of scenery as this is all that is mentioned, but we can not be certain of such a conjecture.

One of the big scenes of this play is the third scene of Act III. The action takes place before the fort and the emphasis is on action. The stage area was open to the fifth groove (probably the largest for this theatre) and all lines but one were cut to facilitate
the action. Wright records the following for this scene:

Stage dark. Fort on RH on fire. The French soldiers fire their guns. The Caribs fire with their bows and arrows. They fight. The French retreating RHUE. The Caribs following till all off.

Flourish Gong Shouts and wood crashes and red fire.
UERH

(Malooh speaks the one remaining speech)

Drum and Trumpet, yells, wood crashes, explosion and red fire as scene opens and fort falls in ruins.

After a series of five flourishes and shouts and the death of a main character the scene ends and all exit. This portrayed the attack upon the French fort by Omreaah. Omreaah is in especial haste to seize Montalbert. Trefusis, from whom Montalbert has taken the heroine Claudina, captures this hated enemy. The mercy of Trefusis as a hero allows Montalbert to escape and Omreaah's vengeance is turned upon Trefusis and Montalbert's wife Claudina. The problem is that the Carib Chief does not know which of his female prisoners he desires dead. Claudina says she will tell who Montalbert's wife is if Trefusis is spared and does so.

This brings us to the final scene of the play in the ruins of the fort. It was probably played in the fifth groove and the violence took place upstage (beyond the third entrance according to figure 7) at the altar.
The stabbing of Claudina was further masked by a semi-circle of Caribs and only the knife was seen to rise and descend. Wright records the deed as follows:

Brancho ... & lst Carib advance to take Claudina to the altar. They struggle, Claudina drops her necklace. She is taken to the altar C and the Caribs and prisoners surround her thus

(semicolon formation discussed earlier is shown before altar)

Brancho raises knife and lets it descend. Claudina shrieks. Trefusis turns away with horror.

Too late, Omreah realizes that Claudina was the daughter whose alleged death had sent him on a bloody trail of revenge. Omreah kills himself as the French return with Montalbert. "The French party level guns at Caribs on L who kneel." In the center of this final picture are the bodies of Claudina and Omreah.

It was an active play with a lot of noise and movement. The audience received thrills from the battles and the boldness of the proud, marching Caribs. The plot was as contrived and unnatural as most of the scene pictures, but the theatrical conventions of the time helped the audience to enjoy the melodrama and sympathize with Trefusis.
Fig. 7. The Ruins of the Fort
**CHART 4. Montrose - 1844**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Romantic Highland</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>Large peat fire</td>
<td>Bank on Trap</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Huge chimney</td>
<td>Rock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>The Hall of</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Table and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darnlinvarach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Act II</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Apartment in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Table on in C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darnlinvarach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>covered</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2 lights</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 chairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Assembly of Chiefs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rock</td>
<td>Banners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>discovered in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 GR &amp; L</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mountains *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 GR &amp; L</td>
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<tr>
<td>Act III</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Inverara</td>
<td>(1)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Originally the chiefs were discovered in the "Hall of Darnlinvarach." This is crossed out and "Mountains" is written in.*
### Montrose (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Anteroom in Castle of Inverara</td>
<td></td>
<td>Folding doors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>The Dungeon</td>
<td></td>
<td>Flat with panel</td>
<td>Chain in wall Stairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>Apartment in Darnlinvarach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>A wild and tangled Brake</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Scene 6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>2 gauzes down 1G Moon in flat seen through gauze Trap open, back C</td>
<td></td>
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### Montrose (Continued)

<table>
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<th>Set Properties</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act IV</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 1</td>
<td>Interior of Cabin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 2</td>
<td>Apartment of Annot Lyle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 3</td>
<td>Loch Lochy</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 4</td>
<td>Gorge of Mountains</td>
<td>(3 or 4)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mill (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 5</td>
<td>Loch Lochy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 6</td>
<td>An Apartment in Inverlochy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Montrose (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Scenic Title</th>
<th>Groove</th>
<th>Staging Elements</th>
<th>Set Properties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Act IV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 7</td>
<td>An Apartment in Loch Lochy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene 8</td>
<td>The Large Hall of Inverlochy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fig. 8. Title Page - Montrose
This play was produced at the National Theatre in the same year that *The Carib Chief* was presented. It was also given a lively production with a full use of nineteenth century staging methods.

The original act and scene sequence found in the printed script was changed in this production. The sequence in the listings found under "scene" in the chart for this play is as the play was divided in actual production at the National. Originally, the two scenes of Act II were included under Act I and what is Act III in the chart was Act II. Continuing on in the script there was no Act IV and the eight scenes included there in the chart made up Act III in the printed script.

Upon studying the chart we can see at the very beginning that a trap was used. After glancing at figure 9, a scene plot for the "romantic highland", we conclude that the trap was a large center one.

The play opens with Eorocht waiting for the return of her husband, Ranald, and her four sons. Kenneth, one son, returns to report that his three brothers were killed and his father imprisoned at

---

Inverara. The entrance of Kenneth is made up the trap.

The next page reproduced from this script is a sketch of the second scene in the Hall of Darnlinvarach. The large peat fire and the huge chimney listed under staging elements were in the printed scene description. In the sketch the outlines of the unit can be seen.

Figure 11 depicts the beginning of Act II, Scene 2. The scene is the assembly in the mountains, which was set in the third groove. The change referred to is the actual opening of the scene.

There was a great deal of flourish to the end of the assembly of the chiefs. The following are the directions written in for the "March up Mountain."

1st 2 Banners meet in C up rocks
2 1st section from L to C & up to 3G single file etc.
3 2nd section from R to C & up to 3G single file etc.
4 Characters Hand & Hand & up
5 Re-enter 1st section LIE & up as before. Small figures X from L to RE
6 Re-enter section R and up
7 2 Banners R and L 1G meet in C & up
   Ring Down

In the first scene of Act III a "profile Gally Xes L to R." In the same written paragraph concerning the galley we have directions for the entrance of a chorus that was supposed to come from a distance:

    Begin chorus very Piano UER. March down behind scenes to R3E & increase as they advance & all enter R2E.
Fig. 10. The Hall of Darnlinvarach
This is the coming of the hero, Dalgetty. His horse, Augustus Adolphus, is also supposed to be in the galley but it is questionable as to whether or not the National Theatre included the noble beast in the scene.

The third scene of Act III took place in a dungeon. The sketch for this scene is reproduced in figure 12. The circular unit at the stairs is apparently a platform and the sliding panel (misspelled pannel) is shown at the right.

Nineteenth century melodramas made the most of dungeon scenes. This particular one was complete with the proud starving hero, Ranald, the appearance of the young man who has not declared his loyalties, and the secret panel that lets the villain, Argyle, in to torture his prisoner.

The entrance of Argyle through the sliding panel is accompanied by a chord. Wright describes the entrance.

Marquis Xes C to Ranald offers basket to him he refuses. Dalgetty steps forward Center & takes it from the Marquis & sits down on the stage CLG and quietly eats.

After a great deal of talk between Ranald and the Marquis, Dalgetty remarks, "I never heard so much good of him before. You must know the Marquis well— or rather you are the Marquis, Lord of Argyle. (seizes him) I arrest you in the name of King Charles as a
Fig. 11. Assembly of the Chiefs
traitor."

Dalgetty forces information out of the Marquis as to how he gained entrance into the cell and how Ranald and he, Dalgetty, may escape. The password is "The Sword of Levi." Wright records the action for this scene as follows:

Ranald goes to pannel (sic) in RF & opens it, the length of his chains allowing him to do it.

Dalgetty takes Argyle to Ranald up C on L who holds him till Dalgetty goes off and returns & releases Ranald who rushes to front dragging Argyle with him on his L

(Dalgetty unlocks the chains)

Ranald's chains fall, takes dagger from Marquis belt and (correction in sequence)
--rushes forward dragging Argyle.

Ranald
with dagger raised
holding lantern

Argyle
on his knees
holds paper

Dalgetty
holds paper

After Marquis signs paper they chain him to wall of prison. Ranald muffles his Plaid round Argyle's mouth & then puts on the Marquis livery cloak, takes dark lantern. Ex URF. (panel in flat)

The sixth scene of Act III, for which there is no scenic title, is one of the most interesting scenes to be considered in this study. The scene is set in the fifth groove and it was probably basically a repeat of the romantic highland which was the first scene of the
play. At any rate, after reading the scenes we find that both take place at the home of the "Children of the Mist." The notation for the scene as recorded by Wright is as follows:

Scene 6th  5G
2 gauzes down 1G. Errocht, Ivan & all the children of the Mist discovered in groups back of gauze. Moon in flat seen through gauze.
Slow music. Trap open at back in Centre.

The area depicted was apparently supposed to be rough, craggy country. A very faint, vague sketch, drawn primarily for character placement, shows four craggy units scattered over the hill. Stage directions indicate that most of these rock units were practical.

The use of gauze to produce a misty, romantic effect in addition to the scattered rock units seems to provide a basically good setting — far better than the usual stock wing and drop set. Unfortunately, we can not know whether an appropriate drop was used to back this set, but we do know the National Theatre did produce some staging effects which were suitable for the dramatic mood intended. Though not so noisy as The Carib Chief, this play offered a kind of quiet suspense and was probably a better show by our own standards today.
Rammed
Chamber, connected to Wall of
Dungeon, attached to beam by a hook.
Bound with a brick bell, along
enough to reach to Rammed and
flattened R.H.

Fig. 12: The Dungeon
CHAPTER IV

"BLUE FIRE AND MYSTERIOUS MUSIC"

The actual physical staging of the nineteenth century American theatre was for the most part not spectacular or even much more than mere background. Yet that same theatre was one of thrills. Consequently the other elements that make theatre were used to their fullest extent to compensate for the visual shortcomings of the settings themselves.

We have seen how some of the staging and character pictures at the National pointed up melodramas and now we will learn some of the many effects used to build climaxes and support spectacles. This will be done by reproducing the notes written by J. B. Wright during various climactic scenes taken from several plays. Various types of music, trap warnings, degrees of lighting, colored fire and the soundings of gongs and chords were among the things recorded by Wright.

It is difficult to divorce such effects from the staging of a play. It has been done, in part, for emphasis. The main purpose of this study is to discover staging methods with the emphasis on the physical elements of staging. The previous chapter was concerned with these physical elements -- set pieces, properties, staging units and character placement and movement.
Some special effects could be classified physical elements but they were mostly present as sound or fleeting puffs of fire. Since these effects are scattered throughout the scripts they will not be treated in the same manner as the staging. The special effects will be noted only at a few climactic scenes and particularly interesting points of emphasis or suspense.

The staging notations for Presumptive Guilt were strong only in the groove sequence. As far as special effects are concerned this script would not deserve mention except for its wide range of music cues. Music notations frequently call for different moods of music precisely described. Unfortunately the insertion marks, which show the exact point in the script that the music comes in or changes, are incomplete. However, just a rundown of the cues may be of interest.

The beginning of the first two scenes of the play are accompanied merely by the word "Music." Scene 3, in the grand Gothic ante-room, opens to a "March pp." This march did not announce a grand entrance as in The Carib Chief but merely set the atmosphere. However, as the lights come up, the march becomes "forte" and later Wright records "music changes to Pizz." Music played pizzicato is quick and snappy. But there
apparently was a difference between "Music Pizz" and "Music hurry." At one point in the script Wright records: "Music Pizz. - when Hubert & Hastale in Doors 2 ER&L music changes to Hurry pp."

Hubert and Hastale were assassins and this hurry music could have been meant to project the idea of their efforts to keep away from the authorities.

In Act II, Scene 1, a scene in a forest, there was a storm with thunder, lightning and rain. "Music Hurry" went with this storm.

In Act II, Scene 2, at the Monastery, the music was "Agitato pp" and later changed to "Music/slow." The third scene returns us to the forest and as the storm lessens the music is pizzicato. When the storm is over and the lights come up gradually, the music becomes "Bold//Marked." The fourth scene of Act II, in the romantic dell, contains the following music descriptions:

Music

---4 Bars, Slow - end with chord
chord / music combat

Scene 5 takes place in the forest and contains the following cues in the space of a page and a half,

Music/hurry
Music Hurry 4 Bars, change to slow
Music Hurry
Music slow change to Bold Music
Music Bold and Marked
Chord
Music Bold & Marked
The chord noted here accompanied a melodramatic discovery.

The final scene of the play in the hall of Winchester Castle was accompanied by the following music directions:

Slow music
Strong lengthened chord
plaintive music
music slow
music agitato pp
Increase
End with a chord.

Besides these cues there were two more chords, one at the time of a discovery and the other a short time later at a recognition.

It is easy to see that this script used music to the fullest extent to give dramatic emphasis to the production.

Storms were frequent in melodramas. Oddly enough, of the six plays treated in this study, only Presumptive Guilt contained a cue for thunder, lightning and rain. It is difficult to say whether the National used actual water illusions or just the sound of rain. One common way to produce the sound was by rolling bird shot over an expanse of everyday brown wrapping paper. The effect of lightning was made by burning magnesium. Thunder was usually produced by one of three well known methods. These include the agitation of a large strip of sheet iron, a rumble cart with irregular wheels, and a thunder
drum that was much like an overgrown bass drum.

The Carpenter of Rouen was a show with what may have been an average amount of sound effects and music marked. The sound for the most part was the ringing or tolling of a large convent bell. A snare drum was also used, probably for a tension device. The constant light roll of these instruments could have produced a feeling of tension and if used at the right time, might have provided good emphasis to action.

The final scene of this play was the big scene for action and effects. It took place in a gallery and the notations included:

Red fire 2 ERH
Wood crashes
Stamping and running about

The last of these three directions was easy to produce. Battle was being done outside and close to this gallery and live actors probably provided the sound simply by stamping and running about. The wood crashes could have been made in one of two common manners. There was, in the nineteenth century, a wood crash machine. It consisted of a mounted "cylinder with two inch by one-inch battens running lengthwise of the cylinder and around the edge." Hardwood slats, held fast at one end, with

\[\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\]

Leverton, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 52-3.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{19}}\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\]

\textit{Ibid.}, p. 54.
the other end pressed against the cylinder, completed the machine. A crank on the cylinder caused it to revolve and the slats were lifted by each passing batten on the cylinder. The slats, then, would spring back, producing a noise as one batten passed and the slats made contact with the next. Depending on the manner in which the crank was turned, this machine would produce a crash or the sound of continuous battle.

The other way to produce a wood crash would involve merely dropping from some elevation an assorted amount of lumber. This is unhandy and difficult to repeat with any rapidity. A crash machine was probably used for this scene as the notation is plural and called for a series of crashes in quick succession.

The red fire was probably produced by a controlled fire off stage right at the second entrance. A red medium may have been used between the fire and the stage to give off a brighter hue. This effect will be discussed further.

With the noise and red glow there could have been a good climactic build to the collapse of the walls revealing the gibbett with the body of DeSaubigney. An offstage crash at stage right augmented the onstage crash, which may not have been a sufficiently climactic noise in itself.
The notations following the fall of the back wall and the discovery are: "Shouts - red fire Alarm bell etc." The shouts were easily handled. There may have been an addition of more red fire. It would have been very effective to frame the gibbett with a red glow on either side. This may have been the intent behind the repetition of the "red fire" notation.

The shouts, the red glow and the frenzied ringing of an alarm bell would have been sufficient to bring the play to a rousing conclusion. We have no idea what the "etc." called for, but it is safe to assume that it involved noise. Maybe it was a continuation of some of the crashes.

A good battle scene was an outstanding goal of nineteenth century staging. The Carib Chief presented the audience with some rousing combat. The action took place in the third scene of Act III before the fort. The directions having to do with effects are as follows:

- Stage dark Fort on RH on fire
- The French soldiers fire their guns
- Flourish, Gong, Shouts and Wood crashes
  & Red fire UBERM
- Drum and Trumpet, shouts, yells, wood crashes, explosion & Red fire as scene opens and the fort falls in Ruins.

The darkness of the stage would add to the tumult and confusion. The darkness would also give emphasis to
the red glow of the 'burning' fort.

The gunshots of the French soldiers could have been produced various ways. The sounds may have been produced by a careful turning of the crash instrument discussed earlier, or by the striking of a thick leather pad.

The flourish, gong, shouts and wood crashes mingled together and backed by the red glow of fire could have been an auspicious sight. The addition of the drum and trumpet to all this probably helped the build to the final explosion. The repetition of the "red fire" notation at the point following the explosion probably called for an intensification or flaring up of the glow. The addition of magnesium to the controlled fire could produce this effect.

Consequently, the battle reached a terrific climax and then the unwinding of the quick flurry was accented by a series of "Flourish and Shouts" notations. During this letting down period, bits of individual action are noted in the battle. Before this the picture was probably one of utter turmoil.

This script is rich throughout with effects that have already been mentioned and which occur from time to time. One notable effect that was very fitting for its purpose was the use of the wind machine and the snare
drum to heighten suspense. When Claudina confesses her identity as the wife of Montalbert, Wright calls for the wind instrument and snare drum to come up. A conjecture has already been made as to the effect of a snare drum on suspenseful action. The addition of a howling wind would serve to heighten the effect.

The sound of wind was usually produced by a machine similar in construction to the wood crash machine described earlier. The cylindrical frame with its battens and crank was the same. But in place of the hardwood slats a piece of heavy silk was made fast over the cylinder. The sound was produced by the friction of the wood against the cloth. The combination of these effects, the drum and wind instrument, was used at several of the high points in this script.

In Montrose many of the effects were keyed to suspense and emphasis. In the best melodramatic tradition a chord was struck upon the entrance of the dark figure in the dungeon where Ranald and Dalgetty were held. A second chord was struck when this dark figure was recognized and named -- Argyle, the villain. In these two chords we have an example of each use.

Later, after their escape from the dungeon, Ranald

\[\text{Ibid., p. 50.}\]
and Dalgetty are discovered in the "Wild and Tangled Brake." Wright says the scene was dark. In the distance the alarm bell is heard as the escape is being followed up. The hero, Dalgetty, cannot find it in his heart to leave his horse, Augustus Adolphus, named after his military idol. Ranald pleads with Dalgetty to leave his horse and escape. Dalgetty does not want to leave the animal, but finally when the hounds in pursuit of the two fleeing men come closer and closer, Dalgetty gives up his horse and the young men and Ranald escape.

The next scene is the abode of the Children of the Mist. When Ranald and Dalgetty appear with Kenneth, who has been sent to aid them, a "hound barks under stage."

Ranald speaks:

Black hound - whose throat never boded good to child of the mist -- ill fortune to her that littered theec! -- Thou hast already found our trace, but thou art too late; the deer has gained the herd.

If these last two scenes were played right, the suspense could have been well sustained and the hound's baying a good accent to the tension.

In the latter scene, it can be recalled, a gauze was used to produce the effect of mist and a rather distant atmosphere. The moon in the flat was probably a cut out covered with an orange medium and lighted from behind. The gauze then would add a shimmering effect.
Montrose like The Carib Chief had a battle scene.
The first directions for this battle seem somewhat familiar.

Drum heard RH & Shouts
Trumpet & Shouts LH
Ordnance RH [continues]

continues
till scene

closes

After some combative action, the battle concludes
with some more effects we have read about before.

Wooden crashes R & L
Red fire behind Mill L &
explosion

All these effects were included in the battle in the
Carib scripts. The effects were listed in a different
order in the two scripts but the overall effect was prob-
ably the same kind of general tumult.

It may be interesting to note that during the last
of the show when revenge was had by the Children of the
Mist, each blow struck - verbal or otherwise - was
accented by a chord. Consequently, triumph was won with
emphasis.

Melodrama often delved into the supernatural result-
ing in a wide use of special effects. One script which
presented opportunity for this was Richard Brinsley
Peake's The Bottle Imp.\textsuperscript{22} This story has borrowed a great
deal from Faust for its telling. The Imp grants wishes
but sooner or later he gets control of his 'master' through
a buying and selling arrangement. Whoever sinks to sell

\textsuperscript{22} Richard Brinsley Peake, The Bottle Imp (London:
Chapman and Hall, \textsuperscript{[18--]} ).
the Imp for next to nothing is taken under his power. Of course, people saddled with the Imp will do anything to get rid of him once they learn his evil powers.

The hero, Albert, in an attempt to escape the Imp has disguised himself as a peddler and has left his home to wander. The roll of a drum is heard. It is hot and Albert has walked a long way. "A bottle of the delicious Bome Carlo wine I was accustomed to drink would be very accept-
able."

At this point Wright orders: "Ring Bell for goblet, Blue fire." The goblet rises on a pedestal in a puff of blue fire.

"How! eh! What is this?" Albert is astonished. Wright continues, "Ring Bell for Imp to ascend, Blue fire."

It may be noted that the lights dim at every appearance of the Imp and come up again after he is gone. When Albert orders the Imp away, Wright records: "Ring Bell for Imp to descend. Blue fire & lights up."

The blue fire was probably magnesium, treated for color, ignited at the movement of the trap for the superna-
natural appearances.

There are several such appearances made during the run of this show. Earlier, when the Imp's power is being newly tested and a wish for gold is made, Wright reports that "a large purse falls down from the flys." This
coming is accompanied by two chords instead of blue fire. In another scene depicting the desperation and frustration of the Imp's victims, we find the bottle thrown out a window. Earlier, Wright has written the provision for a "Cloth ready behind Window in flat to receive the bottle." Consequently, there is no sound of a bottle breaking and almost immediately the bottle reappears on the table. This reappearance is pointed up by two chords.

In the final scene when the Imp claims his victim there is a shower of fire on both right and left as they sink out of sight.

It is interesting to note that besides the chords and drum cues, there were forty-one music cues numbered in the printed script for use in the production. It may be noted also that the music heard coming from the chateau in the first scene of the play was appropriately produced by violins and a flute.

During the inevitable dungeon scene, the entire prison is supposed to be in flames. At this time Wright gives a hint as to how the many National Theatre "red fires" were produced in the use of four simple words --"Red fire in Pan." The fires, then, were probably held and controlled in pans to accommodate the area of fire required. A red medium may have been used to heighten the color.
The next and last scene to be considered in this study is from a play called *The Vampire Bride*. The scene to be noted is the very first in the play — "Introductory Vision to the Vampire." The following is the description of the scene that is printed in the script:

The curtain rises to slow music and discovers the interior of the Basaltic Caverns of Staffa; at the extremity of which is a Chasm opening to the Air. The Moonlight streams through it and partially reveals a number of rude Sepulchres. On one of these Lady Margaret is seen stretched in a heavy Slumber. The Spirit of the Flood rises to the Symphony of the following Incantation.

Wright complies somewhat with the author's poetic description by reporting that the scene was "½ Dark (the) Moon lighted," and "Blue Bottles" are also mentioned. This may mean that all the light allowed to reach the set was tinted blue, except for the moonlight. The opening curtain was slow.

At the printed direction, "A vampire succeeds from the Tomb of Cromal and springs toward Margaret," Wright gives his own notations.

Ring Trap Bell
Red fire and Gong

This, then, is how the vampire came. The red fire may have been a glow issuing up from the trap or a magnesium flare at the entrance of the vampire. The vampire hovers about a while, then "sinks again, shud-

---

dering, and the scene closes." According to Wright, the vampire departed as he arrived -- with red fire and a gong.

Wright concludes the scene with the following staging technique.

Gauze descends. Clouds work on in 1st G. And when all ready behind work off clouds and take up Gauze and discover Scene 2nd.

Scene 2 happened to be a hall in the castle of Lord Ronald and was set in the second groove. The passing of the clouds could have been done with some pulley arrangement or the clouds may have been a wing unit. At any rate, this was a well-executed scene change with the clouds masking the work behind.

The introductory vision was short, but sufficient to hold the audience. The supernatural was easy to work with in the conventions of the nineteenth century. Imaginations could thrive on trap doors, puffs of colored fire and the chilling sound of a large gong. On the other hand, effects for emphasis and accenting were important to the melodramas that dealt with 'real' life. It seems safe to conclude that the National Theatre handled both equally well.
CHAPTER V

A SUMMATION

With the completion of the analyses of the National Theatre prompt scripts we have some idea of the staging at that theatre. Conjectures have been made and conclusions reached throughout this study concerning theatre practices and techniques of the period. It is not necessary to recount all these but a general summary should be sufficient.

It is certain that this theatre was not limited to mere painted flats for the expression of scenic backgrounds. A bridge that would have been painted on a drop in many nineteenth century American theatres held twelve men at the National Theatre. Rocks were not merely ground rows, but could be walked upon. A 'permanent' set was used for one production and the removal of the front wall of the building unit opened playing space in the interior of that building. Gauze was used to create a misty atmosphere and produce a shimmering moonlit picture. Scene changes were quickly and efficiently executed; often with the aid of actors moving properties. The practice of alternating between deep and shallow sets was common in theatres of the day but it is doubtful that many theatres went to the trouble of masking with gauze and moving clouds because it suited the general
mystery of the play. Battles were raged with gusto and forts burned frequently.

All of the thrill effects of nineteenth century melodramas were used effectively and frequently. Chords were sounded and gongs rang to accent evil or warn the audience of impending danger. Hounds bayed in pursuit of heroes. Puffs of blue or red fire accompanied all supernatural arrivals and departures. Music was played to suit the action of the moment.

The National Theatre complied with all the melodramatic conventions. Productions were enhanced by the effective use of many theatrical devices. Audiences at the National thrilled to the sudden mysterious appearance of a cloaked figure in a dungeon and sudden reversals such as the unveiling of the Confrerie. Hearts were touched by the child saving the life of a soldier who was an enemy of the people. The tragic loss of heroines was mourned and proud heros who would rather starve than accept food from an enemy were applauded.

The intent of plays that were made of such events and effects was to thrill people. Melodramas were sensational plays and the National Theatre did a great deal to emphasize and enlarge action toward that dramatic intent.
Theatre men who saw plays at the National Theatre compared some of the productions favorably with those at one of the grandest theatres of the time -- the Tremont. Therefore, we can assume that this "second class" theatre did some first class work. Consequently it seems reasonable that it was not a coincidence that the National prospered while men like Wright, Kelby and Smith were working for that theatre's well being.

With the evidence provided by the prompt scripts corroborated by agreement of theatre historians that the National Theatre was a popular theatre in its day, we are assured that John B. Wright was an effective theatre craftsman. It would seem reasonable to endorse William Clapp's opinion that Wright was the best prompter of the middle nineteenth century.
APPENDIX

The following are the prompt scripts included in the George Beck Collection at the New York Public Library which were available for this study. All the scripts in the collection having connection with J.B. Wright are not listed here; only the scripts that the writer was able to look at and study are included on the following pages.


The Belles Stratagem. Mrs. Cowley. Boston: W.V. Spencer, [18--].

The Belles Stratagem. Mrs. Cowley. New York: S. French, [18--].

Bertram; or The Castle of St. Aldobrand. Rev. R.C. Maturin. New York: O. Phalan, [18--].


The Carpenter of Rouen; or The Massacre of St. Bartholomew. Manuscript.


Coriolanus; or The Roman Matron.


The Devil's Bridge. Samuel James Arnold. London.
The Dramatist; or Stop Him Who Can! Frederick Reynolds. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].

Dumb Boy of Manchester. B. F. Rayner. New York: S. French, [18--].


The Falls of Clyde. George Soane. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].


Foscolo. Mary Russel Mitford. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].

The Four Sisters; or Woman's Worth and Woman's Ways. W. Baile Bernard. Manuscript, 1850?


Harold Hawk; or The Convict's Vengeance. Charles Selby. London: T. H. Lacy, [18--].


Incle and Yarico. George Colman. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].


Isabella; or The Fatal Marriage. Thomas Southern. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].


Jonathon Bradfor; or The Murder at the Road-Side Inn. E. Fitzball. London: J. Duncombe, [18--].


King Henry IV - First Part. Shakespeare. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, [18--].


Ladies Beware. London: W. W. Barth, [18--].


Leap Year; or The Ladie's Privilege. J. Baldwin Buckstone. New York: W. Taylor and Company, [18--].


Love's Sacrifice; or The Rival Merchants. George Wm. Lovell. New York: W. Douglas, 1846?

Macbeth. Shakespeare. London: Dolby, 1824. (3 copies)
The Maid of Judah; or The Knights Templars. M. Naphino Lacy. London: Davidson, [18--].


Management; or The Prompter Puzzled. J. Lunn. London: T. Richardson, [18--].


Merry Wives of Windsor. Shakespeare. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].

Midsummer Night’s Dream. Shakespeare. London?


The North End Caulker; or The Merchant’s Oath. C.H.S. Boston, 1851 Manuscript.


Paul Pry. John Poole. New York: W. Taylor and Company, [18--].

The Pirate’s Legacy. Charles H. Saunders. Manuscript, 1850?

Pizarro; or The Death of Rilla. R. B. Sheridan. Philadelphia: F. Turner, 1838?


The Road to Ruin. Thomas Holcroft. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].

The Road to Ruin. Thomas Holcroft. New York: W. Taylor and Company, [18--].

Rob Roy Macgregor; or "Auld Lang Syne." Pocock. New York: S. French, [18--].


The Sea Serpent; or Gloucester Hoax. Charleston: A. E. Miller, 1819.

Self. Mrs. Sidney F. Bateman. New York: S. French, [18--].


She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not; or The Kind Imposter. Colley Cibber. London: J. Woodward, 1745.

Shipwreck of the Medusa; or The Fatal Raft. W. T. Moncrieff. London: J. Cumberland, [18--].


The Sleeping Beauty; or A Tale of Enchantment. Manuscript.
Speed the Plough. Thomas Norton. New York: M. Douglas, [18--].
The Tailors. -- London: J. Thomas, 1836.
The Tempest. Adapted by Thomas Barry. New York: S. French, [18--].
The Twins of Warsaw. C. A. Somerset. London: T. Richardson, [18--].
Uncle Tom's Cabin. -- New York: S. French, [18--].
Under the Gaslight. Augustin Daly. (New York, 1867 ?)
The Usurper; or Americans in Tripoli. J. Jones. Boston, 1842.
The Vampire Bride. J. R. Planché.
Virginius.
Wacousta; or The Curse. R. Jones. Manuscript, 1851.
West End; or The Irish Heiress. Dion Boucicault. London ?
Who Owns the Hand; or The Monk, the Mask, and the Murderer.
Who Wants a Guinea? George Colman.
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