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## Augustin Daly; Certain Writings on His Life and Livelihood

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## Augustin Daly; Certain Writings on His Life and Livelihood

### Abstract

The American theatre of the early nineteenth century was strongly dependent upon the European theatre. American theatre goers looked across the ocean to import talent, playwrights, plays, and actors. Not until mid-century did America begin to develop its world-wide theatre influence. Specifically, the latter half of the nineteenth century yielded one of the most influential director/playwrights of the American theatre until that time. Modern American drama begins with Augustin Daly (Quinn 1).

John Augustin Daly, the son of an American sea captain and a British Lieutenant's daughter, was born on the seventh of July, 1838 in Plymouth, North Carolina (Johnson 8). His father died soon after his birth, so his mother moved to New York City where Daly developed his strict Catholic faith, a loyalty he maintained until his death in 1899 (Winter, *Vagrant Memories* 246). From the outset, the young Daly had a passion for the theatre; but not as an actor but as a new creative force, the director. Judge Joseph Daly, Augustin's older brother, attributes (at least partially) his desire for directing to Daly's disheartening first acting experience.

**AUGUSTIN DALY;**  
CERTAIN WRITINGS ON HIS LIFE AND LIVELIHOOD

A Research Paper  
Submitted  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

Daniel J. Topf  
University of Northern Iowa  
May 1989

This paper

Augustin Daly;

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Certain Writings on His Life and Livelihood

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by

Daniel J. Topf

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## INTRODUCTION

The American theatre of the early nineteenth century was strongly dependant upon the European theatre. American theatre goers looked across the ocean to import talent, playwrights, plays, and actors. Not until mid-century did America begin to develop its world-wide theatre influence. Specifically, the latter half of the nineteenth century yielded one of the most influential director/playwrights of the American theatre until that time. Modern American drama begins with Augustin Daly (Quinn 1).

John Augustin Daly, the son of an American sea captain and a British Lieutenant's daughter, was born on the seventh of July, 1838 in Plymouth, North Carolina (Johnson 8). His father died soon after his birth, so his mother moved to New York City where Daly developed his strict Catholic faith, a loyalty he maintained until his death in 1899 (Winter, Vagrant Memories 246). From the outset, the young Daly had a passion for the theatre; but not as an actor but as a new creative force, the director. Judge Joseph Daly, Augustin's older brother, attributes (at least partially) his desire for directing to Daly's disheartening first acting experience.

Early in Daly's theatrical career, he took the stage as an actor playing Julius Caesar to Joseph's Mark Antony in 1856 for a small unnamed New York literary society. The performance was not one of any historical significance. Later that same year, Augustin also acted in Macbeth. Prior to the performance of Macbeth, Augustin was having an argument with the orchestra leader over how much money the musicians were to be paid. Daly was so involved in dealing with the man, he

missed his entrance. In a fit of temper, Augustin ordered the actor playing Banquo to go on in his place. The altercation was resolved and Augustin did manage to go on in time for his second scene (Daly 28). Dora Knowlton, one of "Daly's Debutantes," accurately hypothesized in her diary about Daly's aversion to acting: "the only time the Governor (that's what the men call him) had ever tried to act he made such a dismal failure of it and has never tried it since" (30). As a result of his unpleasant personal experience in acting, he forevermore avoided acting as his theatrical creative outlet (Daly 28). Soon after, Augustin directed his first theatrical performance. With no capital whatsoever, he rented a theatre, hired musicians, borrowed costumes, and used schoolmates (as well as his brother) for actors and presented two farces and one act of the troublesome Macbeth to the general public. This venture netted a modest profit of twenty five cents (Hornblow 239).

Throughout Daly's childhood, he continued to produce and direct his friends in various theatrical events. At age 21, he became the drama critic for the New York Courier where he sharpened his abilities as a writer and theatre professional. The experience he gained in this capacity proved to be invaluable, for it kept him in touch with the theatre he loved so much and also polished his writing skills. In addition to being critic at the Courier, he also did free-lance writing for the Sun, the Times, the Express, and the Citizen (Quinn 8).

In 1869, he leased his first professional theatre space and began the legacy that has influenced American theatre ever since. Surprisingly enough, Daly never owned any of his theatres. Each was leased by contract for periods of one year to five years; a business

practice that often got him into legal tangles with his various landlords (Daly 1).

According to Barnard Hewitt, Daly was the first true Regisseur (producer-director) of the late nineteenth century theatre (219). In this newly developed capacity, Daly pioneered the shift of creative power away from the actor and put it squarely on the shoulders of the director (Hewitt 218). With this new centralized organization, Daly strove to do away with the "star system" in his company by hiring talented actors who were not known at the time as "star" material (Morris 216). In addition, Daly's company abolished the popular "lines of business," where actors would have a set repertoire of parts from which to choose. Actors in his company would take on a new and different part for each play. Daly told his new actors from the beginning, "There is no line in this theatre; you do everything" and cast shows as he pleased (Morris 216). However, after a number of years, Daly found "stars" developing in his company and capitalized on that fame in order to keep his near bankrupt theatre afloat. Specifically, it was Ada Rehan who was the major draw at Daly's during the theatre's peak of popularity (Shattuck 59). In addition, many of Daly's actors, after confrontations with "The Governor," went on to become stars on their own or in other theatres.

As a director, his tireless attention to realistic settings and acting made him the first American director to advocate realistic motivations for actors. In addition, his theatre spent great amounts of money for stage settings and furnishings in order to have the most realistic settings possible (Brockett 45). The New York Times stated

that Daly did not believe in "paper-mache properties;" only the best and most authentic were allowed on his stage (June 9, 1899).

When one went to see a Daly production, one saw the best theatre America had to offer (Hornblow 258). Daly was known for his fantastic scenes and grand spectacle. Moses points out that sometimes the critics disapproved of his methods of production and accused him of using them as a substitute for good acting or good scripts (114). However, those critics were the insignificant minority, for Daly was acclaimed as the greatest director of his time. William Winter, author of The Wallet of Time, a well-intentioned historical account of life in the early American theatre, said that Daly "made the theatre important, and he kept it worthy of the sympathy and support of the most refined taste and the best intellect of his time" (Hughes 232). Marvin Felheim, the author of the definitive book on Daly, said "he was a man dedicated to the theatre with a tenacity and a singleness of purpose which drove everything else from the path of his concern" (46). Dora Knowlton said in her diary that Augustin Daly was so effective as a director that "he could make a broomstick act."

It is said that no detail of a production was too small for the scrutinous eye of Daly. Clara Morris, an outstanding actress of the Daly company said: "no detail was too small for Mr. Daly to consider in his preparation of a play, so no detail of daily life in his theatre was too small for notice, consideration, and comment . . ." (Nagler 564). As director, he had the final word in everything. Prior to Daly, the norm in theatrical production was that the "star" actor was the ultimate authority on a particular production. Such was the case for Edwin



Booth's productions. Contrary to Daly, Booth as an actor controlled the artistic content of his plays, much in the same way Daly regulated his, only that Daly acted through his performers in the role of the director. He supervised the construction of setting, building of costumes, composing of music, and design of the lighting; not to mention the enormous influence he had on the acting in his plays (Crawford 373). Felheim even points out that Daly tried to control what was published in the newspapers of New York, but met with considerably less success (35).

Yet, lack of success in controlling reviews and reviewers does not mean that Daly didn't try. A poor review in a New York paper would result in that critic's banishment from Daly's theatres. Furthermore, there was not a New York paper whose criticism didn't prompt a removal of Daly's advertisements at one point or another. This removal usually didn't last long, because Daly usually followed an unpopular production with an fantastically popular one (Shattuck 80).

The enthusiasm and energy Daly focused on the theatre was unmatched by any of his peers. His days began at 7:30 in the morning and rarely ended before 9:00 at night. In the days immediately preceding an opening, rehearsals quite often ran past midnight to 3:00 a. m.; he expected no less from his actors. After the death of his two sons in 1885 he applied himself to the theatre even more, for then he had no other outlet for his creative energies (Felheim 11-35).

Daly began his career as a prolific adapter of French and German novels. Early in his career, Daly offered scripts to famous "star" actors in order to gain a reputation as a respected writer. Most often, his adaptations were rejected by the stars and he was then forced to

produce his plays on his own with his own company (Felheim 5). As his reputation for producing quality adaptations grew, the star actors began to seek him out in order to acquire "tailor made" adaptations that centered around them. Many times, Daly would collaborate with his well-established brother Joseph in order to build credibility. However, because of Daly's need to control everything, all official acknowledgement of the writing of these adaptations went to Augustin.

Daly had a great knowledge of the theatre. According to Mary Crawford, Daly had one of the finest theatrical libraries in the country at his death in 1899 (376). Carl Cannon reports that his book collection was sold for \$23,718.25 at auction after his death in 1899 (322). Daly studied his plays intensely. Not only did he work hard on his adaptations, but later in his career he was known for his excellent productions of Shakespeare and works by other writers (William Winter primarily). Daly's Taming of the Shrew was critically acclaimed in both England and the United States for its outstanding acting as well as its excellence in direction (Quinn 36).

Lloyd Morris, in his book Curtain Time, The Story of the American Theatre, described Daly with these adjectives: strict disciplinarian; unsparing task maker; tall, lean, brown haired; prodigious worker; high tempered; absolutely confident in own judgement; aloof in manner (216). Winter describes the development of Daly's character in The Wallet of Time as a hard man to get to know, for he had an unapproachable persona

that was hard to penetrate. Winter said:

He had encountered much selfishness and much ingratitude, and his experience had made him stern in judgement and somewhat cold and austere in manner, but those who knew him well knew that his probity was like a rock, and they remember him as a man of inflexible principle, affectionate heart, and a temperament marked by simplicity, generosity, and tenderness (355).

Upon his death in Paris during a business trip on June 7, 1899, the New York Evening Post printed in its obituary:

[Augustin Daly was] one of our ablest of theatrical managers, he was practically the only man in the country to whom the term theatrical manager, in its wider and better sense, was really applicable.

#### DALY'S COMPANY

"He gathered the ablest men and women in the profession," writes William Winter of Daly's company (Wallet of Time 354). Countless were the multi-talented actors that came out of Daly's theatre, many of whom went on to become superstars in their own theatres or with other theatre companies. So many actors gained fame through their work under Daly's wing, that only a few can be mentioned here. Many proved themselves as reputable actors in their own right after a short term with the "Governor."

Daly, also known as the "autocrat of the stage," developed a permanent company suitable for the long run. However, later in his career, he pioneered the development of a company that would produce a different play every week (Brockett 45). Daly's basic philosophy in reference to his company was that no actor was any better than any other. Subsequently, Daly worked for the perfect ensemble (Morris 217).

Any time an actor gained personal success in a major role, he or she was given a minor role in the next production. Daly tried to "even the score" for his actors, giving each opportunity to play large or demanding roles (Shattuck 66).

Critical acclaim came to Daly's company for their outstanding work as an ensemble. Brockett recognizes Daly's company as the finest ensemble that had yet been seen in America (45). To this end, Daly was a strict disciplinarian in regard to his company and their work. Numerous disciplinary actions were imposed on anyone who would break the rules of the company, usually posted on the bulletin board outside the theatre. Daly's actors could be fined from fifty cents to five dollars for offenses such as being late for rehearsal, missing an entrance (in rehearsal or performance), lack of courtesy toward Daly or any other cast member (no one was allowed to speak to Daly unless spoken to), going up on lines, breaking character, or for giving out information about a particular play or staging technique so as to ruin a special effect Daly wanted for an audience. Considering actors made between \$7 to \$75 a week, the fines were relatively large (Nagler 563, Felheim 33).

Daly's control over the production was matched only by his control over the company members' lives (Felheim 32). Cornelia Otis Skinner, the daughter of an actor in Daly's company, described Daly's thoughts by saying, "Actors . . . as far as the public was concerned, should be part of the illusion of the theatre" (78). No one was allowed to speak to Daly unless spoken to, or without an appointment to see him in his office (Shattuck 58). Knowlton recalls:

[I]t is etiquette to let him speak first. He is always too busy and worried he hates to be spoken to unless it is absolutely necessary . . . I have never seen a more fascinating man.

However, as a rule actors did not leave the company or react negatively to the behavioral codes imposed by Daly. George Clarke, an associate of Daly's, pledged loyalty to him even though many other theatre companies offered more money. In addition, many actors stayed with Daly because of the great theatre atmosphere, and not because of the financial rewards (Crawford 373). But, there were some who couldn't take the emotional abuse dished out by Daly. Knowlton recollects one particular actress who just didn't seem to be able to "dust" correctly. After numerous counseling sessions with Daly, proclaimed from the back row, Daly lost his patience and lept onto the stage. He took the duster from the woman's hand and showed her precisely how to "dust." His efforts were met with no improvement and he lost his temper. The actress stormed off stage in tears, and Daly calmly turned to his stage manager and instructed him to hire another actress (68).

Clara Morris, one of the finest actresses of her day ever to perform in America, recalled working with Daly. Ms. Morris was known for her powerful emotional acting and strong character roles. As was stated earlier, Daly was one of the first to advocate realistic setting and acting. Sometimes, this pursuit was elevated to the ridiculous. Ms. Morris recalled:

[I]n the old days, the stage-director would simply have said 'cross to the right,' and you would have crossed because he told you to; but in Mr. Daly's day you had to have a reason for crossing to the drawing room . . .

These remarks were made in response to a rehearsal in which Daly spent almost four hours searching for motivation for Ms. Morris to cross to the coffee table stage right. Only after the motivation was found could the rehearsal continue (Nagler 562).

Until Daly's "break" from managing his theatre in 1877, the company had turned out a number of incredibly talented actors and actresses. Daly's company was especially famous for its leading ladies, the first of which was Agnes Ethel. Ms. Ethel came to work for "the Governor" in 1869 and was known for her exquisite beauty and stage presence. Judge Daly recalled that she "filled the eye and the ear so completely that no one asked for more" (91). Following Ms. Ethel in fame were Clara Morris, known for her emotional acting; getting her break in a role planned to be played by Ms. Ethel, and Fanny Davenport, who gained fame for her frequent skirmishes with Daly over company policies and approaches to acting (Hornblow 242, Hewitt 220, Felheim 99-100). Ms. Davenport also enlisted in the company in 1869 at the age of nineteen. Immediately, Daly cast her in the lead role of Lady Gay Spanker and set to work. Ms. Davenport won critical acclaim in the role and became known as "The best 'Lady Gay' of her time" (Daly 90).

Augustin Daly was a pioneer in the field of theatrical public relations. No one wanted a large audience more than Daly, and there were many quite ingenuous methods he used to achieve his goal. Daly abhorred the method of "papering the house" (giving away free tickets in order to fill the seats), but used another technique. Daly hired young, pretty girls who were members of the elite social class called the "Four Hundred." These "Daly's Debutantes" were cast in actor proof roles and kept in the company as window dressing. The "debutantes" played a more important role, however. With the daughters of the elite in the cast, the elite would therefore come to the play; along with brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. As a result, Daly never "papered the house," he gleaned it (Skinner 79).

In 1875, Daly played host to Edwin Booth's road tour. Using Daly's company in the supporting roles, Booth played from the middle of October till the end of November. Booth, in a generous contract arrangement with Daly, acted from his comprehensive repertoire Richeleau, Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard III, Richard II, and a short run of King Lear. Nothing of real significance came of the engagement between the two mega-powers except for the lining of Booth's financial coffers. It was the first time a major theatrical luminary played a central role with Daly's company (Shattuck 60).

At the closing of The Dark City in 1877, (a play for which Daly had high expectations) Daly experienced such financial failure he had to close his theatre and take his company on the road. This being the low point of his managerial career, he turned over the management chores to Stephen Fiske and began a tour of the south (Hornblow 251). After what Joseph Daly termed a "temporary period of rest and observation in Europe" in 1878-1879, he established relations with prominent actors and managers and laid the foundations of his later financial successes back in New York (243). With his new-found capital, he refurbished the old Broadway Theatre and changed its name to Daly's Theatre. The evening of its grand opening, Daly encouraged patrons to arrive early so they could admire the outstanding work done in the remodeling (Odell, Annals 13). This theatre became the space for Daly's greatest achievements (Johnson 44).

Upon Daly's return, he introduced a new leading lady named Ada Rehan. Ms. Rehan, according to Odell, was described as "magnificent" in regard to her appearance and her action (Shakespeare 439). Known for her beauty and marvelous stage presence, Ms. Rehan became as big of a

"star" in Daly's company as an actor could. However, despite her early promise as an actress, she earned less money than most actors in the company at thirty five dollars a week (Odell, Annals 13).

Despite her greatness as an actress, and the development she underwent under the tutelage of Daly, many critics were skeptical. Shattuck proposes that Ada Rehan didn't have the range that many people gave her credit for. In actuality, Augustin Daly lived and acted through her. Shattuck reports Bernard Shaw as remarking that "Ada Rehan was a great actress -- but was best at playing nothing but Ada Rehan" (56). After the death of Daly, his influence over her was lessened. As a result, her acting suffered and she was never able to act with the same vigor or efficacy (Felheim 42).

Rumors of Rehan and Daly having an affair have never been substantiated, but it is widely accepted as true. Cornelia Otis Skinner, in her book Family Circle, reports on the steamy and sometimes rocky relationship between Rehan and Daly. Daly had the reputation of being a philanderer, even though he was happily married. Daly constantly flirted with the young women in his company, sometimes selecting one "young thing" who would hold his interest for a few weeks to be tossed aside for yet another. In between flirtations, he would always go back to Ada, and she would always take him (Skinner 79).

Knowlton recalled that Ada, during a performance of The Royal Middy, was "detained" in Daly's office and missed her call to stage and eventually missed her entrance. Daly was in the room with her, and many in the company wondered how he was "detaining" her. At the realization of her mistake, she gathered her flowing costume and ran to the stage, to the relief of the uneasy audience (130). Those in the company



wondered if the heartily amused Governor would fine her the same amount as any other actor that missed an entrance. Knowlton remembered that she didn't think he should punish her, for the delay was caused by Daly himself. Skinner reported that the fine was posted on the call-board the following morning to be the maximum: five dollars. Rules were rules, no matter the reason or cause (79).

Ms. Rehan became known for her outstanding performances in comedies, and won critical acclaim for her role in Taming of the Shrew as "The only really adequate Katherine seen upon the stage in memory . . ." (Crawford 376). Ada Rehan and the "star" actor John Drew were the headliners for all of Daly's notable Shakespeare plays (Speaight 81).

The successful run of Needles and Pins in 1881 established the "Big Four" in Daly's company: Ada Rehan, John Drew, Mrs. Gilbert, and James Lewis (Felheim 25). Mrs. Anne Hartley Gilbert became respected for her great elderly woman roles. The seemingly ageless actress came to be referred to as "The Grand Old Woman of the Stage" (Hornblow 244). James Lewis' portrayals of "Lucretia Borgia" in Ivanhoe at the Waverly Theatre attracted the attention of Daly. Lewis, known for his extremely "dry" comedic acting style, first appeared with Daly's company as "John Hibbs" in Dreams. The date was September 6, 1869. His first work with the "Big Four" was in 1875 in a play called The Big Bonanza (Molone 217).

Daly took his company to Europe three times. The first in London, to present She Would and She Would Not at the Toole's Theatre in 1884. The play was well accepted and was a great success. Later, in 1886, Daly's company visited London and then moved on to the continent of Europe. His cast was the first English speaking company to perform on

the German stage in 300 years. The audience, however, was almost entirely American (Quinn 34).

### DALY'S THEATERS

One of the greatest achievements associated with Augustin Daly was his tenacious theater management. Though known for his directing and play-writing innovations, he is also known for his aggressive theater management style. In the face of adversity, he managed to open theaters in New York and in London, with little capital and only the hope of a successful run to finance future productions. Daly leased his first theater from James Fisk Jr. for the then exorbitant amount of \$25,000 per year (Felheim 11). Upon entering the Fifth Avenue Theatre (on 24th Street, the naming was a marketing ploy), Daly surveyed its components carefully; he felt totally in control of his new theatre. In a letter to his brother, Daly recalled: "I went upon the stage and felt as one who treads the deck of a ship as its master" (Daly 88).

In 1872, Daly took on the management of a second theatre, the Grand Opera House (the "White Elephant") beginning in August of that year. He maintained the management of the "Elephant" until 1875. Prophetically, upon Daly's inspection of the Grand's management office on his first day in the building, he found a page of the Bible with these words from Luke 14: 28-30:

For which you have a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it? Lest after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that see him begin to mock him saying: "This man began to build and was not able to finish."

On January 1, 1873 tragedy struck. After fifty-nine productions in the first Fifth Avenue Theatre, the last being False Shame by Frank

Marshal, it burned to the ground (Winter, Vagrant Memories 223). In the fire, the company lost all their uninsured scenery, costumes, stage furniture, manuscripts, and books. Undaunted, Daly was determined to rebuild his company. On the 21st of January, 1873, twenty-one days after the fire, Daly opened his second Fifth Avenue Theatre at 728 Broadway, where his company remained until June 23 of that year. Daly opened his third Fifth Avenue Theatre on December 3, 1873 and remained there until his hiatus from professional theatre management in 1877 (Winter, Vagrant Memories 223-6). Daly maintained management of the theatre at 728 Broadway, renaming the building "The Broadway" (Felheim 13). Although he was relatively young and energetic, Daly fulfilled the biblical prophesy and found the burden of management of three theatres too great. Subsequently, he gave up the management of the Broadway and the Grand in order to focus his energies at the Fifth Avenue Theatre (Johnson 43, Daly 137-8).

After Daly's "temporary period of rest and observation," he opened the first Daly's Theatre on September 17, 1879, the fourth theatre of his career. The building was formerly the old Wood's Museum at Broadway and 30th street and was opened after substantial remodeling (Felheim 22). Daly's Theatre was the primary space in which Daly produced his most famous plays. It was in this space that Daly's Company became the dominant force in American theatre of the late nineteenth century. Sadly, the building which housed Daly's Theatre in New York is no longer in existence, for it was demolished in 1920 after being a moviehouse for five years.

As a result of Daly's frequent tours to England sizing up London's theatrical profitability, he leased the second Daly's Theatre there at

Cranbourne Street, Leicester Square. The first production in this space, says Winter, was Taming of the Shrew on June 27, 1893 (226). However, this structure also is no longer standing for it was torn down in 1939. Upon Daly's death in 1899, Daniel Frohman took over the management and directorship of Daly's two theatres. He tried to maintain the prestige of the Daly stock company that had been established, but Frohman could not handle the art of theatre management like the great "Autocrat" (Crawford 377).

### DALY'S PLAYS

"No drama critic lives who has not been tempted to write a play" writes Judge Daly, and Daly fulfilled that credo (47). Augustin Daly was one of the most prolific writers of adaptations in the nineteenth century. Daly's sources stemmed from British and American novels, as well as French and German dramas. During Daly's career, over ninety of his productions saw the stage (Quinn 12). According to Montrose Moses, the drama of the period between 1869 and 1900 was always based on parts drawn from Europe and assembled in the United States (177). He describes the genre of theatre of the period to be melodramatic, over-emotional, sensational, sickeningly sentimental, and reeking of poor dialogue (173).

After many years of writing dramatic criticism, Daly realized his first theatrical success in Leah the Forsaken. The free adaptation from the German play Deborah by S. H. von Mosenthal played at the Howard Athanaeum in Boston, December 8, 1862 (Johnson 43). The success of Leah led to much work for Daly; it served as his break into the business (Quinn 10). During the sixties, Daly experimented in

adaptations from the French and German and in dramatizations of novels like Griffith Gaunt, and Pickwick Papers (Johnson 43).

Up to the year 1867, Daly worked primarily with remakes. In 1867 he wrote his first successful original work entitled Under the Gaslight (Quinn 11). However, it has been proposed by Gerald Bordman that Gaslight was inspired by Wallack's Rosedale (182). Gaslight was a significant play due to its innovative nature and its landmark theatrical devices. It showcased compact structure, interesting dialogue, and the first significant attempts at realism (Quinn 12).

Gaslight also broke ground in another fashion. It was the first play to utilize the device of the person tied to the railroad tracks in front of an on-rushing train. Bordman theorizes that the method may have been derived from an English play entitled Engineer (182). Dion Boucicault copied the train scene in his play, After Dark. After subsequent court battles, Daly was given sole ownership of the device and federal courts denied anyone else use of the train track technique (Quinn 11).

Daly also pioneered the "damsel tied to a log rushing to the sawmill" device in his play The Red Scarf in 1869 (Johnson 43). This device has been copied numerous times; but without the entangling legal proceedings. Daly went on to produce his second most successful original play, A Flash of Lightning in 1868, which featured a Hudson River steamboat that went up in flames at the play's climax (Quinn 13).

During the second half of Daly's career (after 1879), he was most famous for his adaptations of Shakespeare's plays. Daly's innovative approaches to Shakespeare's comedies alone were advancements enough for an entire career, let alone just a portion of one (Felheim 25).

Daly, like most other playwrights of his time, cut, changed, and rearranged Shakespeare's plays to adapt to a multitude of factors. Daly justified his reorganizations with the philosophy that Shakespeare should be "dressed prettily" and should be made clean, writes Charles Shattuck. Everything seen on Daly's stage had to be "sentimentally appealing and morally unobjectionable" and as a result, Otis Skinner remarked, "The old playwrights must have turned in their graves at his ruthlessness" (182). And to complete the "Dalyization," Odell notes that he loaded down his Shakespeare adaptations with music and singing (Shakespeare 409).

Augustin Daly was not alone in his actions. William Winter, one of the foremost theatre critics of the late 1870's and 1880's, was Daly's best friend and chief collaborator in the reworking of Shakespeare's plays. The Daly and Winter team, under the shroud of "moral acceptability" cut enormous amounts of text by the great poet. Furthermore, Daly's policy of casting (exchanging major roles for minor among his company) violated Shakespeare's plays nearly as much as the rewritings did, for many times the actors cast in the major roles were not as competent or talented as others in his company that were assigned minor roles (Shattuck 63).

Winter, the "Dean of Critics," was in such high demand from Daly that he gave Daly his Principles of Emendation so as to allow for Daly to do his own reworking of Shakespeare scripts (Shattuck 61). As if that wasn't involvement enough, Winter also was Daly's "bought and paid for" instant rave review writer. Winter, after collaborating on the acting editions and assisting in the staging of the play, usually composed a rave review weeks in advance of the opening, and it would

then subsequently be published on opening night. These reviews were not chores in the eyes of Winter; they were "labors of love" (Shattuck 57). Daly also had ties with critic Edward Dithmar, who wrote for a number of New York dailies, but Daly's influence over him was not nearly as extensive as his kinship with Winter (Shattuck 57).

Daly's Shakespeare productions were the most lavish America had ever seen (Speaight 81). In actuality, Daly's productions of Shakespeare were amalgamations of scenes to fit around the changing of scenery or for actor's entrances. It was common to rearrange the scenes of a Shakespeare play in order to group like locales together so as to avoid multiple forty minute scene changes (Odell, Shakespeare 405).

Daly took it upon himself to add his own touch to each particular Shakespeare play he undertook. He provided a delayed entrance for Ada Rehan in Shrew in order to peak curiosity by cutting a number of lines in the first act so she would first appear in Act II (Shattuck 65). Also, Daly liked to add an unmistakable flair to an actor's discovery on stage. Before an actor's first appearance, specially composed music would flourish to signal the impending arrival of the star. Audiences would be able to recognize the music as the "signature" of the celebrity, thus many of Daly's most famous actors and actresses had their own theme music.

The Shakespeare productions by Daly that are of note include The Merry Wives of Windsor (1886), The Taming of the Shrew (1887), A Midsummer Night's Dream (1888), As You Like It (1889), and Twelfth Night (1893).

"[B]etween Winter's cuts and Daly's actors, The Merry Wives of Windsor was as jolly and innocent as a set of chapters out of Dickens"

claims Charles Shattuck of Daly's production. The play opened on January 14, 1886, and after thirty five performances, the Merry Wives were divorced. Resulting from countless cuttings, rearrangings, and rewritings, the play had lost its Shakespearean flavor. In the effort to keep Shakespeare "clean," Daly and Winter set to work cutting out every sexual reference within the text. Terms such as "fornication," "whore," "bitch," "lecher," and "erection" were cut without a moment's hesitation. Also, phraseology dealing with religion was also omitted. Uncleanliness was found in such terms as "God," "jack priest," "soul," "resurrection," and "the dickens." However, the cutting wasn't the major cause of its short run. Shattuck attributes the play's lack of popularity to the immature ensemble of actors that were forced to play its many diverse characters. The company had not yet reached the maturity that would allow for an automatic success like The Taming of the Shrew (65).

Undoubtedly, the most successful of the four significant Shakespeare plays was Daly's The Taming of the Shrew (Hornblow 256). The play opened on January 18, 1887 and ran for one hundred twenty one performances to close on April 30, 1887 (Shattuck 65). The play was billed as the first chance Americans have had to see Shrew "as Shakespeare wrote it." Yet, the acting edition used was massively cut, changed, and modified to fit Daly's and Winter's priorities. The modifications were so severe, Petruchio is tamed and the play ends in a draw (Shattuck 66-7).

As was stated earlier, the importance of Shrew in theatre history is the performance of Ada Rehan and the direction of Daly. Skinner equates the influential performance of Rehan's Katharine to Booth's Hamlet (88).



Shattuck reports George Odell as writing in his Annals that "Ms. Rehan's entrance in The Taming of the Shrew as the most magnificent he had ever seen" (66).

After a successful run in New York, Daly took the play to London. The presentation on May 29, 1888, according to Johnson, was the first time a comedy by Shakespeare had been produced in Europe by a company of Americans (45). Shrew played for 120 nights at the Gaiety Theatre in London; success stemming in part from the continued outstanding performance by Ada Rehan (Odell, Shakespeare 383).

Critics Winter and Dithmar applauded Daly's Midsummer Night's Dream as being "as Shakespeare wrote it." But, as we have seen, that pledge didn't mean much in Daly's theatre. In truth, Daly and Winter carved the play with unmerciful cruelty, cutting famous as well as infamous lines. One line of interest in particular, "the path of true love never did run smooth" was pasted over in the promptbook and never spoken in performance. Another downfall of the production was the mis-casting of Ada Rehan as Helena instead of Hyppolyta; a move critics found reprehensible. (Shattuck 70)

Midsummer ran from January 31 to April 17, 1888 and was the most spectacular of the nineteenth century. Daly's technical prowess was loved in New York and praised as the greatest Shakespeare and technical blend since Wagner (Shattuck 73). In the panoramic scene, Theseus and Hippolyta return to Theseus' palace by Grecian galley despite the fact Athens is miles from any sea. The trip takes place in a stationary boat with a panorama of trees and landscape traveling from stage right to stage left. When the play was in London, those in the gallery could see

so plainly that the boat was on dry land, as well as the other technical "falsehoods," that they chanted and jeered at the effects (Shattuck 73).

The most "satisfactory" Shakespeare Daly ever produced was his 1889 production of As You Like It. When the play opened on December 10, Dithmar and Winter raved about it in the papers as usual. However, this time the praise came more rapturously than ever before. Shattuck cites that even the ever negative critic Nym Crinkle praised the performance and its director (76). This production was also well received in London, much like Shrew.

However, some critics were not so supportive. At this point, some critics began to question the abilities of the quintessential Ada Rehan. Henry Clapp of the Boston Advertiser disapproved of the actions of Rehan. He called them "eye fatiguing perambulations." On the whole, the criticism stemmed from the perception that her performance was "Daly-ized" in that the role was not her own, but that of Daly (Shattuck 79).

The short six week run of Twelfth Night in 1893 was followed by over one hundred performances in London a year later. The play was maintained in the company's repertoire until its end in 1900. Again, the mighty slashing of text by Winter and Daly struck. They "smashed the play to make it a musical entertainment." Over six hundred lines were pulled because they "got in the way of the poetry and beauty." And as a result, the character of Sir Toby was cleansed to the point where his drinking and humor were all but missing.

More than any other play since A Midsummer Night's Dream, Daly put his emphasis on special stage effects. He reversed the first two scenes of the play in order to begin with a great display of storm sounds to

indicate Viola as a victim of a shipwreck. On the whole, these techniques were well received by the public, however the critics lashed out. Almost all critics writing in New York at the time voiced their dislike for Twelfth Night except for the loyal William Winter. His review contrasted enormously when compared to the other writers not so unduly influenced (Shattuck 82-5).

One of the reasons attributed to the critical upheaval was that the cast Daly used for the production was not suited for the play. It is noted that if Rehan had been able to play opposite James Lewis the play would have been a success. However, Lewis and Daly had a falling out and therefore Rehan was forced to play opposite a weaker actor. After the run in the United States, Daly took this production to London where it met with more popular success, but the critics still hated it. The trip to London was not a total loss though, because it further cemented the reputation of Ada Rehan in the minds of Londoners (Shattuck 83).

After 1891, Shattuck reports that Daly did a number of additional Shakespeare productions, but none of them are worthy of much notice. In 1891, he produced Love's Labour's Lost which was described by Daly as "squeezing juice from a stone" (89). In 1895 he did Two Gentlemen from Verona followed by Romeo and Juliet in 1896. In December of 1896 he produced an ill fated Much Ado About Nothing. A shortened version of The Tempest was produced in 1897. Tempest was an exceptional example of a Winter and Daly collaboration because one-half of the text was omitted. And finally, the last production directed by Daly was the 1898 The Merchant of Venice. This production was the most discouraging for Daly due to its lack of quality acting and production effects. It was

so bad even William Winter wrote a scathing review. A few months after Merchant closed, Daly was dead (Shattuck 89-90).

Augustin Daly was the foremost theatre innovator of his time. Discriminating in his judgements of actors, he developed many who (in their own opinion) outgrew the position he allowed them and passed from his control. Of those who remained with him he made probably the finest and most complete interpretive instrument for the drama that America had seen. He built a support group that was convinced that any production at Daly's Theatre was a play worth watching. He achieved the identification of manager, playwright, director, company, and theatre that is unique in America's stage history (Johnson 45). The result was a standard which helped to raise the general level of taste for the theatre in America and for the arts in general.

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