ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: A SHOW OF ONE'S OWN: DOROTHY SANDS AND THE RISE OF SOLO PERFORMANCE IN AMERICA

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This dissertation calls scholarly attention to Dorothy Sands (1893-1980), an American actress and parodist who achieved nationwide fame during the Great Depression for one-woman shows that put theater history itself onstage. In her solo works, Sands alternated lectures on theatrical periods with impersonations of stars from the past, delivering monologues in the styles in which they would have been performed. In *Styles in Acting* (1932), Sands presented speeches from the English stage as delivered by past and then-present stars, from the Restoration era forward. In *Our Stage and Stars* (1933), Sands traced theater history from the American Revolution up to the "Vampire Vixens" of cinema (Greta Garbo, Theda Bara, and Mae West). Sands earned accolades from critics and audiences alike; accrued a resume of over 100 Broadway, regional theater, television, and radio drama roles; and became a noted theater educator. Solo performance represents the most widespread kind of theater worldwide, and perhaps the most ancient.

Recovering Sands from her position as an understudied voice contributes to our understanding of the development of solo performance in America. Also, Sands' work touches on key issues in theater and performance studies, such as the limits of historical retrieval in past performance forms, the politics of archive and canon, and the nature of embodied identity in performance. This dissertation studies Sands' life and work in order to fill in a gap in theater history, and also to address current debates in performance historiography, new play development, and actor presence.

# A SHOW OF ONE'S OWN: DOROTHY SANDS AND THE RISE OF SOLO PERFORMANCE IN AMERICA

by

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# Prelude: Setting the Stage

***Overture***

This dissertation project calls scholarly attention to Dorothy Sands (1893-1980), an American actress and parodist who achieved nationwide fame during the Great Depression for one-woman shows that put theater history itself onstage. In *Styles in Acting* (1932), Sands presented monologues from the English stage as delivered by past and then-present stars, in the styles in which they would have performed, from the Restoration period forward. In *Our Stage and Stars* (1933), Sands traced American theater history from the Revolution up to the "Vampire Vixens" of cinema (Greta Garbo, Theda Bara, and Mae West). Sands toured her solo works with uninterrupted bookings from the early 1930s until the late 1940s to filled houses and consistent acclaim. *The New York Times'* Brooks Atkinson described *Styles in Acting* as, "the most vivid sort of theatre history in existence."[1] *The New Republic*'s Stark Young wrote that Sands, at her best, was "brilliant beyond words," and described her shape-shifting abilities as, "a most delicious and almost breathless exactitude and comedy."[2] *The Washington Post* called *Our Stage and Stars*, "in the best sense of the word, the most astonishing 'protean act' our contemporary theater

[1] Brooks Atkinson, "Dorothy Sands, in One-Woman Show, Gives 'Styles in Acting,'" *New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1932.
[2] Stark Young, "Hope and Miss Sands," *The New Republic*, Apr. 29, 1932.

has seen."[3] Sands' ability to transform, her pitch-perfect impersonations, her exhaustive historical research, and her multi-layered comedic flourishes indicate a virtuosic command of theatrical craft and an unjustly forgotten voice.

In addition to her various achievements (she developed a resume of over 100 Broadway, radio, and television roles across a six-decade career, and became a noted educator), Sands emerges as a pivotal figure in the development of solo performance in America, and a rich study for critical inquiry. Solo performance remains an understudied subject, despite its ubiquity across time and cultural space. A book-length study of an exemplar of the genre serves as a corrective. As well as filling in a gap in theater history, this dissertation on Sands' life and work affords scholars and artists a case study to inform current debates regarding historical retrieval, the politics of archive and canon, and the nature of embodied identity in performance. To what extent can we recover performances from the past? How do we gauge the accuracy of performance reconstructions? How do solo performers mediate embodied identity on stage? Also, Sands' gender takes on added significance as a woman performer in the 1930s and 1940s who articulated theater histories based on an armature of female roles and stars. By presenting agential and possibly subversive female characters within entertaining solo works, did Sands' capitalize on the re-inscription of codified gender roles during a time of heightened economic and racial anxiety, or (as this dissertation will argue), does Sands' work to operate as a feminist critique?

This study focuses on Sands' solo work to address these issues, but her six-decade long career forms an arc that frames her one-woman shows. A daughter of

[3] "Dorothy Sands Brings a Solo Bill to Capital: Protean Artiste Will Act Many Parts Tonight at National," *Washington Post*, Feb. 24, 1935, Sunday edition.

"Boston Brahmins," the cultural elite of Boston/Cambridge, Sands trained under theater pedagogue George Pierce Baker at Harvard University. Sands was a founding member of Baker's "47 Workshop," which produced a generation of playwrights, including Eugene O'Neill, Philip Barry, and future Federal Theatre Project director Hallie Flanagan. After serving as Baker's star actress, rehearsal director, and right-hand during the 1910s and early 1920s, Sands starred with the avant-garde Neighborhood Playhouse theater company in New York's Lower East Side in the mid to late 1920s. With the Playhouse, Sands learned to play across genres and cultures. The repertory company produced Sanskrit drama, Italian Commedia dell'Arte, and early Russian-influenced Realist work. Sands (a white, non-Jewish Brahmin) even appeared in the first English production of Shlom Ansky's seminal Yiddish drama *The Dybbuk* (1925-26).

Following the Playhouse's collapse, Sands ascended to Broadway comedy icon status in the late 1920s as a celebrity mimic and sketch artist in the *Grant Street Follies*, an annual roast of the outgoing Broadway season that featured many of the Playhouse actors and management staff. The Great Depression precipitated Sands' shift to solo performance in 1932, which sustained her until the economy recovered. After World War II, Sands returned to New York and settled into the long "third act" of her career. Although she made occasional solo appearances up until the early 1970s, she primarily directed her theatrical energies towards Broadway productions, regional summer theater, teaching classical acting at the American Theatre Wing and nationwide. She also spent these later years accruing a full resume of radio and television credits, primarily as comedic spinster types. Although successful in her

post-solo show career after the end of post-World War II, Sands never regained her ascendant status that she enjoyed as a 1920s Broadway comic headliner or Depression-era barnstorming solo artist. Traditional tropes account for the shift in Sands' trajectory, such as ageism. However, Sands' narrative will also provide insight to large-scale changes in the landscape of solo performance in the mid-twentieth-century.

A critical investigation of Sands' solo work also contributes to theater history and performance studies on a methodological level. In particular, the format of Sands' one-woman shows takes on significance regarding, to coin a phrase, the "performance of knowledge." Unlike more traditional perceptions of theatrical performance or academic scholarship, Sands' solo work consciously conflates scholarly research with theatrical practice. Assimilating and distilling historical narratives, Sands structured her one-woman shows as a series of brief lectures on theatrical eras, which she illumed with reenactments of famous stars of past, performing monologues in period styles, layered with caricature. Sands reconstructed styles of the past through a combination of cultural memory, personal interviews, study of historical criticism, meticulous costume reconstruction, and rehearsal improvisation.[4] Sands grounded her works in academic-style inquiry. In fact, Sands conducted sufficient textual research to have written texts in theater history, yet chose to present the results of her investigations into past performing styles as theatrical entertainment. Sands enacted theater history, calling into question traditional modes of recording and disseminating historical narrative.

[4] The term "cultural memory" raises questions: whose memory? For who's benefit? As Chapters Two and Three will explore, Sands' selected her own Anglo-American heritage as a normative narrative.

As theatricalized reenactment, Sands' solo works would seem to synthesize what Diana Taylor distinguishes as "archive" versus "repertoire." For Taylor, archival knowledge refers to written or otherwise materially permanent records that are "supposedly resistant to change."[5] Taylor's "repertoire" corresponds to embodied knowledge: dance, gesture, non-permanent actions that transmit "choreographies of meaning."[6] Academics typically place a premium on archival knowledge, even though, according to Taylor, embodied cultural memory provides the longer, more traditional format for knowledge systems cross-culturally. For Taylor, performance permits "vital acts of transfer." That is to say, a work of performance (broadly construed) serves as an "object/process of analysis," as well as a methodological lens through which we may question ontological, epistemological, and aesthetic assumptions and, therefore, power.[7] Within Taylor's framework, Sands' solo shows served as vital "acts" (literally), staging abstracted and text-centric knowledge, while also informing audience memory, affect, and expectation, with historical narrative. Accordingly, this dissertation project straddles theater history, dramaturgy, and performance studies.

### *Solo Performance: An Under-studied Field*

Dorothy Sands stands as an under-discovered figure within an understudied field. Solo performance constitutes a primordial form of performance, ubiquitous cross-culturally, yet the subject fails to attract substantial theater scholarship. Perhaps

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[5] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke UP, 2003), 19.
[6] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, 20.
[7] Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire,* 16.

since solo performance often occurs outside of formal theater architecture and management frameworks (as we recognize them), solo performance traditions tend to fall beyond theater historians' areas of focus. Case studies of particular practitioners enjoy popularity within specific discourses (such as Queer Studies, feminist interventions, or performance art), however; broadly conceived histories of solo forms prove relatively scarce.

The first book to survey the history of twentieth-century American solo performance in the aggregate (and one of the few texts that reference Sands) was John Gentile's *Cast of One: One-Person Shows from the Chautauqua Platform to the Broadway Stage*.[8] Gentile argues that one-person performance in the United States originated out of nineteenth-century's anti-theatrical prejudice and the love of public speaking. Elocutionists, aging actors, and literary personalities in need of money turned to so-called "Chautauqua" (named after a town in New York State) and "Lyceum" (meaning "lecture hall," from the place where Aristotle taught outside of Athens), circuits. Set up on make-shift stages, tents, and civil spaces, solo "platform" readers brought morally uplifting presentations of texts to small-towns across the nation's heartland. As theater historian Charlotte Canning describes, Chautauqua circuits, "promised to inspire cultural, community, and individual improvement through performances of various kinds. In the span of three days to a week, audiences could expect musical groups, lectures, elocutionary readers, special programming for children, and leisurely socializing with other members of the

[8] John Samuel Gentile, *Cast of One: One-Person Shows from the Chautauqua Platform to the Broadway Stage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989).

community."[9] Platform circuits served as points of interface between performers and heartland audiences, especially outside of large cities.

Gentile claims that the imprimatur of literary uplift served as *carte-blanche* for theatricalization. On the platform stage, "any firm distinction between the literary and the performance monologue is arbitrary at best," he notes.[10] Free of the questionable moral valence Americans associated with theaters and theater people, performers could engage audiences with theatrical techniques under the rubric of platform lectureship. As Gentile relates, elocutionists administered regular doses of Shakespeare and Biblical passages. However, the circuits also featured highly theatrical "readings" by accomplished Victorian actresses like Anna Cora Mowatt, Fanny Kemble, Charlotte Cushman on one hand, as well as literary giants like Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Dickens, and Mark Twain, on the other. Platform stages also showcased proto-Vaudevillian and pre-Broadway solo acts. Gentile stops short of qualifying these nineteenth-century events as one-person shows.[11] For Gentile, solo performance before mid-twentieth century still falls under the rubric of Chautauqua or Chautauqua style "platform" performance. After about mid-century, Gentile notices a shift to New York-based solo performance (which might also include nationwide touring), exemplified by Hal Holbook's incarnation of Mark Twain, autobiographical work following Spalding Gray's semi-improvisational first-person fantasias, Shakespearian recitals by classical actors John Gielgud and Ian McKellan, and stand-up performances by comedians like Lily Tomlin, Whoopi Goldberg, and

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[9] Charlotte Canning, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 1-2.
[10] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 62.
[11] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 2-3.

Eric Begosian, though to the solo work current at the time of Gentile's writing in the 1980s.[12]

Another works that attempts to chronicle the history of American solo performance is Jordan Young's *Acting Solo* (1989), written for popular readership.[13] Young covered much of the same ground as Gentile, although he set the start date for modern solo work in eighteenth-century England. Young cites failed tragedian Samuel Foote's satirical revues of eighteenth-century English actor David Garrick,[14] and also George Alexander Stevens' popular "Lecture Upon Heads"—a two-hour monologue in which Stevens assayed Indian chiefs to Alexander the Great using a succession of masks, wigs, and props.[15] Following the manuscripts of Gentile and Young, studies of solo performers proliferated, although the overall corpus of solo-performance scholarship remains relatively limited. The primary, oft-cited texts are few enough to survey, and break down into groups (albeit with intersecting and overlapping objectives): pedagogical works, and feminist solo performance projects (both feminist readings of solo performance and readings of feminist solo performers), and studies concerned with transgressive or queer identity, with each group generally eschewing historical perspective.

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[12] Gentile concludes, "The years after 1950 have seen the one-person show form enjoy a vogue reminiscent of that of platform performances during the Victorian age." Gentile, *Cast of One*, 192.
[13] Jordan Young, *Acting Solo: The Art of One-Man Shows* (Beverly Hills, CA: Moonstone Press, 1989).
[14] Samuel Foote (1720-1777) was a British actor-manager. Although not adept at tragic acting, Foote had an ability to turn tragedy into comic potential, including using the loss of his leg as a comedic device. David Garrick (1717-1779) dominated the English stage in the eighteenth century, particularly through his use of a more naturalistic acting style in Shakespearean roles relative to the more presentational convention of his time.
[15] Young, *Acting Solo*, 15-16. Stevens went on to perform his lecture over 1000 times. The definitive study on Stevens, and still an outstanding research model, is Gerald Khan, *George Alexander Stevens and The Lecture on Heads* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

Pedagogical texts and anthologies on solo performance take a present-tense approach. If these texts include historical narratives at all, they usually do so in the form of a few paragraphs or brief introductory chapter. Such works include Michael Kearns' *Getting Your Solo Act Together* (1997) and *The Solo Performer's Journey* (2005), Mark Russell's *Out of Character: Rants, Raves, and Monologues from Today's Top Performance Artists* (1997), Glen Alterman's *Creating Your Own Monologue* (1999), and Louis Catron's *The Power of One: The Solo Play for Playwrights, Actors, and Directors* (2000).[16] The way in which these book address theatre history suggests that the study of the past is important only insofar as it provides models for new work. As Kearns begins his text, "The blank page and the empty stage beckon."[17] Alterman cites Jordan Young's narrative before getting to the business of classroom exercises. Russell's anthology begins with selections from contemporary performance artists Laurie Anderson, Penny Arcade, Elia Arce, and Ron Athey. Jason Sherman's *Solo* (1994) has a two-page introductory meditation on loneliness before presenting commissioned scripts.[18] Texts in this group emerged out of a perceived need to help young artists make more compelling work than much solo work that ends up onstage. For example, Louis Catron found the first solo performance monologues he saw "dreadfully dreary." After seeing exemplary efforts in New York, he set out to help students create their own monologues.[19] These texts

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[16] Michael Kearns, *Getting Your Solo Act Together* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, *1997); Mark Russell, Out of Character: Rants, Raves, and Monologues from Today's Top Performance Artists* (New York: Bantam Books, 1997); Glenn Alterman, *Creating Your Own Monologue* (New York: Allworth Press, 1999); Louis E. *Catron, The Power of One: The Solo Play for Playwrights, Actors, and Directors* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000).
[17] Kearns, *Getting Your Solo Act Together*, vii.
[18] Jason Sherman, *Solo* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1994).
[19] Catron, *The Power of One*, 13.

approach solo performance from praxis, so past exemplars, when cited, serve as models for new work.

Across critical writing in theater and performance studies, writers focus on individual solo performers or performances, but not as broadly conceived histories. Although areas of interest overlap, a group of primarily feminist critiques follow this pattern. For example, Leonora Champagne's *Out from Under: Texts by Women Performance Artists* (1990), Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan's *Acting Out: Feminist Performances* (1993), and most importantly, Jill Dolan's *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (2005) focus on gender performance in the present or near-present for the purpose of social critique in the present for the purpose of social justice in an emergent future.[20] Dolan states plainly, "I take my performance examples from a variety of contemporary performance genres and locations."[21] The focus on *now* emerges directly from feminism's commitment to linking theory with social action, "for me, performance and politics have always been entwined," Dolan writes.[22] Therefore, in *Utopia in Performance*, Dolan refers to performances she has seen and performance experiences that she has had.

When feminist studies scholars do reach into the past, they typically do so in order to establish genealogies of feminist performance that foreground the present. For instance, Suzanne Lavin investigates the "blossoming of women's public speech in performance" in the modern period, which she sets as the four-decade range, 1955-

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[20] Lenora Champagne, *Out from Under: Texts by Women Performance Artists* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1990); Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan, *Acting Out: Feminist Performances* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993); Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
[21] Dolan, *Utopia in Performance*, 2.
[22] Dolan, *Utopia in Performance,* 3.

95. She asserts that Phyllis Diller represents a traditional "vaudevillian" style of comedy from the 1950-70s, Lily Tomlin embraced satire from the 1960-80s, as did Roseanne in the 1980s-90s.[23] Most recently, E. Patrick Johnson and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera's acclaimed 2013 anthology*, solo/black/woman: scripts, interviews, and essays*, features cutting-edge black women monologists working since the 1980s and their thoughts, projects, and questions as they look to the future.[24]

In addition to using the recent past to direct inquiry into the future of solo performance (and social change), feminist critics also turn to the past, in part, out of nostalgia for more activist times. For example, Jo Bonney reminisces,

> When I got to New York in 1979, there was so much to see…Amid the more familiar music, dance and theatre, I saw something less familiar: a kind of idiosyncratic, boundary-breaking solo performance. Not standup comedy, not cabaret, not one-character play, not lecture or reading or poetry–although bits and pieces of all of these were in there somewhere. In Off-Off-Broadway spaces, such as, The Kitchen, Franklin Furnace, Performance Space 122 [P.S. 122] and the Performing Garage; in nightclubs like Club 57, the Mudd Club and Tier 3; in storefronts such as Fashion Moda and ABC No Rio; and even in the loft apartments of artists, I, along with a small but enthusiastic audience, loved the energy and originality of this new solo work.[25]

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[23] Suzanne Lavin, *Women and Comedy in Solo Performance: Phyllis Diller, Lily Tomlin, and Roseanne* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.

[24] *solo/black/woman: scripts, interviews, and essays*, eds. E. Patrick Johnson and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera (Evanston, IL: Northwestern UP, 2014). The anthology breaks ground in focusing on black women performers' embodiment. Furthermore, the combination of scripts, interviews, critical essays, and an accompanying DVD of showcased performances suggests an exciting multi-dimensional format for presenting solo theater scholarship.

[25] Jo Bonney, intro. to *Extreme Exposure: An Anthology of Solo Performance Texts from the Twentieth Century* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2000), xi.

Bonney has company. Looking back, Leonora Champagne saw 1970s feminist solo performance as an anti-theatrical golden age, where "the integrity of the concept or idea and on intimate sharing of a private ritual with the audience. Today's growing audiences for performance often seem to want to be entertained and stimulated rather than challenged by the concepts or emotions behind the work."[26] Writing in 1993, C. Carr pined, "Here at the end of the twentieth century, few things are truly subversive, truly unprocessed and unlabeled, or more than just fashionably shocking."[27] Almost twenty-five years later, many observers would probably still agree to Carr's assessment.

While once again acknowledging the interrelatedness of identity politics, a final group of works treats solo performance primarily from the position of Queer identities. Michael Peterson reads the politics of self in *Straight White Male: Performance Art Monologues* (1997).[28] Peterson argues that the performance monologue is a paragon of cultural inscription. Looking past its conventions and theatricality, the one-*man* show is a normative framework, "productively conceived of as including the network of cultural precedent and expectation."[29] Peterson troubles white heteronormativity through queer readings of Eric Begosian, Spalding Gray, performance artists Josh Kornbluth and Wallace Shawn, as well as comedians Andrew Dice Clay, Denis Leary, and Rob Becker. Also using identity politics as a lens, Holly Hughes and David Román examine how performance artists perform

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[26] Champagne, *Out from Under*, xii.
[27] C. Carr, *On Edge: Performance at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan UP, 1993), xviii.
[28] Michael Peterson, *Straight White Male: Performance Art Monologues* (Jackson, MI: University Press of Mississippi, 1997).
[29] Peterson, *Straight White Male*, 5.

gender and sexuality in *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance* (1998).[30] Hughes and Román chose to publish contemporary queer monologists both because of the academic legitimization textuality bestows, and also because publication, "lessens the burden of representation that some of these artists have had to carry."[31] As with the previously discussed text, these works also generally work from a present or near-present tense focus. Hughes and Román's book anthologizes artists current performers, like feminist performance artist and actresses award-winning actresses Carmelita Tropicana and Peggy Shaw. Likewise, all seven-pieces in the special edition of *Text and Performance Quarterly,* "Personal and Political in Solo Performance," deal with the experiences and identity politics of present-day monologists.[32] Finally, and perhaps *par excellence*, E. Patrick Johnson both performed and wrote critical reflections of his own one-person show, *Strange Fruit*, about Patrick Johnson's own identity as a gay, black, southern, male academic, which he toured from 1999-2004.[33]

Thus, general histories of solo performance are few, and the overtly historical narratives date from the 1980s. Studies on particular solo artists, solo performances, or groups of solo artists and performances proliferate across pedagogical feminist, and queer studies perspectives, but trade historical standpoint for present-tense social critique. When texts do delve into the past, they do so in order to frame their objectives, or out of reminiscence. Therefore, Dorothy Sands, a solo artist of the past

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[30] Holly Hughes and David Román, *O Solo Homo: The New Queer Performance* (New York: Grove Press, 1998).
[31] Hughes and Román, *O Solo Homo*, 11.
[32] Craig Gingrich-Philbrrok, ed*, "Personal and Political in Solo Performance,"* Special issue of *Text and Performance* 20 no. 1 (2000).
[33] At the time of this writing, Patrick Johnson is now touring his solo show, *Pouring Tea: Black Gay Men of the South Tell Their Tales*.

who built performances about the past, is doubly difficulty to contextualize. A review of Sands' contemporaneous women solo artists, and their historical context with a broader genealogy of historical women solo performers, will frame the biographical narrative to follow.

### *A Member of a Cohort*

Although innovative, Dorothy Sands belonged both to a cohort of cotemporaneous women performers, and also to a lineage of women soloists. Granted, generalities should be read against caveats regarding the perils of periodization. As English scholar Lawrence Besserman warns, "In some of the most influential and innovative quarters of contemporary literary and cultural studies, periodization—an ancient concept, but a relatively new word—finds itself in very bad odor indeed."[34] Any boundary will be fuzzy. However, a sense of shared identity appears to exist among Sands' generation of solo women artists, who in turn represent the culmination of an artistic line.

Gentile suggests that Sands fits into a placeholder generation of solo artists, located between the Chautauqua platform readership and professionalized, post-mid-twentieth-century solo formats in New York. Gentile devotes a chapter to monologue performers Cecilia (Cissie) Loftus, Dorothy Sands, Ruth Draper, Charles Laughton, and Cornelia Otis Skinner, as artists who occupied a transition period that, "began

[34] Lawrence Besserman, ed., "The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives," In *The Challenge of Periodization: Old Paradigms and New Perspectives*, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 14.

after World War I and ended with the one-person show renaissance in the 1950s."[35] In other words, a lag existed between the diminution of Chautauqua networks around the end of World War I and the rise of solo performance as a vibrant genre in after the end of World War II. Sands' generation filled that gap until the spirit of solo performance revived, now in New York.

Ruth Draper (1884-1956) is probably the most familiar name of the group. Draper began performing her own work in 1920, first in London, and then in America. Commenting on immigration, and northeastern tenement identities specifically, Draper portrayed characters across class, ethnicity, and language.[36] Cissie Loftus (1876-1943) had a career as an impressionist before performing *An Evening with Cecelia Loftus* (1938) in New York that contained, "impersonations, folk tales, scenes from plays in which she had acted, an original sketch, and an adapted dialogue," Gentile writes, and that she played for five years until her death. [37] Cornelia Otis Skinner (1899-1979) differed from Draper in that whereas Draper tended to create ethnic and personality-type caricatures in her shows, Skinner built shows around biographies. As this dissertation will show, Skinner and Sands' paths crossed, and Skinner's work might have influenced Sands'.

In a reference registry of solo performance artists and show titles, John Cairney parallels Gentile's grouping, but adds excludes Laughton and adds Beatrice Herford, and refers to Draper, Sands, Loftus, and Skinner as "The Famous Five."[38]

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[35] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 96.
[36] For a standard text on Draper, see Dorothy Warren, *The World of Ruth Draper: A Portrait of an Actress* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999).
[37] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 97.
[38] John Cairney, *Solo Performers: An International Registry, 1770-2000* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2001), 27. Cairney's text is a registry-format reference text of solo performers, with names, dates, and brief summaries, and so was excluded by the preceding literature review.

Herford (1868-1952) was British, and, avoiding the stigma attached to becoming an actress, began presenting literary monologue performances in London in 1895. Herford built a small, private theater for herself on her husband's property in Massachusetts in 1904 for guest-only performances.[39] Herford is an evocative figure, occupying a space between England and America, private and public, Victorian and modern, literature and theatre, and is a precursor to Skinner, Draper, and Sands, and Loftus.

Cairney's grouping of five women is evocative because Gentile dismissed gender as a factor in periodization. He grants that Loftus, Sands, Draper, and Skinner, "made the one-person show genre seem the privilege of women" during the placeholder generation, but recommends against reading too much into this commonality.[40] As a counter-example, Gentile adds Charles Laughton to the list of mid-century soloists because of his highly successful show, *An Evening with Charles Loughton*. However, Laughton performed *An Evening with Charles Laughton* in the early 1950s, which would put this example not in Sands' cohort, but with Gentile's "renaissance" period.

Contrary to Gentile's contention, gender may not be an incidental factor, but a critical component in the trajectory of solo performance in the twentieth century, an argument theater historian Maggie Gale makes explicit. Gale adopts a longer view of women solo performances, drawing a continuous arc back into the nineteenth century. Obliquely criticizing Gentile, Gale writes, "Literary-minded critics who have tended to discuss dramatic monologs in the same context as platform readings, overlook the

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[39] Herford's theater still exists and functions as a regional playhouse, Vokes Players, "Beatrice Herford's Vokes Theatre," http://www.vokesplayers.org/ (accessed October 13, 2014).
[40] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 96.

fact that nineteenth-century dramatic monologs developed as theatrical forms."[41] Gale implies that histories like Gentiles' inappropriately include women's solo performances in platform readership, when in fact they should count as one-person performances. For example, Victorian actresses like Frances Maria Kelly (1790-1882), Fanny Kemble (1809-93), and Charlotte Cushman (1816-76) did more than read poetry, Shakespeare, and Biblical passages in their solo appearances. Rather, Gale argues, "the solo form provided the opportunity to develop outside the remit of a mixed-gender company."[42] As soloists, nineteenth century actresses acted roles they would not have been able to play within existing structures, refashioned their public personae, and established techniques and conventions for twentieth-century artists.

Gale's observation that performance monologues began as a genre in the nineteenth century indicates a longer lineage than feminist studies normally assume. For example, Gale recovers Helen Potter (actress, not the *Beatrice Potter* author), an adaptable impersonator whose work prefigures Dorothy Sands' impersonations of celebrities playing famous roles. Potter published a remarkable primer, *Helen Potter's Impersonations* (1891), in which she gave instructions to aspiring mimics, as well as sample texts with pronunciation markings for about fifty studies, including how to play Cleopatra, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Edwin Booth as Hamlet, Charlotte Cushman as Katharine of Aragon, and Henry Ward Beecher delivering a sermon on Lincoln.[43] Gale also mentions May Isabel Fisk who, like Beatrice Herford, achieved success as an impersonator. Working during the rise of sociology and self-

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[41] Maggie B. Gale, "Going Solo: An Historical Perspective on the Actress and the Monologue," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress*, eds. Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge UP, 2007), 293.
[42] Gale, "Going Solo," 293.
[43] Helen Potter, *Helen Potter's Impersonations* (New York: E.S. Werner, 1891).

movements, Fisk and Herford developed the monologue as a popular form of "staged observations of the social context of characters, social types and personalities."[44] Socially, Fisk and Herford lived in a period in which, "acceleration of urban industrialization meant that individuality and social identity were becoming an issue in the popular press" and were keen critics of identity and social type.[45] Fisk lampooned emerging middle-class values, playing caricatures such as a newly upper-class woman attempting to take her children out on an outing on the nurse's day off. Working outside of both Chautauqua and Vaudeville, Fisk and Herford provided a "strong anthropological perspective," Gale notes, from which the next generation of solo performers could build.[46] Although platform readership certainly included men, and although Gentile enumerates women soloists who succeeded after mid-century (though not generally before the 1960 and 70s), we should also recognize a shift in solo performance market structure from a predominantly female form to a *normatively* male profession—the "one man" show. Sands' cohort of women solo artists therefore do not constitute a placeholder generation, but the culmination of roughly century-long line of women solo artists that began in Victorian England and ended in mid-twentieth-century America.

The importance of gender in understanding Sands' solo work amplifies as Sands herself composes genealogies of women characters and solo artists with her own shows. As these chapters will demonstrate, Sands built theater histories around women and female characters, chose scenes for her shows that questioned traditional codes of gender and power, and took an interest in the contributions of women to

[44] Gale, "Going Solo," 297.
[45] Gale, "Going Solo," 297.
[46] Gale, "Going Solo," 298.

society at large. Consequently, this dissertation takes as its title, *A Show of One's Own*, as a play on novelist Virginia Woolf's extended essay, *A Room of One's Own* (1929). Three years before Sands premiered *Styles in Acting* (1932), Woolf penned her manifesto based on lectures she gave at Cambridge University in 1928. Woolf argued that women authors require literal and literary space in order to flourish as writers. Of such potential writers, Woolf wrote, "Give her a room of her own and five hundred [pounds] a year, let her speak her mind and leave out half that she now puts in, and she will write a better book one of these days."[47] As if taking up Woolf's challenge, Sands inhabited a "room" of her own as a soloist. That is to say, she followed a theatrical and organizational solo company model established from the late Victorian-era through near contemporaries. Her choice of canon, treatment of stars, and selection of texts reflects a keen awareness of her shifting market. Even so, Sands' solo work sounds a resounding response to Woolf's call.

***Sources for the Tale***

To my knowledge, no full-length published studies of Dorothy Sands exist. Sands is featured, however, as one of three subjects in a 1982 University of Texas at Austin doctoral dissertation by Linda Sue Long.[48] Long argued that scholars had overemphasized Ruth Draper and Cornelia Otis Skinner at the expense of women monologists Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands. Long's study provided accounts of Herford, Loftus, and Sands in order to rebut their second-tier

[47] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 1989), 94.
[48] Linda Sue Long, "The Art of Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands within the Tradition of Solo Performance" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1982).

status. Long's dissertation did not result in book or article publications, but Gentile's four-page précis on Sands in *Casts of One* relies on Long's thesis. References to Sands in other unpublished works typically cite Gentile, and therefore Long.[49]

Long provided theater studies a service by documenting the format and content of Sands' one-woman shows, and offering preliminary speculation into Sands' rehearsal and performance process. Long's scene-by-scene breakdown of Sands' solo shows, and detailed descriptions of Sands' costumes for each of her impersonations, are particularly helpful.[50] Also, Long's expedition into the jungle of the then-newly available archival material, armed only with index cards and notebook paper, seems heroic from today's digital vantage point. Even so, Long's study was and is limited. For instance, the scripts of Sands' solo shows did not become unavailable until a family bequest to the Harvard Theater Collection in 2006 and, thus, were not at Long's disposal. An audiocassette dating from February 1952, containing Sands performing the first two sections of *American Theater Highlights* (Sands title for *Our Stage and Stars* after World War II), was not available at the time of Long's writing either (no known films of Sands' solo work exist).

Most limiting, Long relied almost exclusively on Sands' own extensive scrapbook collection (in effect, using Sands' archives as simultaneously primary and secondary sources), housed at the Billy Rose Collection at the Performing Arts

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[49] See Gentile, *Cast of One*, 97-100. For unpublished dissertations that trace the genealogy of Sands' cohort based on Gentile's précis of Long, see Natalie Highland, "Performing the Single Voice: The One-Woman Show in America" (PhD diss., Bowling Green State University, 1997); Jay T. DiPrima, "Towards a Poetics of Monodrama in Performance: The History and Analysis of Critical Response to Monodramas on the Stages of New York City from 1952-1996" (PhD diss., New York University, 1998); Donald David LaPlant, "Metahistorical Theater: Recent American Approaches to the Dramatic Presentation of Historical Material" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 2001).

[50] Observers at the time also reported Sands' costuming in detail. Sands utilized research and reconstruction of costuming both for theatrical effect as well as a dramaturgical strategy, processes that Chapter Four explores.

Library of the New York Public Library at Lincoln Center. In her dissertation, Long builds her narrative around quotations from reviews and features that Sands' placed in the scrapbooks. In taking a summarizing approach to the articles and memorabilia Sands saved, selected, and sequenced rather than critically analyzing the material, Long accepted Sands' interpretation of her own career at face value. Sands was a virtuosic actress and parodist, and her scrapbooks serve as another kind of performance, a problem Long does not address.

*A Show of One's Own* diverges from Long's work in several respects. My dissertation project makes use of data and meta-data from on-line databases, historical periodical searches, and digital archives to better contextualize the materials within Sands' archives. Furthermore, the chapters glean insight from primary sources that have become available since Long's project—most importantly, the 2006 Sands family bequest to the Harvard Theatre Collection. This trove holds Sands' solo show scripts (transcribed and annotated in the Appendices of this dissertation) and research notebooks that span the length of her solo career, many of which contain stage directions, cue sheets, budget and time notes, emendations and edits over time, and marginalia that reveal Sands' responses to shifting audience expectations, in addition to research notebooks from which Sands developed her shows.

*A Show of One's Own* also makes use of archival material that Long either chose to omit or did not have the space to incorporate into her manuscript. From the Billy Rose Theatre Division, these resources include Sands' speeches and teaching notes, dramaturgical and rehearsal notebooks (including an astonishing "impersonation guide" that records her notes in fashioning celebrity impersonations),

letters, financial records, and marginalia. From the Harvard Theatre Collection, archives include George Baker's 47 Workshop papers (which includes Sands' correspondence with Baker), as well as the papers of Dorothy Sands' sister, Mary, housed at the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. In terms of scope, this dissertation devotes its pages to a single individual, rather than three, which affords time and space for close readings of primary source evidence.

***Tonight's Program***

This dissertation uses Dorothy Sands' solo work as a means to gain new insights into to theater history, production dramaturgy, and performance studies. *Chapter One: Life and Times* provides a critical framing for the chapters to come by establishing Sands' biographical narrative, from her upbringing as a *fin-de-siècle* Boston Brahmin; to her apprenticeship with George Baker at Harvard University (and her nearly decade-long service to him as star actress and right-hand); to her move to New York and three-year crucible at the Neighborhood Playhouse; followed by her ascension to icon-status with *Grand Street Follies*. Noting details of her solo career, described in the following two chapters, Chapter One concludes with the later stages of Sands life and work.

*Chapter Two: A Show of One's Own (1932-45)*, Act I—*Styles in Acting*, introduces Sands' one-woman show, *Styles in Acting* (1932), which traces theater history from English Restoration Comedy to the "Vampires" of the Silver Screen. Chapter Two offers close readings of never-before-available scripts from the Harvard

Theatre Collection that feature Sands' corrections, emendations, and edits over her solo career, and reads Sands' work as a feminist critique. The chapter concludes with speculation about shifting audience composition and expectations based on Sands' script changes over time.

*Chapter Three: A Show of One's Own (1932-45)*, Act II—*Our Stage and Stars* introduces Sands' second one-woman show, *Our Stage and Stars* (1933) (which she retitled *American Theatre Highlights* after World War II). Like Chapter Two, this chapter makes use of Sands' handwritten scripts and research. Also like the previous chapter, this chapter uses changes in *Our Stage and Stars/American Theatre Highlights* to infer changes in audience expectations, especially in terms of shifts in entertainment technology and social codes.

*Chapter Four: Chameleon Dramaturgy*, analyzes Sands' approach to play development for her one-woman shows, based on Sands' research notebooks in the New York Public Library, as well as her speeches, teaching notes, stage management documents, photographs, programs, and related memorabilia. Chapter Four conducts a close investigation of Sands' strategies for celebrity impersonations; how she approached reconstruction of past theatrical styles; and the specific research Sands undertook for each of her solo works. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Sands' strategies for retrieving theatrical styles, and in performance reconstruction generally.

Finally, *Chapter Five: Pistil and Stamen* broadens the dissertation's critical focus, using Dorothy Sands's work as a lens. In particular, Chapter Five applies George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's theory of conceptual metaphors to distill patterns

in Sands' methodologies, which find resonances across time in writing about the stage. The application of Lakoff and Johnson's system to Sands' archives reveal insights into the nature of embodiment in solo performance and the function of the solo performer. In particular, Sands' conception of the history of theater as a geneology of female stars—and herself as a naturalist collecting instances of historical blooms—touches on an enduring metaphor in the history of the study of live performance, as well as deepening our understanding of Sands herself.

# Chapter One: Life and Times

## *Introduction*

The preceding introduction framed this dissertation project as a recuperative and critical investigation of Sands as an actress, solo artist, and parodist, using broad brushstrokes to argue for a greater emphasis on solo performance generally, and a deeper appreciation of Dorothy Sands in particular. This chapter establishes Sands' biographical narrative, which will provide framing for close readings of her solo scripts in Chapters Two and Three, as well as contextualize the dramaturgy of her solo work in Chapter Four. An examination of these formative phases reveals the ways Dorothy Sands acquired the theatrical training, organizational methodologies, and dramaturgical tools necessary to make a major contribution to the evolution of solo performance in America. Sands' trajectory also informs our understanding American theater history, since her training and early career intersect with important figures, trends, and institutions in the development of twentieth-century dramatics. The latter part of Sands' career offers insights into twentieth-century theater markets.

The following biography highlights Sands' upbringing in Cambridge, Massachusetts (1898-1911); formal theater training at Harvard/Radcliffe with theater pedagogue George Pierce Baker and his legendary "47 Workshop" (1911-15); Sands' post-graduation tenure as Baker's protégé and right hand; her work with Boston's noted School of Expression; and her work as a Boston-area actress, director, and

theatrical producer (1915-24). The chapter then explores Sands' transition to New York and her experiences with one of the pioneering institutions of the "Little Theater Movement," the *Neighborhood Playhouse* (1924-27). The biographical sketch continues by addressing Sands' ascension to Broadway icon status as parodist, writer, and sketch artist in the Playhouse-sponsored revue, *The Grand Street Follies* (1925-29). Finally, Chapter One concludes with Sands' return to New York following post-war recovery, and her late experiences on and off-Broadway, radio, and television.

***Cambridge Idyll (1893-1924)***

Dorothy Sands (1893-1980) entered the world on March 5, 1893 to a family with impeachable blueblood credentials. The Sands were quintessential "Boston Brahmins," a term Oliver Wendell Holmes coined to compare Boston's intellectual and social elite to the upper strata of the traditional Hindu caste system.[51] The Sands family traces its lineage back to Robert de Sandes (1380-1424) of the Cumbrian village of St. Bees on the Irish Sea coast of England. Robert de Sandes' son, William, hailed from the hills of Furness Fells in the highlands of Cumbria, though the family moved about England in subsequent centuries with changes of fate. William Sandys, titled "First Baron Sandys of the Vine," was a Tudor diplomat, Lord Chamberlain, and favorite of King Henry VIII.[52] Henry Sandys II sailed from

[51] Oliver Wendell Holmes, "The Brahmin Caste of New England," *The Atlantic Monthly* 5, Issue 21, Chapter 1 (1860). The traditional Hindu caste system divided India's society into five strata. The darkest-skinned, the "untouchables," handled dead bodies and cleared streets of manure and feces, whereas the lightest-skinned, the Brahmins, held elite positions as philosopher-priests.
[52] Current Boston-area Frank Sands, Dorothy Sands' great-nephew, has put helpful genealogical information online, such as an interactive family tree, Frank Sands, "Family Tree & Genealogy Tools for Dorothy Sands," http://www.wikitree.com/genealogy/Sands-Family-Tree-349 (accessed August 26, 2015).

Suffolk to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1636, and seven generations later, Dorothy Sands' father, Frank Edgar Sands, thrived as an MIT-educated banker and local Cambridge politician (mustachioed with conservative polish, though savvy enough to gain popular appeal by reducing municipal water rates).[53] Dorothy Sands' mother, Maine-born Lydia Phipps, married Frank Edgar Sands in 1890 and embodied the role of New England Victorian, favoring lifelong participation in the staunchly correct North Avenue Congregational Church.[54]

Dorothy Sands arrived in 1893 to a world roiled in contrast and transition. Patriotism and Jim Crow racism suffused the American landscape. Gilded Age opulence and Industrial Age squalor painted a jarring chiaroscuro—in fact, a sizable economic correction, one of the U.S.'s financial "panics," occurred in Sands' birth year.[55] "Gay Nineties" *joie de vivre* and affected cynicism butted heads in fashionable salons and classrooms. Above all, advances in technology sounded staccato leaps in the materiality of daily life. A citizen of the Roman Empire could have made sense of the world of 1700, and could have even acclimated to Western society at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, but inventions like the telephone (1876), the phonograph (1877), the electric light bulb (1879), the aeroplane (1903), and the tank (1915), made society unrecognizable even to its own members.[56] A

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[53] "Councilman F.E. Sands," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Apr. 15, 1893.

[54] Congregationalism is a branch of Protestantism peculiar to New England, and stresses autonomy and self-governance for each congregation. The Cambridge Baptist congregation built the North Avenue church in 1845 near Harvard Square, but the North Avenue Congregational Society bought and moved the building in 1866.

[55] The "Panic" of 1893 was the worst economic downturn the United States had then faced, based on railroad speculation that led to bank failures.

[56] For a table of nineteenth and twentieth-century inventions, see Günter Berghaus, *Theatre, Performance, and the Historical Avant-Garde* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 27-33, or the popular-reader oriented Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History of People and Events,* Revised 3rd ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991).

feeling of dislocation reverberated as a result of rapid technological advancement that Alvin Toffler named "Future Shock."[57] Sigmund Freud, Albert Einstein, and Karl Marx revealed forces beneath the surfaces of psychology, physics, and history. Ether, chloroform, and antibiotics transformed medicine. Urbanization and Industrialization reordered society, and political instability caused the largest migrations of people the world had ever seen.

Despite such monumental shifts in society, Dorothy Sands enjoyed a childhood of privileged innocence. Dorothy was the second eldest child, and her siblings included Benjamin Franklin Phipps Sands (1891), Donald Phipps Sands (1895), Mary Powell Sands Thompson (1896), Walter Edgar Sands (1900), and Lydia Phipps Sands Rice (1910).[58] As a child, Dorothy Sands engaged in dancing lessons; ice-cream birthday parties;[59] and occasional diversions, such as an extended trip to an aunt's home in Cincinnati;[60] and theme-parties for neighborhood friends.[61] Dorothy attended the prestigious Peabody Grammar School and then the Latin School, adjacent to Harvard University campus.

The Sands boasted no particular background in theater, although a theatrical streak seems to have run through the family. Dorothy's mother, Lydia Phipps Sands, participated in church-related pageants, festivals, and children's plays throughout her life. Dorothy's younger sister, Mary, would later join Dorothy at Radcliffe in collegiate productions. After graduation, and in addition to a full-time career as

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[57] Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Random House, 1970).
[58] MrTrees.com, "Lydia Phipps—Index," http://www.mytrees.com/ancestry/Massachusetts/Married-1890/Ph/Phipps-family/Lydia-Phipps-he000931-650.html (accessed August 26, 2015).
[59] "Other North Cambridge News on Page Three," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Mar. 28, 1903.
[60] "North Cambridge Porter's Station and Vicinity, City Notices," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Sept. 2, 1905.
[61] "North Cambridge," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Feb. 5, 1910.

secretary to the president of the prestigious, all-female Mills College, Mary Sands Thompson remained a lifelong amateur actress. Dorothy's father, Frank ("F.E.") Sands, held a Christian mistrust of theatre. However, even he indulged the dramatic when he helped develop theatrical programming after taking over the organization of Cambridge, Massachusetts' ten-year (alcohol) abolition "jubilee" activities.[62]

As a member of a prominent family, Dorothy appears in local social columns early and often. She received her first dramatic notices in April 1907 at the age of fourteen as the mistress of ceremonies and carrier of the eponymous role in "Mrs. Jarley's Animated Dolls"—an entertainment aimed to raise money against the North Avenue Congregational Church's debt, under the auspices of the Ladies' Benevolent society (Dorothy's brother Donald played her page and Mary a singing doll). The *Cambridge Chronicle* noted of the precocious teenager, "nothing more pleasing could be imagined than this charming young girl whose beauty and self-possession won the hearts of all."[63] The *Chronicle*'s encomium presaged similarly worded reception throughout Sands' career. The young performer assumed an early and easy place in the public spotlight, whether presenting flowers during Lincoln Day observances,[64] hosting a cobweb party,[65] serving on the theatrical planning committee at the Latin School, or raising money for tuberculosis by performing in a three-act play called *Sisters* at a local venue, the Newtowne Club Hall.[66]

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[62] *Ten No-license Years in Cambridge: A Jubilee Volume* (Cambridge, MA: The Citizen's Committee, 1907), 207.
[63] "Animated Dolls," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Apr. 20, 1907.
[64] "Lincoln Day Observed," *Cambridge Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1906.
[65] "North Cambridge, Porter's Station and Vicinity, City Notices," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Nov. 10, 1906.
[66] "Will Aid Tuberculosis Camp," *Cambridge Tribune*, Dec. 10, 1910.

In 1911, Sands matriculated to Radcliffe College, located one block northeast of her home on 22 Avon Street.[67] College life appears to have offered the same, almost disconcerting, lack of obstacles as her childhood. *The Cambridge Sentinel* breezily reported, "Miss Dorothy Sands, a popular North Cambridge young lady, and a sophomore at Radcliffe, is taking a prominent part as a member of the Radcliffe Glee Club."[68] In addition to immersing herself in campus performing groups, like the Glee, Idler, and Dramatic Clubs, Sands found her way into the classroom of America's leading theater pedagogue, George Pierce Baker. Baker founded the Harvard Theatre Collection at Harvard University Libraries in 1901, established the Harvard Dramatic Club in 1908, and, when the Harvard Corporation would not let him develop a playwriting major, helped found the Yale School of Drama in 1925, where he taught until two years before his death in 1933.[69]

Baker's legendary "47 Workshop" represents Sands' first formative theatrical influence. The workshop began as graduate-level seminars, "47" and "47a," in Harvard University's English department. Baker intended these courses to create an American voice in playwriting.[70] Baker took only about ten to twelve playwriting students from across the United States, so his charges inevitably assumed the moniker

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[67] The Sands' home predated the Radcliffe College Quadrangle, which Harvard University established in 1901, when Dorothy was eight. The Quadrangle functioned as the women's college residence hall, and is distinct from Radcliffe Yard. No longer Harvard University's women's college, Radcliffe College today houses the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the Women in America, and the prestigious Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study.

[68] "North Cambridge," *Cambridge Sentinel*, Oct. 26, 1912.

[69] Baker's legacy also merits focus from theater scholars, as no definitive study on Baker or the Workshop exists. The cavernous 47 Workshop archives at Harvard Library are, *George Pierce Baker Papers, 1866-1940* (MS Thr 639), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

[70] For an engaging summary on the 47 Workshop as seen through the experiences of novelist Thomas Wolfe, see Chapter III of David Herbert Donald, *Look Homeward: A Life of Thomas Wolfe* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1987), 65-102.

"Baker's Dozen."[71] In order for the laboratory to function, Baker formed an associated 47 Workshop company, and sought talented and devoted actors, of whom Sands was the most important. Sands became a founding member, and subsequently participated in the company during each of her undergraduate semesters as a Radcliffe College student (graduating in 1915), as well as for nine years after her graduation (through 1923), serving as star actress, rehearsal director, and tour manager.

As Baker's lead performer and factotum, Sands helped shape future American voices, such as playwrights Eugene O'Neill; Philip Barry; future Federal Theatre Project director Hallie Flanagan; and the North Carolina native, novelist Thomas Wolfe, who attended Baker's workshop after completing his Master's at Harvard. Sands directed ("coached"), tour managed, or otherwise assisted Baker, but appeared most prominently as an actress, in productions that include Philip Barry's first play, *A Punch for Judy* (1921), and Thomas Wolfe's class project, *Welcome to Our City* (1923), which he later worked into one of the most celebrated American novels of the twentieth century, the deeply autobiographical *Look, Homeward Angel* (1929).[72]

For Sands, 47 Workshop offered a role model for play development, which she would later apply when creating her own work. The concept of a playwrights' company implied a dramaturgical space between page and stage, and therefore aligned with live performance—versus approaching theater as dramatic literature. As Sands later reminisced,

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[71] Donald, *Look Homeward*, 66.
[72] The play version, which Wolfe had originally titled "Niggertown," offers a window into a deeply conflicted, post-Reconstruction South (and Wolfe's own racism), Thomas Wolfe, *Welcome to Our City: A Play in Ten Scenes,* ed. Richard S. Kennedy (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983).

> With the author seated beside him (for the play was the thing), Mr. Baker would use the actor to experiment, to try to discover the means of expressing an idea which the playwright had not made clear. Often the actor had to create a part that was only indicated or play a badly constructed scene in order that the audience's reaction might prove to the author the need for clarification of the character or the rewriting of an act.[73]

The existence of the Workshop also presupposed playwriting's status as a teachable art: the 47 Workshop was, in fact and simply, a workshop. In a tract reprinted in 47 Workshop programs and brochures, Baker argued, "The 47 Workshop is not in the usual sense a theater. It has no wish to revolutionize anything. It masks no scheme for a civic or community theatre. Its main purpose is to try out interesting plays written in the courses in Dramatic Technique at Harvard University and Radcliffe College."[74] Baker created a safe working space that prefigured today's pre- and off-Broadway play development cycle, and marks, arguably, the starting point for developmental dramaturgy workshops in the United States.

Sands also learned to subordinate individual effort in service to a higher vision. Baker declared, "The fundamental principle of The 47 Workshop—and to this it had held steadily throughout its history—has been that everyone from the director to stage hands must co-operate in putting the play upon the stage as the author sees it."[75] Importantly, Baker used a company structure in order to develop authorial

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[73] Dorothy Sands, "Of the 47 Workshop and its Training in Acting," *Radcliffe Quarterly*, Feb. 1961, 19-20.
[74] George Pierce Baker, "The 47 Workshop" in *The Quarterly Journal of Speech Education* 5, no. 3 (May 1919): 185. Shortened versions of this essay appear on multiple Workshop 47 documents and publications in Baker's archives at the Harvard Theatre Collection.
[75] Baker, "The 47 Workshop," 186.

voices. As a 47 Workshop flier stated, "What is needed to round the play into final shape is just what the author is unable to get, an opportunity to see the play adequately acted before an audience sympathetic yet genuinely critical."[76] Baker taught theory to his charges as well, but always placed emphasis on praxis. In his playwriting textbook based on a series of his lectures to the Boston-based Lowell Institute in 1913, Baker wrote, "This book treats drama which has been tested before the public or which was written to be so tested. It does not concern itself with plays, past or present, intended primarily to be read—closet drama. It does not deal with theories of what the drama, present or future, might or should be."[77] The point of play development was playability, an invaluable lesson for Sands' future career.

The 47 Workshop also functioned as the first crucible in which Sands transmuted her native talent into a functional toolset. Baker's pedagogy relied on the ability of playwrights to see and hear their work enacted with full production values, which provided them the opportunity to revise their work based on real-time feedback. Consequently, Baker required actors and actresses who could mount productions quickly, adapt characterizations on the fly, and subsume their own egos in favor of evolving play scripts. Baker demanded a no-nonsense clarity. The cardinal "Rules for the Company" included nuts and blots concision: "1. PICK UP CUES QUICKLY. 2. ENUNCIATE DISTINCTLY 3. DON'T CONVERSE. Act. 4. GIVE EACH SPEECH COLOR AND SPEICAL VALUE, THUS SENDING YOUR CHARACTER ACROSS THE AUDIENCE. That is: Aim at 1. Clearness.

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[76] Ibid.
[77] George Pierce Baker, *Dramatic Technique* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.: Boston, 1919), 1.

Characterization. Swiftness [uppercase and underline in original]."[78] Above all, actors had to be quick on their feet. The Workshop generated many talented performers, but Sands blossomed under Baker's mentorship.

Most of the 47 Workshop performances occurred on Radcliffe campus in Agassiz House, a small auditorium with semi-circular orchestra-level seating and a modest upper gallery, still in use today. The small stage does not have a backstage space or greenroom. Instead, a door on the back wall off stage right opens directly onto a handsome hardwood and paneled ballroom that was the living commons for Radcliffe's all-female student body.[79] The architecture of the theater served as a visual metaphor for Sands' experience of theater at Harvard/Radcliffe. Dramatics blended into campus life. Sands took leadership roles in campus musical and dramatic clubs, as well as remaining active in the Latin School, North Avenue Congregational youth and drama groups and fundraisers, and enjoyed the company of her younger sister and fellow thespian, Mary.[80]

After her graduation in 1915, Sands stayed in the Boston/Cambridge area, exemplifying the expression, "big fish in a small pond." Upon her graduation from Radcliffe, the Sands family moved down the block to stately 44 Avon Street, a manse replete with cliché late-Victorian trappings—from stately dormers to the Irish serving

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[78] Typed document on 47 Workshop letterhead, George Pierce Baker Papers, 1866-1940 (MS Thr 639), Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[79] Special thanks to Elizabeth Dean, Assistant Technical Director of Agassiz House Theater, for a personal tour of the facility.
[80] *The Cambridge Chronicle* and *The Cambridge Tribune* ran several dozen pieces on the Sandses, and Dorothy in particular, from the 1890s through the early 1930s, mostly in the society and local news columns. See the searchable Cambridge Public Library, "Historic Cambridge Newspaper Collection," http://cambridge.dlconsulting.com/ (accessed September 7, 2015).

maid.[81] Sands continued to perform, assist, and produce 47 Workshop activities as well as appear in fundraising events for her mother's church and varied civic events. After taking classes at the prestigious School of Expression, founded by elocutionist Silas Curry, in Boston, she joined the school's faculty in 1922, where she led "dramatic work" and supervised renovation of their studio theater.[82]

Despite her successes, by the early 1920s cracks began to appear in the veneer of Sands' Cambridge idyll. For example, not appreciating the necessity of written contracts, Sands received a lower salary than she understood the School of Expression's director to have promised, and only Baker's intercession resolved the issue.[83] Sands may have begun to feel a growing sense of restlessness. According to family sources, Sands received and turned down marriage proposals, apparently unwilling to close the door on the life of a full-time actress.[84] Sands continued to work, but her activities have a sense of marking time. She began receiving summer adjunct teaching offers, such as the University of Montana.[85] Local newspapers began referring to Sands' "readings" at local events, in the vogue of literary readers

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[81] The Clark "Blue Book" series for Cambridge, MA lists the Sands at 22 Avon Street until 1915 and 44 Avon Street for 1916. Sands graduated in 1915, and she and Mary appear to have lived at home after leaving school, along with other relatives at the house.
[82] "School of Expression Opens 40th Term," *Cambridge Tribune*, Aug. 26, 1922.
[83] Dorothy Sands to George P. Baker, Dec. 6, 1923; George P. Baker to Dorothy Sands, Dec. 11, 1923; Dorothy Sands to George P. Baker, Feb. 29, 1924, *George Pierce Baker Papers, 1866-1940* (MS Thr 639), I.A.1: General Correspondence, Folder 2414, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University. The Curry School Director, George Patton, ultimately left his post for unrelated misconduct.
[84] Email correspondence with Sylvia Paxton, Sept. 18, 2015.
[85] H.G. Merriam Western Union Telegram to Dorothy Sands, Jan. 24, 1924, *George Pierce Baker Papers, 1866-1940* (MS Thr 639), I.A.1. General Correspondence, Folder 2414. Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Merriam, the chair of University of Montana's English department offered Sands $352 for nine weeks to teach two courses and stage a play, a sum just below $5000 in 2016 dollars.

of poetry and classic texts.[86] A decade later, Sands would canvass the country along established Lyceum and Chautauqua circuits, which featured dramatic readers for moral uplift in small towns across the heartland. At this point, however, her readings occurred only within Boston/Cambridge.

By 1923 Sands was approaching thirty, almost the exact mid-point for life expectancy for American women in that year.[87] Against her family's moral objections to professional theater, Sands finally chose to leave Cambridge. Baker himself had already engaged in negotiations with Yale to co-found and head the Yale School of Drama. Although his departure took Sands by surprise, perhaps she had intuited his restlessness.[88] Baker advised Sands to take a lead in a touring production before moving to New York, in order to bypass a break-in period of Broadway walk-

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[86] For example, the lead-in, "The successes of Miss Dorothy Sands as a dramatic reader…" in "The Chronicler," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Feb. 26, 1921. Sands read in local venues as well as in the family's church, as when she gave the featured "Easter reading," "North Congregational," *Cambridge Tribune*, Mar. 31, 1923.

[87] In 1923, the life expectancy was 56.1 for men and 58.5 for women, see University of California at Berkeley, "Life Expectancy in the USA 1900-1980," Department of Demography, University of California at Berkeley, http://u.demog.berkeley.edu/~andrew/1918/figure2.html (accessed November 16, 2016). Sands lived to 87.

[88] Sands scrawled a note to Baker upon the news of his departure,

Dear Mr. Baker,

At two this morning John came rushing in with 'The Times'————!

I'm thrilled for you!
I congratulate Yale!
I gloat over Harvard's shame!
I despair over Radcliff's tragedy!
I grieve for The Workshop.
I suffer pangs over previous memories!
I glory in your golden opportunity.
I hope that at last your dreams may be realized.

I pledge anew the deepest loyalty I know and an undying devotion for what you yourself are for all you've done for me and for your [sic] going to do at Yale.

As ever,

Dorothy Sands.

Dorothy Sands to George P. Baker, Nov. 26, 1924, *George Pierce Baker Papers, 1866-1940* (MS Thr 639), I.A.1. General Correspondence, Folder 2414, Harvard Theatre Collection, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

on parts.[89] Sands took the starring role in a financially unsuccessful, yet (according to her correspondence with Baker) artistically lackluster 1923 tour of future Pulitzer Prize-winning author Martin Flavin's *Children of the Moon*.[90]

Sands' letters to Baker while on tour reveal the anxieties, backstage drama, and professional heartbreaks of a starry-eyed, albeit late-blooming, ingénue. In particular, her missives express the melancholy of the road, as well as the thrill of developing a lead role. Sands confided to Baker, "This is a curious Christmas day, alone in my room looking out there at the snow on Detroit house-tops and steeples and bill-boards. The snow, my packages and chimes playing [sic] help a little make it possible to believe it is Christmas. Naturally I should like to be at 44 Avon Street to-day [the Sands family's address], but the thought that I can play Jane [the female lead in *Children of the Moon*] again to-night—completely reconciles me."[91] Regardless of its artistic shortcomings, the tour introduced Sands to a larger world, and included appearances in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, and Philadelphia. After the tour ended, Sands returned to Cambridge, but only briefly. Having tried on the mantle of a professional actress, she could not resume her old costume as Cambridge's favorite daughter. She had left home once, and perhaps felt something along the lines of the title of her classmate, Thomas Wolfe's, second great novel, *You Can't Go Home Again*.[92] In 1924, Sands followed a trail to New York, forged by Baker's alums, and the next phase of her chameleon training: The Neighborhood Playhouse.

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[89] George P. Baker to Dorothy Sands, Dec. 11, 1923, *George Pierce Baker Papers,* Folder 2414.
[90] *Children of the Moon* was the first effort by Martin Flavin, a University of Chicago educated playwright and novelist. Flavin would win the Pulitzer Prize in 1944 for his novel *Journey in the Dark*.
[91] Dorothy Sands to George P. Baker, Dec. 25, 1923, *George Pierce Baker Papers*, Folder 2414.
[92] Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1940).

***The Neighborhood Playhouse (1924-27)***

As Baker's star pupil, Sands would have her choice of berths. The *Boston Evening Transcript* ran a whimsical piece in 1925, the year after Sands' arrival in New York, titled "Cartographia Bakeriana," with the dizzying sub-headline, "The American Sphere of the Defunct Harvard Workshop Set Forth in Line, Print and Symbol, According to the Old-Fashioned Artful Manner." The nautical-themed map provides a visual sense of the extent of Baker's legacy—47 Workshop alums in theatrical leadership positions in twenty-five states, as well a roster of New York playwrights, performers, designers, actors (by then, Sands heads the list), and managers.[93] New York figured as the obvious choice for rising talent, if for no other reason than the city teemed with Baker graduates. One of Baker's protégées, a writer named Roscoe Brink, mounted a New York production of a production of *Catskill Dutch*, set in upstate New York's farmlands, and invited Sands to join the cast. Sands had starred in Brink's piece in Baker's workshop in February 1923, and now agreed to play a supporting part on Broadway, a year and a half later, in May 1924. The New York incarnation appears to have compared unfavorably with Brink's production under Baker, and the show closed after seven performances.[94] Out of work in New York only momentarily, Sands connected with another Baker product, Agnes Morgan, the production manager and rehearsal director of an experimental

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[93] "Cartographia Bakeriana," *Boston Evening Transcript*, Jan. 16, 1925.
[94] Dorothy Sands to George P. Baker, Apr. 29, 1924, *George Pierce Baker Papers, 1866-1940*, Folder 2414. Baker responded to Sands on the abrupt closing, "Dare I hope that there was a row? You can well imagine, I think, that my enthusiasm for the New York theater, after the experience in the handling of the last two plays, is not marked, or likely to be lasting," George Baker to Dorothy Sands, May 13, 1924, Folder 2414.

theater company in the Lower East Side and Sand's next training ground: The Neighborhood Playhouse. Sands would join first as an apprentice, then full company member, and finally as headline star.

The Playhouse, located on Grand Street, two blocks south of the Delancy Street—the de facto border between 1920s Jewish and Gentile Manhattan—emerged out of the Henry Street Settlement, which social reformer Lillian Wald established in 1893 (Sands' birth year) to address the hardships of tenement life.[95] Henry Street vibrated with the artistic energies of incoming waves of Jewish immigrants, coming primarily from Southern and Eastern Europe. In addition to theater, Henry Street produced a generation of Modern Dance pioneers, such as Blanche Talmud, Anna Sokolow, Murray Lewis, and Alwin Nikolais. Sisters Alice and Irene Lewisohn founded the Neighborhood Playhouse in association with the Henry Street Settlement community in 1915 (the same year Sands graduated from Radcliffe), and led the Playhouse until they ran out of money in 1927.[96] The theater reopened as the Neighborhood Playhouse School in 1928 under new management. Acting teacher and Method Acting style co-founder Sanford Meisner joined the faculty in 1935, and the school has become synonymous with Meisner technique up until the present day.[97]

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[95] Lillian Wald (1867-1940) was born into a German-Jewish family in Ohio and initially trained as a nurse. In addition to founding Henry Street, she was a founding member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (1909), and also helped establish the Women's Trade Union League (1903), the National Child Labor Committee (1915), among other organizations and activities.
[96] Alice Lewisohn Crowley's memoire, *The Neighborhood Playhouse: Leaves from a Theatre Scrapbook* (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1959). See also John P. Harrington, *The Life of the Neighborhood Playhouse on Grand Street* (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 2007).
[97] The school's web page is, The Neighborhood Playhouse, "The Neighborhood Playhouse—School of the Theatre," http://neighborhoodplayhouse.org/ (accessed May 1, 2014).

In the 1920s, The Neighborhood Playhouse, along with the Washington Square Players and the Provincetown Playhouse, led the American response to the Little Theater Movement, a trend in theater to reject grandiose, nineteenth-century spectacle melodrama in favor of psychological realism and emotional intensity, in smaller venues.[98] The movement began in the 1880s, when impresario André Antoine opened the first season of the *Théâtre Libre* ("Free Theatre") in France on a subscription basis, allowing him to bypass censorship and produce experimental work by playwrights like August Strindberg and Henrik Ibsen. Otto Braham spearheaded a similar impulse in Germany called the *Freie Bühne* ("Free Stages"), and Jacob T. Grein founded England's Independent Theatre Society, which produced George Bernard Shaw. The movement peaked when Russian directors like Nemirovich-Danchenko and Konstantin Stanislavsky developed acting systems to tackle the psychological demands of playwrights like Anton Chekov.[99]

As directors in the van of theatrical innovation, the Lewisohns provided a conduit for Baker protégées, including playwrights, performers, designers, critics, and backstage professionals. To take one of many examples of the artistic flow between Boston and New York, the Playhouse produced *Makers of Light* in 1922, by 47 Workshop graduate Frederic Lansing Day, a piece that Sands performed at Radcliffe's Agassiz Theater in 1921.[100] In her memoire, Alice Lewisohn writes that

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[98] "Little" really did mean little: the Little Theatre in New York (built in 1912) held 299 people. The private theater of the Great Swedish playwright August Strindberg held 80. As opposed to 3000-seat halls, these intimate spaces focused more detail on the actor versus industrial-scale mechanical effects. Richard Leacroft and Helen Leacroft, *Theatre and Playhouse: An Illustrated Survey of Theatre Building from Ancient Greece to the Present Day (*London: Methuen, 1984), 137-40.

[99] See Oscar G. Brockett and Franklin Hildy, *History of the Theatre, Foundation Edition* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2007), 357-70.

[100] "Makers of Light Vigorous: Life is Pictured Relentlessly in Frederick L. Day's Drama," *The New York Times*, May 24, 1922.

although she was aware of acting schools in New York and apprenticeships in traditional stock companies, "except for Professor Baker's 47 Workshop at Harvard, there was no center of training for all the related crafts of the theater."[101] Whether or not Lewisohn's assessment was correct, this is apparently what the company's co-founder thought. Baker's program was too prominent to ignore.

Consequently, when George Baker's star actress presented herself to the Playhouse, she must have seemed a natural fit. Sands also symbolized Baker's influence. She maintained correspondence with Baker, and met with him whenever he traveled to New York. For example, in 1925, the year after Sands joined the company, Baker paid homage to the Playhouse for its ten-year anniversary, including giving a speech onstage praising the company's vision and leadership.[102] Alternatively, when Baker left Harvard, Dorothy Sands and fellow 47 Workshop-alum, Playhouse manager Agnes Morgan, traveled to Boston together to give speeches at his farewell dinner.[103]

Sands seems to have reveled in the day-to-day intensity of a working player. She became a full company member with the Neighborhood Playhouse in 1924, and remained until the company's collapse in 1927. She benefited from this experience in two respects. First, Sands had the chance to further her range by appearing and starring in cutting-edge productions across cultures and styles. These opportunities encompassed roles in an English adaptation of a Sanskrit drama, *The Little Clay Cart* (Mṛcchakaṭika) (1924), which included immersion into Sanskrit drama aesthetics and live musicians playing ragas; a Sheridan English comedy, The Critic (1925); the

[101] Lewisohn Crowley, *The Neighborhood Playhouse*, 101.
[102] Harrington, *The Life of the Neighborhood Playhouse*, 9.
[103] "Workshop Presents Baker with $1,199," *The Harvard Crimson*, Jan. 20, 1925.

American premiere of James Joyce's psychological drama, *Exiles* (1925); the first English performance of Sloyme Ansky's seminal Yiddish play, *The Dybbuk* (1925-26); a staging of a Hayden operetta entitled, *The Apothecary* (1925-26); a Helen and Granville Barker translation of Gregorio Martínez Sierra's Spanish comedy, *The Romantic Young Lady* (1926); the "Isabella" stock character in a *Commedia dell'arte* interlude (1926-27); the love interest in a Symbolist satire about the circus by French-Polish writer Alfred Savoir, *The Lion Tamer* (1927); and the female lead in a Constructivist/Expressionist piece about disaffected youth in the Jazz Age, *Pinwheel* (1927).

Second, Sands had the chance to train and perform with a repertory company, an uncommon organizational structure in American theater at that time. Operating more like a full-time ballet company than a run-of-the-show theater environment, Playhouse ensemble members lived and breathed their work. Their routine included a daily company class, a full day's rehearsal, and then evening performances. As Lewisohn writes,

> Each day began early with technical work in voice and movement, then a pause for lunch, followed by rehearsals for the new production and very often follow-up work on the current bill as well as work on some specialized problem, for the production always required an individual touch in speech, song, language, or racial idiom. Strenuous as the year was, the group thrived on it, nor had there ever been a better esprit de corps. Something electrical evolved out of that daily experience.[104]

[104] Lewisohn Crowley, *The Neighborhood Playhouse*, 172-73.

Three seasons' worth of the kind of work Lewisohn describes would have given Sands' technique a razor's edge. Looking backward from 1929, *The Nation*'s Joseph Wood Krutch lauded Sands and her fellow players' work with the Playhouse, claiming, "No other New York institution so consistently insisted upon acting in contradistinction to the mere exploration of types and personalities and it made of its most talented members something very much like the super-marionnettes [sic] dreamed of by [theater theorist and visionary Edward] Gordon Craig."[105] For Sands, the experience was transformative.

She appears to have thrown herself into her work, and critics praised her contributions. In the *Lion Tamer*, Sands played the acrobat Arabella, "with a charm and attractiveness beyond belief."[106] Even in negative company reviews, Sands was dependable. For example the *Chicago Tribune* rated Sands' interpretation of the lead role in *Pinwheel*, as well as her co-star Marc Loebel, "effective," whereas "the rest of the cast are just drifting columns in the rear."[107] In a 1926 reprise of *The Dybbuk*, *The New York Times* counted Sands' portrayal of the mother-in-law character, Freda, among the "telling performances."[108] In her personal scrapbooks, Sands carefully chronicled each of her productions with the Playhouse, underlining references to her performances in notices and reviews, and always included her three years with the company in her future resumes and bios.[109] However, the regular season Playhouse

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[105] Joseph Wood Krutch, "Drama," *The Nation*, May 15, 1929. Craig envisioned robot-like performers, whose technical capability, void of limitations, could enable productions bound only by the imagination.
[106] R.C.S., "The Suburbs of Columbia," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Oct. 14, 1926.
[107] F. Freeland, "Mrs. Pat Steps Down from her Pedestal," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 13, 1927.
[108] "Amusements," *The New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1926.
[109] Dorothy Sands scrapbooks, Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library, MWEZ + n.c. 25,447; MWEZ + n.c. 25,449; MWEZ + n.c. 4641 #3.

performances were the opening act for Sands, who came to prominence once she discovered her true métier: impersonation.

### *The Grand Street Follies (1925-29)*

Some combination of natural facility, Bakers' crucible, and the demands of repertory theater came together for Sands, and she found that her acting skillset allowed her an uncanny ability to impersonate celebrities. This capability catapulted her to Broadway headline status. While at the Neighborhood Playhouse, Sands began participating in a series of Playhouse-sponsored revues called the *Grand Street Follies*. The *Follies* parodied the outgoing year's Broadway season, and proved popular with audiences and critics alike. The Playhouse's ensemble presented seven seasons of *Follies*, including 1922 and from 1924-29. The Playhouse hosted these roasts at their own theater until the company's demise in 1927, at which point the *Follies* relocated to the Little Theater on 44th Street and continued as an independent entity, although with largely the same structure and personnel. The 1928 and 1929 *Follies* editions occurred at the Booth Theater, which is significant since Sands would premiere her first one-woman show there in 1932.[110] Sands participated in the 1925-29 *Follies*, and became co-stars with Playhouse actor Albert Carroll, serving as a role model for junior members of the cast, including then-newcomer Vera Allen and the *Follies'* young choreographer and future Hollywood legend, James Cagney.[111]

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[110] The best summary of the *Grand Street Follies* is still Margaret M. Knapp, "Theatrical Parody in the Twentieth-Century American Theatre: 'The Grand Street Follies,'" *Educational Theater Journal* 27, no. 3 (October 1975): 356-63.
[111] For quick reference to cast lists, see IMDb, "Grand Street Follies," http://ibdb.com/search.asp (accessed March-May, 2014).

The *Grand Street Follies* included music, dancing, and spoofs of popular plays and stars. By all accounts, Carroll and Sands were astonishing mimics, which allowed for multi-layered comedy. For example, in one skit, Sands and Carroll abused the visionary German theater director Max Reinhardt, who led the Little Theatre movement in Germany (*Folksbühne*—literally "People's Stage) and whose stage version of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* had proven popular on Broadway in 1927. Consequently, the 1927 *Follies* presented a scene from *Romeo and Juliet* in the style of Reinhardt, with the Montagues and Capulets feuding over the price of New York subway fare, Carroll speaking Romeo's lines in German, and Sands playing the iconic sex-starlet Mae West as Juliet, appearing through holes cut in the subway steps.[112] In another scene, Sands impersonated an impersonator, Canadian-born British actress, Beatrice Lillie, and sang songs to penguins at the North Pole.[113] As these examples suggest, the *Follies* depended on recognition humor, referencing Broadway stars and productions. *Follies* audiences would have enjoyed feeling that they were the "in" crowd in being able to "get" the rapid-fire jokes.

In a *piece de resistance*, Sands parodied Elinor Glyn—the original "It" girl, and point of departure for Joseph Roach's classic study on the nature of celebrity and charisma, *It*.[114] In a playful offering, Roach paraphrases Glyn's animal-magnetism-inflected 1927 articulation of "it" as, "a certain quality, easy to perceive but hard to define, possessed by abnormally interesting people."[115] For Roach, Glyn-style charisma originates from inscrutable realms, although materializes through

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[112] Knapp, "Theatrical Parody in the Twentieth-Century American Theatre," 360.
[113] "The Suburbs Columbia," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, July 26, 1926. A rare error on Sands' part: penguins only inhabit the South Pole.
[114] Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007).
[115] Roach, *It*, 1.

materiality, such as hair, accessories, clothes, flesh, skin, and bones.[116] In Sands' 1927 *Follies* skit, Sands impersonates Glyn as the officiator of a Hollywood personality contest. Finding the competition lacking, Glyn gives the award to herself.[117] Roach omits any mention of Sands, although her skit indicates an awareness of the vapidity of celebrity even as society observers like Glyn were engaged with laying out its precepts.

The parody also illustrates how the *Follies* cast, especially Sands (drawing on Baker's workshop model), conceived and developed their scenes. In what is presumably an earlier draft of the Glyn sketch, Sands penned the end of the scene in a communitarian spirit. Glyn says,

> I find myself deeply stirred by this lavish display of 'It': So stirred, in fact, that I am unable to award the prize with my usual cool detachment. Permit me, therefore, to divide it equally among all the contestants. And before I withdraw to my bungalow for a dose of asperin [sic], let us sing together our Hollywood song in praise of my great discovery: (Song—'It'—by all) [in Sands handwriting, the stage direction: 'after watching these dear clever boys & girls'].[118]

The earlier version carried an agitprop quality: the sharing of glory, veneration of youth, and a rousing song. Since the final version featured Glyn giving herself the

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[116] Roach also uses the study to propose the notion of the "deep" eighteenth century to complement the traditional "long" eighteenth century, which spans the Glorious Revolutions of the 1688 until the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. For Roach, the deep eighteenth century marks the origins of still-running narratives, like slavery, colonialism, and modern celebrity. Therefore, the deep eighteenth century is, "not merely a period of time, but a kind of time," 13.

[117] "Grand Street Revue Gay in Uptown Debut: 'Follies of 1927'' Opening at Little Theatre Marked by Speed and Spontaneity," *The New York Times*, June 1, 1927. See also Long, "The Art of," 192-93.

[118] Loose paper in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,556.

award, perhaps we can assume that narcissism won out as the skit's object of ridicule, an easy target in for "Roaring 20s" New York.

The *Follies* spared no one, even the Neighborhood Playhouse itself. For example, the *Follies*' cast spoofed their own landmark production of *The Dybbuk*, and obliquely mocked *Pinwheel*'s faddish championing of 1920s Soviet-style "Constructivism," the Soviet movement based on the artistic abstraction of mechanical devices. The *Follies* put on a scene from an imagined Constructivist rendition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, listed in the program as an "Example of the Sympathetic Elastic Theatre," in which, "Little Eva, Topsy, Uncle Tom and Simon Legree enact their sentimentalities and villanies across a stage cluttered with meaningless junk in the modernistic spirit."[119] There was no such thing as the "Sympathetic Elastic Theatre." Rather, the overwrought phrase lampoons the successive waves of avant-garde trends that Playhouse itself helped bring to American stages. The onstage clutter might have served as a visual metaphor for the accumulating baggage and silliness of rapidly turning art fashions, and the use of blackface in the *Follies*' burlesque of *Uncle Tom* may have been political.[120]

In performance, the flexibility of the repertory-trained players dazzled spectators. Famed *New Yorker* illustrator Al Hirschfeld composed a study of the cast in action that graced the full front page of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times*

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[119] J. Brooks Atkinson, "Frivolity in Grand Street," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1926.

[120] A deeper reading of the Playhouse's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* spoof might reveal a critique of blackface minstrelsy generally. Politically the Neighborhood Playhouse was an ally to African-American organizations. The Playhouse offered physical space for some of the NAACP's inaugural meetings, for example. Also, the NAACP approached the Lewisohns to finance a never-realized film retort to *Birth of a Nation*—D.W. Griffith's 1915 epic of a lost South that characterized the KKK as crusading paladins, riding in defense of white female virtue under siege from black bestiality. See Robert Zangrando, *The NAACP Crusade against Lynching, 1909-1950* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1980), 33-34, cited in Lynne Greeley, *Fearless Femininity by Women in American Theatre, 1910s to 2010s* (New York: Cambria Press, 2015), note 174.

in May 1928.[121] At the same time, the *Follies* succumbed to a characteristic (though baffling) tendency in sketch comedy to measure broad spans of mediocrity. In a fit of journalistic pith, a *Columbia Daily Spectator* critic, reviewing the 1927 *Follies* edition, opined, "The bad parts—and there were bad parts—were very bad."[122] Making the same point, *The Nation*'s Joseph Wood Crutch wrote that the 1929 season, "occasionally crosses over to the wrong side of the mysterious line which separates the careless spontaneity of the best burlesque from the embarrassing antics of the funny man who half realizes that he is only making a fool of himself."[123] Nevertheless, few criticized the *Follies* for playing safe.

For Sands, the *Grand Street Follies* provided a platform for the culmination of her apprenticeships with Baker's Workshop 47 and The Neighborhood Playhouse. Her pitch-perfect impersonations astonished audiences and critics alike. For example, the waspish *Spectator* critic pined for Sands' portrayal of actress Jane Cowl, a melodrama actress who achieved notoriety by playing Juliet on Broadway in 1923 for 1000 consecutive performances, "Miss Sands seemed to have at her fingertips every trick used by Miss Cowl—gestures, the look in the eyes, the posture, the use of the fingers—everything."[124] In a similar vein, regarding the 1928 *Follies*, nationally syndicated humorist Robert Benchley concluded, "after Dorothy Sands has done her

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[121] Al Hirschfeld illustration (full front page), *New York Herald Tribune*, May 27, 1928, Sunday edition.
[122] "The Grand Street Follies," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 23, 1927.
[123] Joseph Wood Crutch, "The Grand Street Follies," *Nation*, May 15, 1929, 594.
[124] "The Grand Street Follies," *Columbia Daily Spectator*, May 23, 1927. Also qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 131-32.

imitation of Ina Claire you can go back and finish dinner."[125] Sands, as they say, had arrived.

Sands seemed to explode with energy. For example, in the 1927 *Follies*, in addition to the Elinor Glyn skit, Sands wrote lyrics for a prison musical scene and sang as a prisoner; impersonated Jane Cowl; assumed the guise of a long-careered Broadway starlet, Isabelle Irving Crosman as "Lady Fanny Flounce" in a conflation of two Barrymore hits—*School for Scandal* and *The Rivals*; spoofed Laura Hope Crewes, a leading character actress in 1920s and 1930s film (she played Miss Pittypat in "Gone with the Wind"); and sang "The Naughty Nineties" (music by composer Mex Ewing) in the guise of an early twentieth-century musical hall star, "Floradora Fay."[126] The other *Follies* programs demonstrate a similar depth and versatility.

The targets of the *Follies*' caricatures seemed to have enjoyed Sands' attentions as much as Broadway audiences. According to playwright and *New Yorker* contributor Arthur Kober, Sands maintained connections and sightings with stage and screen stars. Kober claims that Jane Cowl, the American stage and film star famous for lugubrious roles, sent her husband, secretary, *and* chauffeur to see Sands impersonate her. Haidee Wright, an English-born Broadway character star, came in person to see Sands portray her as the sleepwalking Lady MacBeth. Florence Reed, a well-regarded stage actress and later film star (including the 1934 film version of

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[125] Robert Benchley, "Drama Criticism," *Theater* 4, no. 2 (1973): 64-78, originally printed in *Life Magazine*, "Summer Evening Hints," July 12, 1928. Ina Claire was a leading comedic actress on Broadway and also an astonishing mimic, which adds another layer of satire to the Follies' take: imitators imitating imitators.

[126] The number became a short film with Swedish opera sensation Jenny Lind (nicknamed "The Swedish Nightingale"), first called "Floradora Girl," then "Production #478," and finally "A Lady's Morals," see Frank W.D. Ries, "Albertina Rasch: The Hollywood Career," *Dance Chronicle* 6, no. 4 (1983): 286.

*Great Expectations*) might have helped Sands with her makeup.[127] In fact, in the summer of 1928 the *Follies* held a "professional matinee" performance at the Booth Theatre and invited those impersonated to attend.[128] Whether Sands had such chummy relationships with the targets of caricatures outside of professional contexts is almost beside the point. The 1920s were roaring, and everyone sought to be in on the fun.

Sands achieved her greatest triumph in the *Follies* by imitating the sultry and scandalous actress Mae West. Apparently, Sands' West was so successful that audiences made a point in seeing both West in her 1928 production of "Diamond 'Lil,'" and then Sands as West as "'Lil" in her concurrent Follies spoof. According to Kober, when Mae West saw Sands play her as Diamond 'Lil, West supposedly said, "Gee! I must be pretty good!"[129] Bizarrely, Dorothy Sands' archives at the Harvard Theatre Collection contains a "Diamond 'Lil" doll that West appears to have given Sands for the occasion.[130] Sands successfully parodied dozens of Broadway and Hollywood actresses, but West became her signature caricature.

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[127] Alfred Kober's piece, "Profiles," appears in Sands' archives at Harvard University Libraries, *Dorothy Sands papers*, circa 1932-1977, Box 2, Houghton Special Collections, Harvard Theater Collection. The piece profiles Albert Carroll in a left column, and Dorothy Sands on the right on each page, numbered 5 and 7. Unfortunately, the corners, which might have contained more source information, are torn. Based on references in the piece to Sands' appearance in *The Seagull*, and her upcoming *Follies* season, Kober must have written the piece in May, 1929 (the piece does not appear in 1929 issues of *The New Yorker*, however). The same feature, with a slightly changed ending, and only featuring Sands, appears without author credit as, "A Breathless Survey," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*," May 5, 1929, Sunday edition.

[128] Audience members included performers Madge Kennedy, Haidee Wright, Helen Hayes, Sylvia Field, Aline MacMahon, Mae West, Earle Larimore, Rose MacClendon, and Frank Wilson. "Professionals See 'Grand Street Follies,'" *The New York Times*, June 23, 1928.

[129] Ibid.

[130] *Dorothy Sands papers*, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Special Collections, Harvard Theater Collection, Cambridge, MA. The artifact is truly surreal. About 12" in height, the doll wears West's red dress, blonde curls, and pearls. The doll also comes with a photocopy of a cartoon of the doll, unsigned. There is no way to corroborate that the doll came from West, although the *New York Times* article cited in note 78 reports that West saw Sands in 1928, and Kober makes a reference to the doll in his piece cited in note 77.

Life began to imitate art in in 1928, when West's propensity to test censorship laws led to her threatened arrest for *Pleasure Man* (and the fifty-six cast members' actual arrests). Rumors emerged that West's manager approached Sands and offered her $1000 a week to fill in for West in the case of the star's incarceration. Sands supposedly declined the offer.[131] *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* cooed, "she [Sands] did not think that stepping into Mae West's shoes would give her pleasure."[132] The *Eagle* writer sought to champion Sands' virtue against West's questionable morality, "That was foolish of her [Sands' decision to decline the payday], I should say, but it makes admiring the girl very easy."[133] The story feels apocryphal, and Sands herself may not have had anything to do with the newspaper stories. However, the tale illustrates a mythology beginning to surround to Sands, and underscores the close association the show-going public had between Sands and the objects of her parody. Sands transcended her role as a player, comic, and mimic. She had become a Broadway star in her own right.

***Stranger in a Strange Land: Whiteness and Jewishness in the 1920s***

Sands' experiences in New York transmuted her from a George Baker talent into a virtuosic professional with Broadway star. The repertory company lifestyle served as a crucible that forged Sands' already creditable craft, and the range of styles in which she performed broadened her adaptability. However, Sands' time with the Neighborhood Playhouse and *Grand Street Follies* may also have helped shape her

[131] Long also reports this story, which she accepts on face value, Long, "The Art of," 196-97.
[132] Arthur Pollock, "Plays and Things," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 11, 1928.
[133] Pollock, "Plays and Things."

subsequent solo work in an inadvertent way. As a Boston Brahmin Gentile in the Lower East Side, Sands stuck out in ways unique to her fellow ensemble players. To quote from a Judaic source, Sands was a "stranger in a strange land" (Exodus 2:22). The experience of being an interloper might have served to reaffirm her own heritage, which would carry implications into her dramaturgical and historiographical choices in her one-woman shows.

Despite its status as a hotbed of theatrical innovation, Dorothy Sands would have been hard pressed to find a more incongruous cultural context for her to inhabit than the Neighborhood Playhouse. Physically, the theater resided at 263 Henry Street, near the intersection Grand and Pitt Streets in the heart of the Lower East Side, two blocks south of the Delancy Street, the de facto Jewish/Gentile border. Reformer and nurse Lillian Wald founded the Henry Street Settlement in 1893 to provide social services, arts programming, and health care in response to the ravages of poverty she saw around her. Functionally, the Neighborhood Playhouse emerged as the centerpiece of the Settlement's arts programs. Second Avenue, parallel to Broadway (in every sense), featured dozens of Yiddish Theater troupes, and acquired the label, "The Jewish Rialto."[134] The Playhouse provided a gateway for gentile fans, practitioners, and uptown critics. Culturally, the Playhouse helped express the artistic energy of the Jewish immigrant tenement experience.

In 1920s New York, Sands' Boston Brahmin origins would have differentiated her from her Jewish colleagues not only in terms geography and social class, but in racial terms as well. In the present, Jewishness (in most circumstances)

[134] The "Jewish Rialto" meant the Yiddish theater district, whereas "Rialto" originally referred to the central market and warehouse district in Venice. Perhaps coincidentally, in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock asks, "What news on the Rialto" (1.3.31-32)

dissolves into whiteness.[135] In the 1920s, however, Jewishness functioned as distinct racial category, bordered by both overseas and domestic trends. In Europe, Adolf Hitler rose to power primarily through racial hated of Jews. He formed the Nazi Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*) in 1920 and wrote his manifesto, *My Struggle* (*Mein Kampf*) against a perceived international Jewish banking conspiracy in 1923 (the year before Sands moved to New York), and became Chancellor of Germany in 1933 (the year Sands' premiered *Our Stage and Stars*—her revue of American theater history). Hitler framed his "Final Solution" of exterminating Jews and Gypsies in explicitly racial terms, following decades of academic efforts to formulate hierarchical typologies of the world's races.[136]

Domestically, Jewishness helped perform the work of defining whiteness, especially in northern cities. As cultural theorist Mai Ngai notes, the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924 (the year Sands joined the Playhouse and also the same year Hitler was released from prison), "drew a new ethnic and racial map based on new categories and hierarchies of difference," and defined Jews an undesirable raced category and set quotas on their entry into the Untied States.[137] In the 1920s, immigrant "ethnic" groups, including (and not limited to) Jews, served as racially marked others against which white Americans primarily defined their whiteness in

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[135] "Whiteness" here conforms to Richard Dyer's conception of the term: as a lack of awareness of racial markings due to socio-political, economic, and historical privilege, "other people are raced, we [white people] are just people," Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1. Naming and describing whiteness can illuminate landscapes of power, though racial categories shift over time and cultural context. As Ruth Frankenberg claims, whiteness is, "historically constructed and internally differentiated," Ruth Frankenberg, Intro. to *Displacing Whiteness: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1997), 4. Sands would have brought her racial markings with her from Boston.

[136] Pseudo-scientific racialization begins with responses to Darwin, but the application of hierarchical evolution to social structures perhaps began in academic contexts with Joseph Frazier's classic, *The Golden Bough: A Study of Comparative Religion* (1890).

[137] Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2004), 3.

northern cities. Following W.E.B. Du Bois' economic analysis of race, Marxist scholars Theodore Allen, Alexander Saxton, and David Roediger have demonstrated that waves of Poles, Italians, Jews, and others performed the work of working class "others."[138] As Roediger notes, "working class formation and the systematic development of a sense of whiteness went hand in hand for the US white working class."[139] In New York in the 1920s, Jews were a racial immigrant group that helped white workers define their own identities.

Sands' presence in a tightly-woven, predominantly Jewish repertory company provides a fascinating test of the Jewish/Gentile and Boston/New York boundaries. Sands' archives offer little insight into racial hazing she might have experienced, but other sources do. Tellingly, Sands is present in her near-total absence in Playhouse co-director Alice Lewisohn's memoirs, even though she had become a leading member of the repertory company and headline-star of the *Follies*.[140] However, she does appear in the love letters between fellow Workshop 47-alum, novelist (and rabid anti-Semite) Thomas Wolfe and Playhouse designer, Aline Bernstein. Wolfe and Bernstein (Jewish and nineteen years Wolfe's senior) had an explosive, passionate, and ultimately tragic affair lasting from 1925 until 1936. Like a moth to flame, Wolfe made Bernstein his *La Belle Juive,* a nineteenth-century character type Charles Erdman summarizes as, "the semi-exotic object of ill-fated Gentile desire."[141] The

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[138] Theodore Allen, *The Invention of the White Race, Vol.1* (London: Verso, 1994); Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (London: Verso, 1990); David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London: Verso, 1991).
[139] Roediger, *Wages of Whiteness*, 8.
[140] Lewisohn's erasure of Sands was so complete that she is also largely absent from Harrington's otherwise comprehensive survey of the Playhouse.
[141] Harley Erdman, *Staging the Jew: The Performance of an American Ethnicity, 1860-1920* (New Bruswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1997), 9.

unlikely couple seemed condemned to their relationship. Finally, as if completing the operatic formula, Wolfe died in 1938 from the orthodox Bohemian sickness, tuberculosis.[142]

Wolfe and Bernstein's letters to one another contain references to Sands, which hint at the cultural stereotypes that Sands might have confronted. On September 8, 1926, Bernstein gossiped to Wolfe, "Dorothy [Sands] looks more spinstery than ever, and is panic stricken at the new part she has to play in Le Dompteur [*The Lion Tamer*]."[143] Bernstein sounds nonplussed that Sands' won the Arabella character in *The Lion Tamer*, the lead female role and manipulative nymphomaniac. On September 17, Bernstein wrote to Wolfe,

> …Dorothy is playing the lady, and she is as alluring as a dish of cold cream of wheat. I am dressing her in vile shades of pink. She came in to see me this evening for a little while, with [47 Workshop friend and theater critic] John Mason Brown. The very first thing they both asked for you [sic]. I was so glad to be able to even open my mouth about you. I am afraid I talked of you too much. They heard you had gone abroad forever. I hope not. They didn't stay long. They were on their way to some where [sic] else. Dorothy is really a nice girl thought [sic].[144]

Bernstein allows that Sands exceeded her expectations in an otherwise uninspiring production, "Dorothy gives a remarkably good performance as Arabella but that is all

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[142] Often ill, Wolfe contracted a respiratory influenza in the summer of 1938, then pneumonia, and finally died of a cerebral hemorrhage caused by blood-born tuberculosis germs associated with the pneumonia, *Thomas Wolfe Interviewed, 1929-1938,* eds. Aldo P. Magi and Richard Walser (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985), 121.
[143] Aline Bernstein to Thomas Wolfe, Sept. 8, 1926, in Suzanne Stutman, "The Complete Correspondence of Thomas Wolfe and Aline Berstein" (PhD diss., Temple University, 1980), 56.
[144] Aline Bernstein to Thomas Wolfe, Sept. 17, 1926, in Stutman, "The Complete Correspondence of Thomas Wolfe and Aline Berstein," 70.

it is. Not a bit of excitement and sicklied o're [sic] with the pale cast of Cambridge. Thank God this is the last dress rehearsal tonight, I don't want to sit through it again watch how like a wig Dorothy's wig looks [sic], and how remote the possibility is that [Sands' co-star, Albert] Carroll is a charmer."[145] Apparently, Bernstein does not detect smoldering sexuality from Carroll either.

More substantively, Bernstein's phrase, "sicklied o're with pale cast of Cambridge," teems with texture. The line alludes to the "To Be or Not to Be" speech in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (3.2), in which Hamlet considers suicide (or, if the director chooses for Hamlet to direct the monologue at Ophelia, the prince's attempt to plant the idea of suicide in Ophelia mind—in fact, she kills herself in Act IV). In Shakespeare's play, Hamlet concludes his speech with, "and thus the native hue of resolution / is sicklied o'oer with the *pale cast of thought*" [italics added] (*Hamlet*, 3.1.85-86). Coming at the end of the end of his meditation, Hamlet explains, "thus conscious does make cowards of us all" (*Hamlet*, 3.1.85-86). Hamlet reasons that, despite the overwhelming evidence why we should want to escape this world, our minds prevent our instincts from holding sway, and therefore we lack the courage to claim death.

Bernstein's play on Hamlet's monologue operates on multiple levels. Suicide threats constituted part of the drama of the Bernstein-Wolfe relationship train wreck. Consequently, Bernstein's reference to suicidal depression in Shakespeare read as a form of dark humor or latent threat, in addition to working as clever theater joke. She might be making light of her suicidal depression, while simultaneously reminding

[145] Aline Bernstein to Thomas Wolfe, Oct. 6, 1926, in Stutman, "The Complete Correspondence," 117-18. Also quoted in shortened form in Harrington, *The Life of the Neighborhood Playhouse*, 248.

Wolfe of the potential consequences for misbehavior. At the same time, she may mean that that Neighborhood Playhouse's production of *The Lion Tamer* with Dorothy Sands and Albert Carroll was so boring she wanted to kill herself—a figurative jest that takes on sinister subtext because Bernstein herself really did at times want to kill herself.

Bernstein's play on *Hamlet* also underlines the conflict between intellectualism and emotionalism, symbolized by Baker's Boston and the Playhouse's New York, and personified by Sands. Bernstein changes Hamlet's phrase "the pale cast of thought" to the alliterative (a Shakespearean hallmark) "pale *cast of Cambridge*" [italics added], in order to characterizes the cast in *The Lion Tamer* as bloodless intellectuals, incapable of impulse. Moreover, Bernstein's use of "cast" may refer to the literal presence in the *cast* (noun) of multiple "pale" (white) Workshop 47 alums, but can also mean that, by extension, Baker's specter *cast* (verb) a pale influence upon on an otherwise robust and earthy community, like a sallow light depressing a warm space. Furthermore, a "sicklied" pale implies pallor. That is to say, the Playhouse production of *The Lion Tamer* had succumbed to an anemic lack of eroticism, characteristic of (white) New England primness. Sands exceeded Bernstein's expectations since a "cold bowl of cream of wheat" is, of course, also white. Using both visual and biological imagery, and inverting racial tropes of Jews as a degenerate and sickly race, Bernstein construes *whiteness* as an infectious disease that extinguishes theatrical and sexual heat.

Bernstein's comments on Sands' performance in the Playhouse's *Lion Tamer* production do not match the critical impressions offered by gentile journalists.

Perhaps Sands was aware of backstage natter, since she gave pride of place to a dumbfounding review in one of her scrapbooks. The piece is worth quoting in its entirety both for its gall and as a counterexample to Bernstein's spleen:

> And while we're admiring the ladies, let's chalk up a white mark for Dorothy Sands' performance in 'The Lion Tamer' at the Neighborhood Playhouse. I have no doubt that, offstage, Miss Sands is the most demure of little somebodies. But she is called upon to act a little animal of a blonde bareback rider in a French circus, and, in the course of her amorous career, to emerge from a room where she has just spent thirty-six hours with a professional seducer and then and there make kittenish love to a painful English nobleman, who is consumed by jealous remorse over getting her into that bedroom. I honestly believe that I have never seen any woman on the stage make herself so seductive as the small Sands does in those moments. She has sex appeal in that scene that a lady guinea pig would be proud of. I admonish all actresses who are cast for vampire parts to journey down to Grand Street and try to solve Dorothy Sands's [sic] style. This is an indelicate but sincere tribute.[146]

On the one hand, the comparison of a stage professional's sexual energy to "a lady guinea pig" demonstrates a divergence between past and present journalistic standards. However, the metaphor also underscores the slipperiness of identity politics. Differing audiences come away having seen separate performances.

On an interpersonal level, Bernstein does not appear to have had personal issues with Sands. In her letters to Wolfe, Bernstein makes repeated references to

[146] *New York Telegraph*, Oct. 10, 1926, in Dorothy Sands Scrapbooks, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,447.

Sands visiting her, presumably during varying states of Bernstein's mental health, and apparently out of genuine concern. Despite her hateful commentary in letters to her lover, Bernstein repeatedly uses "nice" to describe Sands. Sands knew and worked with Jews both at Baker's Workshop, and in daily work at the Neighborhood Playhouse in the persons of the Lewisohns, Agnes Morgan, as well as individual designers, production staff, and cast members. Sands' whiteness functions as a surrogate for Baker, and white America at large, at least for Bernstein.[147]

In a larger sense, though, do Bernstein's remarks reflect a general sentiment in the Playhouse towards outsiders? If so, how did Sands react? *De rigueur*, Sands' archives are opaque. In a photograph at the Billy Rose Theater Collection, dated 1927, Sands serenely sips from a porcelain teacup, ensconced in a rattan chair near a well-tended fire, backgrounded by Adrina Peterkin, a Henry Street resident who provided low-cost food and drink to Playhouse members (see Appendix).[148] In the photo, Bernstein leans in, as if to chat with Paula Trueman, a stage and film star and then-regular in Playhouse and *Follies* productions. Helen Arthur, lawyer and manager for the Playhouse from 1915-27 (also manager of monologist Ruth Draper from 1929-39 and one-time partner of Henry Street founder Lillian Wald) peers at Sands, who stares straight ahead and out of the shot. The mise-en-scène appears staged to depict normalcy and gives no indication as to the complex interpersonal dynamics at play. Similarly, in an undated letter to her family, Sands wrote, "Last

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[147] Wolfe's comments regarding Sands in his letters to Bernstein unfortunately fall beyond the scope of his study, though they might offer future work insights into Wolfe's complicated racism, anti-Semitism, and regionalism.

[148] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,447. "Mrs. Peterkin, the hostess of the Traktir coffee-house, where members of the audience as well as the Playhouse family can dine at small cost, is another resident whose personality is as agreeable as the meals she provides," Lewisohn-Crowley, *Neighborhood Playhouse*, 81.

night we did another Jewish benefit. They sold bonds before the show and got enuf [sic] for a bomber to be named for their society. The audience impact to the show is terrific. Everyone is very happy, of course, and it is a wonderful feeling to know that we'll run for a few more months anyway."[149] Based on these sources, life in the Rialto ran smoothly, although the impression seems pat.

Perhaps more candidly, Sands wrote to her parents after the opening of an ill-fated farce, *All the Comforts of Home* (May 25-30, 1942). Sands reports that the producer, Mollie Steinberg, apparently overcome with the stress of the production, arrived at the theater only moments before curtain, then fainted, and then left, "She was shaking like a leaf & couldn't talk without weeping, poor thing ['dear' and 'thing' are written overtop one another]." However, Steinberg's departure left the cast in a lurch. Sands wrote, "That's the Jew of it. Not to keep the chin up. She [Steinberg] didn't show up until before the show last night, and the rumor is that she had been drunk." Sands' comments to her parents appear to imply that she felt a stronger Steinberg would have overcome her ethnic deficiency: she "o't to have stood by."[150] Sands may have been code-switching for her Brahmin parents, but the slur by no means falls outside of mainstream attitudes or rhetoric towards Jews, even five months after America's entry into World War II against Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. Sands' available archives do not present indications of anti-Jewish sentiment, but her comments to her parents do not indicate that she felt completely welcome in her Henry Street-based community either.

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[149] Dorothy Sands to her parents, n.d., however Franklin Roosevelt began issuing war bonds in Fall 1940, Dorothy Sands Scrapbooks, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theater Collection, MWEZ + n.c. 25,444.

[150] Dorothy Sands to her parents, between May 25-30, 1942, Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,444.

Perhaps the most eloquent commentary on Sands' response to her Playhouse experience lays in her choice of an exclusively Anglo-American canon within her solo work, described in the following two chapters. Sands' experiences in the Rialto appear to have torn away her white privilege, inevitably prompting her to reaffirm her own heritage when positioning her solo work. In part, as the following two chapters will show, Sands kept an eye towards her target markets. Women's clubs in the Midwest probably would not have known what to make of avant-garde Yiddish theater from Moscow, for example. Still, artists like Ruth Draper and Cornelia Otis Skinner made extensive use of gross caricature and racial stereotypes in their solo work, but Sands did not broach subaltern theater traditions or identities in her solo performances at all.

The absence of ethnic and racial caricature (or even mention) is striking since Sands lived and breathed in an environment of heighted racial consciousness and awareness of multi-cultural theatrical traditions. She created characters with minoritarian identities, such as a Hindu courtesan's mother in *Little Clay Cart* or the nurse Freda in the first English production of the *Dybbuk*, perhaps the seminal Yiddish theater piece. For that matter, Sands had even played a tragic mulatto character back in 1923 in Thomas Wolfe's class project for George Baker's 47 Workshop, *Welcome to Our City*, which Wolfe later adapted into his acclaimed novel, *Look, Homeward Angel*.[151] In New York, Sands must have been aware of the Neighborhood Playhouse's alliance with the NAACP, and after a five years working relationship with the predominantly Jewish Playhouse and *Follies* personnel, would

[151] Thomas Wolfe, *Welcome to Our City: A Play in Ten Scenes*, ed. Richard S. Kennedy (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State UP, 1983), 74.

have been aware of outsider racial identities. Perhaps Sands omitted racial types from her work out of empathy, but more likely she came away from her experience in the Neighborhood Playhouse community, and its subtle or overt hazing, by reaffirming her own Anglo-American heritage.

***Chameleon at the Gate (1929-31)***

A decade of training under George Pierce Baker, three seasons as a repertory player in the avant-garde Neighborhood Playhouse, and four cycles as an *über-marionette* with the *Grand Street Follies*, brought her acting prowess to its zenith. She might have parlayed her comic icon status into dramatic renown if macroeconomic events had not precipitated her transition to solo performing. Nevertheless, history intervened. On October 29 and 30, 1929, the New York Stock Exchange lost almost one-fourth of its value. The United States plunged into the Great Depression, an economic, social, and political crisis that did not fully resolve until after the Second World War.

For a time, Sands weathered the economic devastation. From her last *Follies* show in 1928, until she launched her solo career in 1932, Sands parlayed her professional network and social capital to maintain a full performance calendar. In 1929, Sands appeared in the second American production of Anton Chekov's landmark play *The Seagull* (the first was in 1916 by the Washington Square Players) for a ninety-nine night run at the Comedy, Repertory, and Waldorf Theaters.[152] Under the direction of Russian émigré director Leo Bulgakov, Sands played Madame

[152] New York City Guide, "The Seagull," http://www.jimsdeli.com/theater/2008-2009/seagull.htm (accessed November 16. 2016).

Irina Arkadina, one of the play's four main protagonists. In a glowing review, *New York Times* critic J. Brooks Atkinson described the production as "sheer light," and praised Sands' performance, "As the vain actress with a bird-like brain, Dorothy Sands heightens her playing with remarkably skillful comedy that does not betray the part; she brings to it both vitality and meaning."[153] Similarly, Sands leveraged her experience with the Spanish comedy of manners piece *The Romantic Young Lady* at the Neighborhood Playhouse in 1926, to appear in the same play opposite famed Moscow Art Theatre star Maria Ouspenskya in 1930.[154]

Also in 1930, Sands appeared in a farce titled *Many a Slip* at the Little Theatre to critical acclaim. The *New York Evening Post* reviewer observed that, "Miss Sands is obviously having a grand time with this part," and that the "unusually competent set of actors" actors seemed almost overqualified for the script.[155] The Philadelphia-based *Evening Public Ledger* heralded Sands' depth (though reflecting gender tropes of the era),

> The focal point [of *Many-a-Slip*] is not, oddly enough, the girl or her advanced-thinking sweetheart, but the mother. This role Dorothy Sands does with admirable address, with the sophistication of a woman of the world, whose own marriage has ended in divorce, and with the dry quizzical humor that is native in some women when they are fortunate beyond their sex in having a sense of the humorous. It is an exceptional performance in its underlying sincerities, its feminine facility in minor deceptions, its aspects of

[153] J. Brooks Atkinson, "The Play, View of a Materpiece," *The New York Times*, Apr. 10, 1929.
[154] "Amusements," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 1, 1930. The article refers to Sands as the "winsome embellishment of the Neighborhood Playhouse and the Grand Street Follies."
[155] Wilela Waldorf, "Many-a-Slip," *New York Evening Post*, Feb. 4, 1930.

> the woman of breeding and experience set up on the happiness of her daughter.[156]

These and similar reviews praise Sands' comedic proficiency, often nodding to her past successes, but point to untapped potential. In addition to *The Seagull* and *Many a Slip*, Sands' other Broadway credits during this period include *The Stairs* (1927), *For Ladies Only* (1928), *Pleasure Bound* (1929), *Half Gods* (1929-30), *Rock Me Julie* (1931), and *The Royal Family* (1932)—a heady schedule for an out-of-work actress in the depths of the Depression.

Sands also extended her activities beyond urban confines. She spent an April-through-June season at the Westchester Playhouse in 1931, in a range of plays, some of which went on (with separate casts) to become successful movies. At Westchester, Sands played a gossipy shrew in a comedy about a local "gal" in trouble, *It's a Wise Child*; parodied Ethel Barrymore ("Julie Cavendish") in a jab about the Barrymore acting clan, *The Royal Family*; took the lead role in a dark comedy in which the Grim Reaper falls in love while on vacation, *Death Takes a Holiday*; appeared in a morality play about Wall Street greed, *Holiday* (written by Baker-alum Philip Barry, and directed by Playhouse-ally Agnes Morgan); played poet in a Depression-era, father-son tragicomedy, *Philip Goes Forth*; as well as the lead in English playwright Richard Sheridan's eighteenth-century burlesque on theater and acting, *The Critic* (again directed by Agnes Morgan). Sands also played in Voltaire's classic comedy,

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[156] "'Many a Slip' Shows Vagrant Philosophy of Young Radicals," *Evening Public Ledger* (Philadelphia), Mar. 25. 1930, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450.

*Candida*, and reprised her role in *The Romantic Young Lady* at the Playhouse at Locust Valley in Long Island.[157]

In 1932, Sands was thirty-nine years old when opportunities in New York finally ran out. Although film of her solo performances has not surfaced, a side project captures Sands just before the beginning of her decade-long hiatus from Broadway in favor of solo barnstorming.[158] Sands starred in a seven-minute "Vitaphone" comedic short called "Opening Night" (1931), in which she plays a grating society woman who is unable to locate her tickets.[159]

In the film's opening shot, the camera focuses on Sands' head, behind which reads the name of the premiere, "Hot Sands" on a placard. Sands' character spends most of the film trying to get past the teller saleswoman and the ticket taker. When her husband arrives and proves unable to get them into the theater either, Sands' character bursts into tears. She retrieves a handkerchief from her handbag, which causes the tickets to fall from her purse onto the floor. The couple finally enters the theater. As they triumphantly promenade down the central aisle, Sands takes in the scenery before exclaiming, "Oh! I saw this [play] in Poughkeepsie when it was called 'Cold Feet!'" The short is not a great work of cinematic art. However, its punch line depends on audience recognition of Dorothy Sands in order to make the connection from "Hot Sands" to "hot under the collar" to "Cold Feet," indicating her own celebrity.

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[157] Dorothy Sands Scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450.
[158] Sands' string of comedic spinster television parts and commercials began upon her return to New York after the end of World War II, but earlier media has not surfaced. Sands worked extensively in radio as well, but records of these roles prove elusive.
[159] "Opening Night," in *Vitaphone Cavalcade of Musical Comedy Shorts*, Disc 1, DVD (Burbank, CA: Warner Brothers Archive Collection, 2010).

In 1931, Sands carried star power. Nevertheless, the effects of the Great Crash finally caught up to even Broadway headliners and Sands' connections could no longer buoy her. Yet, "luck is where preparation meets opportunity."[160] In 1932, a young artist manager named James B. Pond, Jr. saw Sands deliver a lecture on comedy at the fashionable Cosmo Club on 13 East 40th Street in Midtown Manhattan, just east of the flagship building of the New York Public Library, and approached her with a proposition.

***Interlude (1932-1942)***

Thus far, this chapter has followed a linear path through time. At this point (and despite the preceding cliffhanger), the narrative will skip a decade, since the period from 1932 until roughly after the end of World War II will provide the focus for the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In particular, Chapter Two will offer additional biographical context for the life and work that gave birth to Sands' first one-woman show, *Styles in Acting* (1932). Chapter Three will engage in similar work for *Our Stage and Stars* (1933), and both chapters will conduct close readings of Sands' solo show scripts. The remainder of this chapter will chart the rest of Sands' biography, so as to provide a critical framing for the investigation of her solo work to come.

To restate, Sands does not seem to have experienced inactivity, usually an intrinsic component of a career in theater, between the end of the *Grand Street Follies* in 1928 and the creation of her first one-woman show in 1932 (or a lull at any point in

[160] Paraphrase from Seneca, favorite aphorism of Laurie Sanda, personal communication.

her career, for that matter). Even so, 1932 was like a starting gun. As the following chapter will show, by the end of a decade's worth of touring, Sands had hit every U.S. state, as well as overseas engagements in Canada, Mexico, England, and Germany as part of the post-World War II airlift program. If Sands kept a New York address throughout this period, she would not have seen it much. Her solo barnstorming days were everything that her first professional tour of Martin Flavin's *Children of the Moon* was not—artistically rich, financially remunerative, exhausting, and well received by audiences and critics alike. Sands' solo career sustained her both monetarily and professionally during the Depression years, and the majority of Sands' archival material, critical response, and play development notebooks studied in later chapters date from this era.

As the economy recovered in the 1940s, thanks to the stimulus of wartime military buildup, the nation experienced a post-war boom. As Broadway recovered, Sands returned to New York and gradually phased out her solo engagements. From that point on, she remained employed in New York productions (on and off-Broadway), regional theater, television and radio work, and teaching. She also stayed connected with her family, Radcliffe alumnae networks, and professional organizations, although she never married or had children, and eventually retired to an artist-oriented community along the Hudson valley, Croton-on-Hudson. Despite an impressive resume in her later years, Sands never again achieved her headline status of the late 1920s and 1930s, and her solo work left popular consciousness even within her own lifetime. Sands' change in fortune perhaps derives from macro-level

changes in American tastes and shifts in the entertainment industry, as the final section of this chapter now explores.

*A Shifting Landscape (1942-80)*

Although Sands continued to perform one-woman shows to occasional women's clubs, civic venues, and private events until the early 1950s, her barnstorming solo days ended in the early 1940s. Exhausted by the physical demands of the works themselves, the road, and perhaps lonely, Sands came back to New York as Broadway (and the economy in general), recovered as a result of the buildup to, and American involvement in, the Second World War. After almost a decade on the road, from 1933 until 1942, Sands came home. Based out of her residence in the historic apartment building Hotel Schuyler, centrally located in 57 West 45th Street, Sands lived a short walk from Broadway theaters, Times Square, Bryant Park, the New York Public Library, and the Museum of Modern Art.[161]

Sands returned to Broadway in *Papa is All* (1942), a three-act comedy about the Pennsylvania Dutch, directed by 47 Workshop friend and Neighborhood Playhouse ally Agnes Morgan, which ran for sixty-three performances. *All the Comforts of Home* (1942), a living room farce, lasted only eight shows. However, *Tomorrow the World* (1943-44), starring Ralph Bellamy and which Sands joined mid-production, clocked in for a money raining 500 performances.[162] In contrast to *Papa*

[161] Sands inscribed her address in notebooks at the Harvard Theatre Collection, as well as in letters in multiple scrapbooks at the Billy Rose Theatre Division. She resided at the Hotel Schuyler until ca. 1971, when she moved into her retirement community in artist-friendly Croton-on-Hudson, New York.
[162] IBDb Database, "Papa is All," https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-show/papa-is-all-6919; "All the Comforts of Home: https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/all-the-comforts-of-home-1199; Tomorrow the World," https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/tomorrow-the-world-1287 (all accessed November 19, 2016). Sands collected programs and clippings from these early shows in

*is All* and *All the Comforts of Home*, *Tomorrow the World* allowed Sands to flex her range, as the drama was about a former Hitler-youth member who moves to America to live with his uncle, an academic who is engaged to a Jewish woman, and who tries to bring the boy away from Nazism.[163]

Back in New York, Sands embarked upon a thirty-year second career (or third career, if you count her time in Boston). She had fourteen Broadway roles between 1942-70 (an envy-worthy resume in of itself) to add to her twenty-three from the 1920s and 30s, starred in summer regional theater productions, read for radio plays, and taught period styles for the American Theater Wing, the parent organization for the Tony Awards. Sands toured internationally with the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based American Repertory Company (ART), founded by Robert Brustein and associated with Harvard University, then under the direction of famed Washington, D.C. native actress Helen Hayes. Sands stepped in for Hayes she fell ill during a tour to Turkey.[164] Sands remained active in professional theater organizations, Radcliffe alumnae networks and scholarship fundraising.

After her return to New York in the 1940s, Sands also enjoyed a television career, which illustrates a fascinating disconnect with the rest of her oeuvre. Taking advantage of the emergence of nationally broadcast television programs filmed in New York, Sands was able to accept regular (if minor) roles without traveling to Los Angeles or interrupting her stage and teaching activities. Between 1949-66, Sands

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Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,557.

[163] *Tomorrow the World* became a black and white film in 1944, starring Fredric March, Betty Field, and Agnes Moorehead. The title comes from Hitler's pronouncement, "Today Germany, tomorrow the world." In the stage version, Sands played the boy's aunt.

[164] Sands collected clippings, programs, and related production information for the ART Ankara tour in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,562

had thirty-one television roles. The characters themselves were almost entirely cut from the same cloth: comedic spinster, governess, and otherwise Old Maid walk-on parts. For instance, she played Mrs. van Est, the neighborhood busybody in the episode, "Dreams" on *The Goldbergs* in 1955 and Mrs. Crummit, the dour mother of Jessica Tandy's lead character, on "The Confidence Man," as part of a TV series called *The Alcoa Hour* in 1956.[165] Whatever Sands' feelings about these opportunities, Sands performs her roles with gusto. As Mrs. Van Est in *The Goldbergs*, Sands skitters into her neighbor's house, adorned with short white gloves, short curly hair, and no shortage of interest for a good gossip. Speaking with affected diction, van Est fidgets and reacts with wide-eyed relish.[166]

A diminutive, energetic woman in her sixties and seventies, Sands looked the part of comedic spinster, although producers cast Sands in similar roles for radio, which is not even a visual media. For instance, as early as 1939, she played a minor role Sophocles' tragedy Alcestis for the National Broadcasting Company's series *Great Plays*.[167] In contrast, Sands played the title role on stage for the Cambridge, Massachusetts based Poets' Theater the year before, in 1938.[168] Also for NBC's *Great Plays* series, Sands appears on "Robert E. Lee" in 1941 as the governess who briefly interrupts the Southern general during a meeting to remind him to eat

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[165] IMDb, "Dorothy Sands—Filmography," http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0762307/ (accessed November 19, 2016).
[166] YouTube, "The Goldbergs—Dreams," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CvywDWYd9Q (accessed March 6, 2017).
[167] The major American radio stations regularly produced radio dramas from the 1920s until the peak of their popularity in the 1940s. Television cut into radio drama's market share in the 1950s. In 1939, radio drama casting would have been highly competitive.
[168] "Poet's Theatre Fills 'Alcestis' Final Cast," *The Harvard Crimson*, May 12, 1938.

breakfast.[169] In contrast to her radio roles, Sands continued to play major roles in live theater both on Broadway and in regional summer theater from the early 1940s up until the 1970s. In her final Broadway appearance, she co-starred in the mind-bending two-person show *Right You Are*, by experimental playwright Luigi Pirandello at the Roundhouse Theatre in 1972 at the age of 79.[170] In television and radio, however, she found herself typecast.

Impressionistically, to see and hear her in these television and radio cameos, Sands seems to imbue feisty busybody characters with aplomb. In 1951, she appeared on an episode of the CBS series, *Suspense*, a television program adapted from radio that filmed stories from classic writers like Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Dickens, and Agatha Christie, as well as contemporary writers like Roald Dahl and Gore Vidal.[171] In the episode "Suspicion" (starring Charlton Heston), Sands appears in two scenes as a society lady on a train, engaged in gossip with her friend. Sands' high-pitched, mannered prattle becomes so grating that the traveler sitting opposite eventually closes his newspaper and stomps out of the compartment. Sands' character and her friend lean forward, leading with their hats, hen-like, to watch the

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[169] Old Time Radio Downloads, "Great Plays, Robert E Lee," http://www.oldtimeradiodownloads.com/drama/great-plays/great-plays-41-03-30-robert-e-lee (accessed November 19. 2016).

[170] "In and About Town," *New York Magazine*, Sept. 18, 1972. Luigi Pirandello (1867-1936), was a prolific writer, whose works in Italian, Sicilian, and in English translation explored Freudian themes, and his plays helped lay the groundwork for twentieth-century Absurdist theater. His most well known work is *Six Characters in Search of an Author* (1921).

[171] For season information, see IMDb, "Suspense," http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0041061/ (accessed November 19, 2016).

man go.[172] Like her cameo as Mrs. van Est in the Goldbergs, her role in "Suspicion" hardly takes advantage of capabilities, although her eyes seem to twinkle mid-gag.

The presence of ageism in theater, and even more so in media entertainment, is an indubitable but well-worn thorn. On its face, Sands' experience with typecasting would not seem to offer new insights into an unjust but common experience for female performers. However, several factors may be at play in Sands' late career. After World War II, Sands might have begun to seem like a holdover from an earlier time. In a telling anecdote, Norris Houghton, theater educator at Vassar College from 1962-67, brought in stage professionals for his students, including Sands. Houghton brought in a Method teacher named Anne Revere, since "The search for truth in acting was her constant goal, and to her student she imparted the basic lesson that truth is more important than 'effects.'"[173] By "effects," Houghton meant vocal ornamentation and mannered gestures of nineteenth-century style, "But since technique cannot be disparaged, I next called in Dorothy Sands, a comedienne in the high classical sense, who balanced the class's diet by demonstrating how to get laughs just by raising an eyebrow."[174] In Houghton's (very mainstream) view of acting in the second half of the twentieth century, someone like Sands was a ringer, or specialist. Along with voice, stage combat, or stage make-up, Sands' skill sets had become electives, important for well-trained actors, but subservient to emotional truth revealed through Method concepts like super-objective,

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[172] YouTube, "Suspense (1949): 'Suspicion' starring Charlton Heston," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1eQc3TUE-eI&index=49&list=PLBsy4mW8B2c3NKV0Rs-ppDoqCXS51Ta-Z (accessed November 19, 2016).
[173] Norris Houghton, *Entrances & Exits: A Life in and Out of the Theatre* (New York: Limelight Editions, 1991), 288. See also, Eileen Sheehan, "Vassar Miscellany," Feb. 27, 1963.
[174] Houghton, *Entrances & Exits*, 288.

character building, and sense memory. To echo Houghton's metaphor of "diet," development of the inner life of characters is the meat and potatoes of acting (Anne Revere), whereas old-fashioned technique, like voice and body training (Dorothy Sands), are healthy but unpalatable vegetables.

Houghton's left-handed remarks about the refinement of Sands' "technique" indicate that Sands' gestural and/or vocal training no longer seemed cutting edge. Houghton still saw value in the wisdom to what Sands could teach her students—which is why she invited Sands to her class in the first place. At the same time, Houghton's delimiting view of Sands as a "technician" implies that she saw Sands as a living exemplar of the self-aware, nineteenth-century declamatory acting style. Houghton's view, apparently shared by casting directors in mass media who put Sands in minor "character" roles, seems paradoxical with Sands' unalloyed success as a shape-shifting parodist up until the end of World War II.

Perhaps Sands did retain traces of the late-Victorian theater world of the Barrymores, Sarah Bernhardt, and Ellen Terry. Her exemplification of nineteenth and early-twentieth century training systems might have been invisible to previous spectators since they were also part of that cultural space, but modern audiences perceived a difference. In other words, theatrical tastes had changed. Sands knew the Stanislavski-based tenets that took hold of American theater and Hollywood after World War II. As a full repertory member of the Neighborhood Playhouse, she helped bring psychological Realism to America. However, she had emerged from a theater world which valued a presentational style fit for unamplified caverns filled with distracted patrons, distracting prostitutes, and warbling "gallery gods" hurling

imprecations and objects from the upper balconies, and her body and voice retained the stylization of those times. On the other hand, as discussed above, Sands continued to win lead stage roles, so perhaps the difference lay in age and gender bias specific to media.

Even so, Sands' journey out of public consciousness relative to her previous prominence seems to call for more explanation. Sands resided in her Hotel Schuyler apartment until circa 1971, when she moved into a Hudson Valley-based retirement community in Croton-on-Hudson, New York. Sands passed away in 1980, by which time the 1920s had begun to move from memory to history in popular consciousness. The *New York Times*, which had published some of the most enthusiastic reviews of Sands' work, seemed to not remember who she was. The *Times* obituary reported that Sands "received a Tony Award in 1959 for her teaching of classical acting in the American Theater Wing's professional training program."[175] Sands did teach for the American Theater Wing, the parent organization for the Tony Awards, and they did provide a dinner and a plaque her service, but Sands' name does not appear on the rolls of past Tony award winners.[176] The *Times* obit contains obscure details, such as Sands' acting textbook, *21 Lessons in Acting*, that she co-wrote with Donald Keyes. Possibly, absent in-house information on Sands, the *Times* solicited an obit from one of Sands' family members. Today, the online Internet Movie Databse (IMDb) states that Dorothy Sands was primarily known for her work on *Evening Primrose* (1966),

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[175] Thomas W. Ennis, "Dorothy Sands, 87; On Stage 50 Years: Celebrated as a Mimic—Had Two One-Women Shows," *The New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1980. Long repeats this error in Long, "The Art of," 21, which passes on to Gentile, Cast of One, 100, and so forth.

[176] Gentile, following Long, also states that Sands "received an Antoinette Perry (Tony) Award for her teaching at the American Theatre Wing," 100.

*Pygmalion* (1963), and her 1931 Vitaphone short *Opening Night*.[177] In fact, Sands was a "Store Person" for the Steven Sondheim musical, *Evening Primrose*, and the straight-laced housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce, in the 1963 adaptation of Shaw's *Pygmalion*. The laughter of Sands' Mae West imitations for New York's 1920s glitterati had faded into memory.

In addition to a changing stage conventions and ageism, Sands' departure from popular awareness may stem from two additional factors. Sands was a creature of the stage and did not take steps to immortalize her solo performance legacy. She recorded her voluminous stage work in scrapbooks, but devoted little to media format beyond photographs. In contrast, solo artist Ruth Draper better ensured her legacy by producing studio albums of her solo shows, which are still available.[178] These albums inspired comedienne Lily Tomlin, when she was working as an impressionist in a coffeehouse in Detroit, for example.[179] Cornelia Otis Skinner (1901-79), whose solo works included *The Wives of Henry VIII* (1931), *The Empress Eugenie* (1932), and *The Loves of Charles II* (1933), published a long series of popular companion books to her stage work,[180] and she also made an audio recording of one of her shows.[181]

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[177] "Dorothy Sands," IMDb, http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0762307/ (accessed November 19). 2016.
[178] E.g., Ruth Draper, "Ruth Draper and Her Company of Characters: Selected Monologues," BMG Special Products B000BW37XY (CD), 2001; "More Selected Monologues: Ruth Draper and Her Company of Characters," BMG Special Products B000BVZ6LQ (CD), n.d.
[179] Young, *Acting Solo*, 47.
[180] Skinner's authorial output was impressive, and includes: *Dithers and Jitters* (with Constantin Alajalov) (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co, 1938); *Soap Behind the Ears* (with Constantin Alajalov) (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1941); *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* (with Jean Kerr). (Chicago: Dramatic Pub. Co, 1946); *Family Circle* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1948); *Nuts in May* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1950); *Bottoms Up!* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1955); *That's Me All Over: All the Favorite Absurdities from Dithers and Jitters, Soap Behind the Ears and Excuse It, Please!, Along with Tiny Garments*. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1956)*; Elegant Wits and Grand Horizontals; A Sparkling Panorama of "La Belle Epoque," Its Gilded Society, Irrepressible Wits and Splendid Courtesans* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962)*; Madame Sarah* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967); *Life with Lindsay & Crouse* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976).

The other factor that might account for the disappearance of Sands' legacy was a long-term shift in solo performance that displaced the legacy of women soloists in favor of (primarily) male solo artists (at least for the first two decades following the end of the War). In the 1930s, Sands and her fellow women artists were aware of each other and aware of their status as women soloists. In a 1934 *Christian Science Monitor* interview, Dorothy Sands said, "'There is really no word for us,'" in reference to "the one-woman performances which she and Ruth Draper and Cornelia Otis Skinner are famous for presenting."[182] Sands' claim is evocative. What does "no word" mean? Unlabed? Unknowable? In searching for an appropriate term, critics sometimes employed the term *diseuse* as a moniker for a female monologue performer. From the French *dire*, "diseuse" means something like, "she who speaks in an artful manner." Supposedly a newspaper referred to Skinner as a, "well-known *disease* [sic!]," a story Skinner delighted in retelling.[183] Although the mistake was probably a simple typographical error on the newspaper's part, the story nevertheless sums up an absence of terminology.

Sands' comments and the *Times'* impression of Sands' cohort as unique is striking because, as the Prelude of this study showed, Sands' generation marks a line of soloists extending back into the Victorian period. As Chapter Two will mention, Sands' own publicity materials for her one-woman shows compared her to contemporary monologist Cissie Loftus, as well as earlier women solo artists such as

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[181] Like Draper's recordings, remastered and available as Cornelia Otis Skinner, "Paris '90," Columbia DRG: B000087DS9 (CD), 2003.
[182] "One-Woman Repertory Theater Ideal Plan of Dorothy Sands, *The Christian Science Monitor,* Jan. 16, 1934.
[183] *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 2, 1944.

Gertrude Hoffman and Elsie Janis.[184] Rather than the start of a new tradition, Sands' cohort of women monologists might be better characterized as the autumnal season of a largely women-dominated art form, one whose ground was already beginning to give way. In his survey of monodrama in American theater, John Gentile characterizes women artists Cecilia (Cissie) Loftus, Dorothy Sands, Ruth Draper, and Cornelia Otis Skinner, as a placeholder group that, "began after World War I and ended with the one-person show renaissance in the 1950s."[185] Consequently, Sands' retirement from solo performance marks the end of an arc beginning with late-Victorian female stars and soloists, and ending with a shift in the 1940s and 50s from (primarily) female to (primarily) male solo performers. Women soloists would later "rediscover" their heritage, as Lily Tomlin did by finding old vinyl recordings of Ruth Draper. At mid-century, the gender shift (what Gentile refers to as the "Renaissance of the One-Person Show in America"[186] ) had the effect of erasure of women's solo legacies.

To illustrate this point, Cornelia Otis Skinner made an appearance as "mystery guest" on the television program "What's my Line" in 1959. Accessorized with mink stole, elbow-length gloves, knee-length dress, and lace headpiece, Skinner played the glamorous Broadway star. The three blindfolded celebrity contestants had little difficulty identifying Skinner. In fact, they used some of their questions to reveal that they knew the name of the play she was in, and even knew what the set looked like. At the end of the segment, Skinner apologized for "being so guessable." Quiz shows

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[184] "'Dorothy Sands: The Supreme Contemporary Mistress of Impersonation,' ca. 1930-40," American Memory, Redpath Chautauqua Collection, The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[185] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 96.
[186] Gentile, *Cast of One*, 118.

in the 1950s (or ever) may not have been entirely spontaneous, and average Americans may not have even heard of Skinner. Her "What's My Line" cameo told Americans they *should* know (but do not) Skinner as a celebrity, someone recognized and revered by the highbrow New York theater set.

The segment then took a revealing turn. Host John Charles Daly remarked, "I always wonder, you know, Miss Cornelia, when you…because I think probably the thing you love best is take off and do these one-'*man*' shows, in quotes, that you do." Skinner replied, "Oh don't be silly. Between that and being in a show in New York, there's no comparison." Incredulous, Daly pressed, "You'd rather be in New York?" Skinner replies, "Oh yes, far more…wonderful!"[187] Skinner's comment has to be understood with the caveat that she co-wrote the Broadway play she was starring in, and she was probably being polite. The fact that Skinner perceived that distancing herself from her status as a solo star was the appropriate gesture in 1959 is telling. Like Sands, Skinner could no longer hang her hat as a solo artist. As for the other members of Gentile's interwar cohort, Sands had returned to Broadway, Loftus died in 1943, Herford in 1952, and Draper in 1956. Sands' generation of solo artists had passed.

Women continued to perform solo work following the War, although for less remuneration and publicity. The gender gap persists into the present day. Among the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Solo Performance winners between 1984 and 2016 (the Tony Awards do not have a solo performance category), nineteen are men and twelve are women. Overall, of Drama Desk Solo Performance nominees, eighty-

[187] "What's my Line," #458, Season 10, Ep. 30, Host: John Charles Daly, Panel: Dorothy Kilgallen, Dore Schary, Arlene Francis, Bennet Cerf, aired Mar. 29, 1959.

nine are men and sixty-seven are women for the same time period, about a 25% difference.[188] Women can and do achieve unqualified success in solo form, examples of which appear at the end of this dissertation, suggesting that the landscape is set to move again. Sands, then, faded from the stage lights of popular consciousness (and subsequently, theater history) because of her association (justified or no) with the bravura technique of pre-Method theater; because of age-related bias regarding casting in mass media entertainment; and also because the ground on which her fame as a solo performer rested had shifted. Sands left behind an accomplished career, unheralded contributions to early twentieth-century American theater, and a rich solo oeuvre awaiting rediscovery.

[188] IMDb, "Drama Desk Award Outstanding Solo Performance," https://www.ibdb.com/awards (accessed November 19, 2016).

# Chapter Two: A Show of One's Own (1932-42), Act I – *Styles in Acting*

***Introduction***

The previous chapter traced Dorothy Sands' journey from Boston/Cambridge's favorite daughter to a New York headline star with a wide range, thanks to formative experiences with George Baker, the Neighborhood Playhouse, and the *Grand Street Follies*. This chapter introduces Sands' first one-woman show, *Styles in Acting* (1932), in which Sands presented her reconstructions of period monologues from the English stage to American cinema, from eighteenth-century Restoration Comedy of Manners through to the "Vampires" of the silver screen (Mae West, silent film star Theda Bara, and Greta Garbo). In these scenes, Sands impersonated present and past stars, working in the styles in which she presumed they would have performed, and introducing each scene with brief summaries of historical trends and changing theatrical conventions.

After setting the context for the opening of *Styles in Acting* (and its marketing strategy), the bulk of this chapter examines Sands' never-before-studied handwritten scripts, housed at the Harvard Theatre Collection. In doing so, this chapter will explain the significance of newly available primary source materials and the rationale for taking the 1932 incarnation of *Styles in Writing* as the source text for this dissertation's investigation. At the same time, because multiple versions of her scripts are now accessible across Sands' solo performance career, Chapter Two

ventures cautious analyses of changes in Sands' scripts as a way to glean insights into shifting audience composition and expectations.

### *A Big Fish in Pond's Pond*

As Chapter One indicated, Dorothy Sands was approaching the end of her opportunities in the Depression-decimated Broadway of the early 1930s. She continued to work in New York, acting, developing projects, and taking on speaking engagements. Even so, what happened next must have seemed like serendipity. In 1932, Sands delivered a lecture on comedy at the prominent women's Cosmopolitan Club in Midtown Manhattan.[1] Although she might have expected to see fashionable patrons, directors, or other performers in the audience, the thought that an artist manager in search of female monologists could be in attendance would have strained credulity. Nevertheless, this providence is precisely what happened.

Fortuitously for Sands, the audience member in question, James B. Pond, Jr., was hunting talent. In fact, Pond was attempting to carry on a family tradition. His father, Medal of Honor-winner Major James B. Pond, Sr. (1838-1903), had managed speakers after serving as a Union Officer during the Civil War.[2] Pond, Sr.'s, roster included Mark Twain in the 1860s, as well as booking lecture engagements for English statesman Winston Churchill and Africa explorer Henry Morton Stanley.[3]

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[1] Founded in 1909, the Cosmopolitan Club featured headline women writers, thinkers, artists, and activists. The Club moved from East 33rd Street to 44th Street and Lexington in 1914, and had just relocated to its current location at 122 East 66th Street when Sands spoke there in 1932.
[2] Major Pond and a business partner became involved with the Boston-based (James) Redpath Bureau in about 1874, and Pond opened the Pond Lyceum Bureau on 50 East 42st New York in 1879. See "Pond Lyceum Bureau," *The Lyceum Magazine*, ed. Ralph Albert Parlette, Feb. 19, 1919, 53.
[3] Pond, Sr.'s clients also included showman P.T. Barnum, educator and orator Booker T. Washington, reformer and statesman Frederick Douglass, author Arthur Conan Doyle, actress Ellen Terry, and

James Pond, Jr. (1889-1961) took over the bureau following his father's sudden death in 1903. What drew Pond, Jr. to the Cosmopolitan Club in 1932 remains unclear. However, upon seeing Sands speak, Pond must have been favorably impressed, as he signed her for representation. As Sands tells the story, "When Mr. Pond [Jr.] suggested that I do a one-woman show, I said 'No, that I really wanted to stick to the theatre.' He explained to me wisely that there wasn't much theatre then (it was a year ago last fall [1932]) and that I'd better make my own. I've been doing impersonations ever since."[4] In the same interview, she adds, "I am just an actress…I always had an ideal of a repertory theater, and not being able, in this day and age, to achieve my ideal, I made a repertory theater out of myself."[5] In this quotation, Sands points to financial exigency as the motivating factor in her decision to shift from New York theater to solo touring. Although little evidence exists to nuance Sands' account, given the macroeconomic context in 1932, this rationale seems plausible.

From Pond's perspective, Sands fit the type of talent he wanted. At the time Pond recruited Sands, he was already working with Bryn Mawr and Sorbonne-educated Cornelia Otis Skinner, referenced in Chapter One as one of Sands'

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abolitionist clergyman Henry Ward Beecher. In a twist of historical symmetry, just as James Pond, Jr. managed Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain's real name), James B. Pond, Jr. later managed Hal Holbrook's storied recreations of Clemens' shows. To the extent that Mark Twain was just as much a performance for Clemens as for Holbrook, the two Pond productions are on a deep level identical (see Gentile, 126-27). Definitive studies of either Pond are wanting. James Pond, Sr.'s papers are housed at, "James B. Pond Papers," William L. Clements Library, The University of Michigan.

[4] Margaret Ford, "How Dorothy Sands Takes Personalities Apart to See What Makes Them 'Click,'" *Boston Herald*, Jan. 7, 1934, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 4641 #3, qtd. in Linda Sue Long, "The Art of Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands within the Tradition of Solo Performance" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1982), 78.

[5] Ibid. Sands' theater experience from Baker's 47 Workshop to the Neighborhood Playhouse to the *Grand Street Follies* had involved ensemble-driven production. A social creature, solo work may not have been Sands' first choice as a working style. Her phrase, "A repertory theater…of myself," could refer both to building a organizational structure around herself, and also her solo show format in which she played multiple characters.

contemporaries. Skinner had been performing solo work since 1926, and in November 1931, Pond helped her launch her one-woman romp, *The Wives of Henry the VIII*, at the Avon Theater, located one block east of the Little Theatre (Sands' stomping ground for the *Grand Street Follies*) and one year before Sands' history-based solo production. Skinner's one-woman show involved a succession of historical female characters, as Sands' pieces would. Skinner's *Wives* program promised audiences, "selections from Miss Skinner's Repertoire of her Original Character Sketches" (presumably as a crowd-pleasing appetizer) and then the one-act itself, comprised of monologue scenes of Henry VIII's wives in chronological order: Catharine of Aragon (1525), Anne Boleyn (1536), Jane Seymour (1537), Anne of Cleves (1540), Katheryn Howard (1542), and Katherine Parr (1547).[6] No evidence has emerged whether Sands saw Skinner's production, but the physical proximity to Sands' areas of activity and the similarity in historical format to Sands' solo work suggest a connection, and possibly Pond's participation in conceptualizing one or both women's show concepts.[7]

On the other hand, regardless of inspiration from Pond and/or Skinner, Sands had a long-standing interest in historical reenactment. For example, in the summer of 1921, while still in Boston/Cambridge, Sands wrote, produced, and performed in a "Reminiscent Show" at the Agassiz Theater on Radcliffe College campus for a

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[6] Playbill, "The Wives of Henry Viii," http://www.playbill.com/production/the-wives-of-henry-viii-avon-theatre-vault-0000006281 (accessed November 16, 2016).

[7] Sands and Skinner did connect later, touring together in Skinner's production of George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* in 1939, perhaps in order to capitalize on the notoriety of pairing two solo artists (Sands received better reviews even though Skinner took the lead role). Sands devotes an scrapbook to the tour in her collections, Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,448. The Harvard Theatre Collection holds a hardcover edition of Shaw's play that Skinner inscribed to Sands' parents, thanking them for their daughter's participation in the tour, Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 2, Houghton Special Collections, Harvard Theater Collection, Cambridge, MA.

Harvard Glee Club reunion. She paid homage to the 1908 and 1911 cohorts by recreating a performance of the 1911 Glee Club with the help from 1913 and 1915 members. The *Radcliffe News* noted that Sands' ad hoc troupe, "gave a reproduction of itself [the 1911 show] as it had actually once appeared," and importantly, the paper wrote, "Old dresses of antiquated style and highly amusing coiffures made the number most entertaining."[8] As Chapter Four will demonstrate, material reconstruction and rehearsal exploration of costumes, props, and wigs served as a key component of Sands' dramaturgical process in her solo work. Although the 1921 Radcliffe event was an amateur production, the project nonetheless involved creating a crowd-pleasing historical reproduction of a past performance using staging and costume reconstruction, strategies Sands would re-employ a decade later for her one-woman shows.

Sands' dialogue with Pond eventually led to Sands signing with James Pond's bureau, by then located on 25 West 43rd Street, for the 1932-33 season. In so doing, she joined a roster of forty-eight explorers, authors, musicians, scientists, and animal trainers that were available for engagements. In a "Pond Bureau" brochure, Sands and Skinner enjoy pride of place in the "Entertainment" column, set off with larger headshots than the other talent, distinctive red font, and boxes around their descriptions (see Appendix). Spanish prince Infante Alfonso and "First Indian Mayor of Bombay," Vthalbai J. Patel, seemed to have commanded the highest fees under

[8] "The Reminiscent Show," *Radcliffe News*, June 22, 1921.

"World Affairs," and half a dozen adventurers boast smaller headshots under "Exploration."[9] In the flier, Sands' blurb reads.

> The famous impersonator of The Grand Street Follies tells the story of acting throughout the ages. Hers is a complete picture of the theatre from then to now. She gives you not only Styles in Acting, but Styles in Theatres, Styles in Costumes, Styles in Audiences, Styles in Emotion *in her Sensational Success* 'STYLES IN ACTING' A Great Show! [italics and uppercase in original][10]

The brochure demonstrates faith in a future product on Pond's part, since Sands would still have been developing *Styles in Acting* at the time of printing (and initial booking). Pond's copy omits mention of specific time periods in Sands' history, or even the range of cultural traditions in the show (she eventually settled on Anglo-American theater history), only that she will present the story of "then to now." Also, what "Styles in Emotion" might have meant seems unclear. Alternatively, the blub references styles in theater architecture, costuming, and audience in Sands' hit show. In fact, Sands did discuss material changes in theater experiences, and also audience composition across historical periods in her shows, though future publicity materials tended to highlight shifting acting styles.

Little record exists for the details of Sands' rehearsal process, such as where she might have found studio space, who offered her feedback, or how much Pond himself participated in production. However, once she had the basic structure of her show in hand (Chapter Four discusses Sands' play development processes) Sands began her solo performing career. Under Pond's aegis, *Styles in Acting* had two

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[9] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450.
[10] Ibid.

preview performances, one at the Cosmopolitan Club in New York on February 8, 1932 and another on April 1, 1932 at the Women's Club of Maplewood, New Jersey (a 1930 Georgian Revival mansion dedicated to cultural programming).[11] Subsequently, Sands premiered *Styles in Acting* to the general public on April 3 and 10, 1932, at the Booth Theatre on 222 W. 45th Street, the same venue she enjoyed where she had her success in the 1928 and 1929 iterations of the *Grand Street Follies*.

Sands spent the remainder of 1932 honing *Styles of Acting* while simultaneously developing her second piece, *Our Stage and Stars* (1933). In addition to testing and polishing *Styles in Acting*, Sands also used these early performances to accumulate critical endorsements. A later (probably 1933) Pond flier for *Styles in Acting* provides eight testimonials by east coast critics.[12] For example, the flier quotes *The New York Times*' J. Brooks Atkinson, who commends Sands' work as, "the most vivid sort of theatre history in existence—an illuminating evening with the gayest sort of caricatures," as well as *Vogue Magazine*, which christened Sands as, "the supreme contemporary mistress of impersonation, generously spiced with rich humor."[13] These critics were familiar with Sands' work on Broadway, the Playhouse, and/or the *Follies*, and securing their imprimatur would have been a logical first step.

Furthermore, the copy at the bottom back of the 1933 Pond Bureau flier provides insight into the marketing narrative Pond presented to presenters: the "capable, arresting, highly entertaining" Sands proved herself as "the most popular of

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[11] Dorothy Sands, Notebook 1: "Original Copies of my two one-woman shows: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932 and 'Our Stage and Stars or American Theatre Highlights' 1938," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[12] Dorothy Sands, Clipping File, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 26,058.
[13] The flier is also available on the Iowa Digital Library, "Dorothy Sands: the supreme contemporary mistress of impersonation," University of Iowa Libraries, http://digital.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm/ref/collection/tc/id/42547 (accessed Nov. 16, 2016).

the Neighborhood Playhouse family," but came into her own with the *Grand Street Follies*—"There was her metier [sic]." In other words, the flier asserts that Sands' progression from The Playhouse to the *Follies* prepared her way for an inexorable transformation into a solo performer. The flier concludes that now, "at last, she comes into her own" with *Styles in Acting*, in which Sands impersonates her way through theatrical history. In true showman style, Pond promises,

> …the perfect single-handed entertainment, with Dorothy Sands, ever lovely, parading before your eyes not only a catalogue of styles in acting itself from then to now, but giving you concurrently styles in theatre, styles in audiences, styles in the very costumes themselves. Here is a novelty that became an over-night sensation.[14]

A *fait accompli*, the marketing pitch went, Sands' solo interpretation emerged organically from her ascension to the throne of Broadway comedy. The marketing narrative takes care to use the past tense. Sands' solo show "*became* an over-night sensation [italics added for emphasis]" as if to indicate that the rest of the nation ought to catch up with the latest east-coast trend. The flier also references Sands' appearance ("ever lovely.") Dorothy Sands' looks did attract attention in her early career, especially her luminous eyes (see Appendix), but the sequence of imagery in the quotation—parade, catalogue, costumes, sensation—also associates her with the glamour of 1920s Broadway. In short, the flier uses Sands' New York credentials as a means of selling bookings to the heartland, a strategy James Pond, Sr. used for female solo artists of the previous generation, such as Beatrice Herford and Cissie

[14] Ibid.

Lofts in 1924 (i.e., "James B. Pond presents Ceclia Loftus, now the big attraction with Ziegfield Follies."[15])

With a show and marketing message, Sands' barnstorming took on its own momentum, and references to New York fame gradually shifted towards the sheer volume of states in which she appeared (eventually all of them, plus Mexico, Canada, England, and Germany). In 1933, Sands signed with Lee Keedick (1870-1959), the director of the "Redpath Chautauqua" who hired speakers, readers, and entertainers to bring moral and cultural uplift to America's heartland.[16] The Chautauqua were roughly equivalent to today's speaker circuits, and Keedick was the model Chautauqua manager. Throughout his career, Keedick's talent stable included artistic luminaries of the day, like writers Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and Thornton Wilder.[17] Keedick's personality could be imposing. One client described him as, "the most formidable of all managers," and, "a smooth-shaved gentlemanly Banker kind of person with a big formidable chin, but who drove hard bargains."[18] Sands worked with other managers (especially for radio and television work later in her career), but Pond Bureau materials do not appear in Sands' archives after 1933, so she seems to have shifted over to Keedick for her solo work once she took a nationwide focus.

Keedick's Redpath Chautauqua marketing concept for Sands embraced her status as a woman performer. His flier presents Sands in a seated side pose, face set

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[15] Advertisement on "Brooklyn Life, Brooklyn, New York," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 2, 1924.
[16] As noted earlier, James Pond, Sr. initially worked with Redpath Chautauqua founder James Redpath before founding his own agency, so Sands' shift from the Pond to the Redpath organization might have occurred organically.
[17] "Lee Keedick, Lecture Manager for Noted Persons, Dies at 79," *The New York Times*, Aug. 18, 1959.
[18] "Lee Keedick," John Cowper Powys in American, http://www.powys-lannion.net/Powys/America/Keedick.htm (accessed November 16, 2016).

against her profile shadow above the copy, "Lee Keedick presents Dorothy Sands," along with the woman's magazine, *Vogue,* epigraph, "The Supreme Contemporary Mistress of Impersonation." The Redpath Chautauqua pamphlet also compares Sands to her contemporary monologist, Cissie Loftus, as well as late nineteenth-century monologists Gertrude Hoffman and Elsie Janis, embedding Sands in the genealogy of female solo performers and lecturers.[19] The Redpath pamphlet contains images, program information, and critics' praise for both *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*. Additionally (and helpful to the historian), the pamphlet includes "A Few of the Places Where Miss Sands has Been." Of the forty-eight venues, twenty-four are civic and local groups; eleven are organizations that explicitly identify themselves as woman's clubs in the titles; and thirteen are universities, including all-female institutions Bryn Mawr, Wellesley, and Oklahoma College for Women. Although the list refers to select New York groups, like the fashionable Cosmopolitan Club, it excludes Sands' engagements at New York and large regional theaters. Keedick's flier portrays Sands as an uplifting and popular woman lecturer/performer, suitable for Chautauqua presenters and audiences across the heartland.

The Keedick flier's selective list of venues indicates an important aspect of Sands' business model: she reached multiple target audiences through the use of parallel networks. The Keedick organization's bookings included engagements with civic organizations, local women's groups, amateur acting associations, and small colleges. In addition, Sands relied on her Radcliffe College alumnae network. For example, when she appeared at the National Theater in Washington, D.C, the *Washington Post* ran two stories about Sands in the same paper. One of the pieces

[19] Iowa Digital Library, "Dorothy Sands."

was a critical review of Sands' performance, whereas the other article was a style piece that listed the name of the Radcliffe Alumnae Association representative at whose house Sands stayed during the performance weekend, the names of Radcliffe alumnae who attended the after-show party, the Monday afternoon tea, and the Monday afternoon brunch that the Drama Department chair of nearby Mount Vernon Seminary held in Sands' honor.[20] Sands' Radcliffe College alumnae consistently provided Sands logistical support, and Sands participated in Radcliffe scholarship fundraising throughout her career. Theater critics formed a third network. As critical accolades listed so far in this chapter show, writers responded with gusto to Sands' work, and were happy to promote Sands within their readership markets. By relying on at least these three grids—booking agents, alumnae networks, and the press—Sands could play audiences that encompassed local bridge clubs, highbrow Ivy League brunch sets, and national theater patrons. Thus positioned, Sands spent nearly a decade on the road.

### *Selecting Sands' Script*

With Sands' organizational and marketing framing in mind, the remainder of this chapter examines *Styles in Acting* as a theatrical case study, based on a close reading of the original script(s) so as to examine the show itself. When Linda Sue Long wrote her dissertation on Sands, Loftus, and Herford in 1982, she relied on

[20] "Dorothy Sands Offers a Solo Study of Stars," and "Dorothy Sands Guest at Home of Mrs. Gower," *The Washington Post*, Feb. 26, 1935. The *Post* also ran preview stories on both Sands' show and her social engagements. The Radcliffe Alumnae Association provided Sands similar support when Sands and Skinner performed Candida in Washington, D.C. in 1939. Since 1999, The Mount Vernon Seminary and College has become part of George Washington University.

press clippings, programs, and memorabilia that Sands left in her scrapbooks at the Billy Rose Theatre Collection. Long sifted through Sands' saved clippings and the arrayed quotations that praised Sands' vocal and gestural mannerisms, and provided detailed descriptions of the costuming for each of Sands' characters.[21] Long does not discuss the text, evaluate Sands' choice of canon, or critically engage Sands' scripts, nor *could* she have, because—it is important to note—scripts of Sands' shows only became available to the public as part of a 2006 gift to the Harvard Theater Collection.

This rich acquisition contains seven notebooks that include multiple versions (mostly handwritten) of both of Sands' shows over time, with Sands' emendations, edits, stage directions, insertions, deletions, and prop and cue sheets, as well as an accompanying cassette tape recording, featuring Sands performing the first two scenes of *Our Stage and Stars*.[22] Besides copies of *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*, the collection contains additional texts that will inform the later chapters of this dissertation and appear as annotated transcripts in the Appendices. Among these items are a script for a show titled *Tricks of the Acting Trade* (1940); an unperformed pieced, *Styles in Acting in the Greek Theater* (1946); and a version of *Styles in Acting* (1946) that Sands seems to have intended for publication in the *Encyclopedia Americana*.[23] The seven notebooks are a dragon's horde. The first notebook alone, "Original copies of my two one woman show 'Styles in Acting' 1932 and 'Our Stage

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[21] Long, "The Art of," 129-58.
[22] Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Special Collections, Harvard Theater Collection, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[23] This version is useful since it contains an extensive bibliography. Although many sources postdate Sands' 1932 opening, others probably served in the work's initial formation. Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 5: 'Styles in Acting,' Sept. 1946," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

and Stars' 1938," spans 266 pages, and includes production sheets, loose notes, show outlines, and play development research.[24]

For *Styles in Acting*, Sands' notebooks contain two complete scripts from which to select as the base text for analysis in this chapter. The earlier of the scripts seems to have been the one Sands used in her premiere performance at the Booth Theater in 1932.[25] The later script, which she titles, *Changing Styles in Acting* (the script is still *Styles in Acting*, however) does not contain clues for precise dating. However, this version could date from after World War II and as late as 1946, by which point Sands had given up full-time touring. Both scripts contain substantial handwritten edits. There are therefore four choices in selecting a "base" text: the earlier script with or without its edits, or the second script with or without edits. Perhaps the intuitive choice (and perhaps Sands' wish) would be to select the latest version, which is to say the second script with edits, since this one would presumably be the most polished. However, coming towards the end of Sand's solo touring, most audiences would not have seen this final version. Alternatively, the earliest version (the 1932 Booth script without edits) is raw, having not gone through the polish of multiple performances. Another complicating element is the impossibility of knowing when Sands made which edits. For instance, she may have tweaked her performance over time and wrote down accumulated changes only periodically. Based on intuition as much as rationale, this chapter uses the earlier text with edits as a compromise. Presumably, this iteration would have been the one that the most

[24] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 1: "Original copies of my two one woman shows, 'Styles in Acting' 1932 and 1938 'Our Stage and Stars,' article on Playing Comedy," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University Cambridge, MA.
[25] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 3: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University Cambridge, MA.

Americans saw during *Styles in Acting*'s 1932-1940s lifecycle, although the end of this chapter discusses the possible significance of changes in the script over time.

### *A Very British History*

In presenting the history of theater *as* theater, Sands tapped into a primordial and enduring practice, even as she positioned herself in the van of theatrical innovation. Performing history through stylized speeches, songs, and stories spans the temporal canvas of bards and storytellers. Soloists and thespians have long performed history; from the rhapsodic recitations of Homer's accounts of the Trojan War and Anglo-Saxon *scops;* to Shakespeare's dramatization of the Battle of Agincourt in *Henry V*; the assassination of Roman emperor Julius Caesar in *Julius Caeser*; and the death of the last Egyptian queen in *Antony and Cleopatra*. In 1784, failed English tragedian George Alexander Stevens' premiered his wildly popular lecture performance, *Lecture On Heads* (1812). An otherwise middling actor, Stevens struck a specifically British chord in his solo work by satirizing the popularity of physiognomy, the then-newly popular pseudo-science of dowsing character traits from facial and cranial features. In his two-hour monologue, Stevens assayed character archetypes, using a succession of oversized paper-mâché masks, wigs, and props.[26] As discussed in the *Prelude* to this dissertation, Helen Potter made

[26] Jordan Young, *Acting Solo: The Art of One-Man Shows* (Beverly Hills, CA: Moonstone Press, 1989), 15-16. Stevens, apparently considered a mediocre actor previously, went on to perform his lecture over 1000 times. The primary study on Stevens, and still an outstanding research model is Gerald Khan, *George Alexander Stevens and The Lecture on Heads* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984).

a systematic study of playing famous roles of the present and past.[27] In *Helen Potter's Impersonations* (1891), Potter gave instructions to aspiring mimics, as well as sample texts with pronunciation markings for about fifty studies, including how to play Cleopatra, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, actor Edwin Booth as Hamlet, actress Charlotte Cushman as Katharine of Aragon, and reformer Henry Ward Beecher delivering a sermon on Lincoln.[28] Like Potter, Sands made use of a technique that we might term "double-impersonation"—not only impersonating an actress from the past or present, but impersonating an actress as she might have played a specific role (a strategy Sands employed even more thoroughly in *Our Stage and Stars*). Although Sands' audiences and even Sands herself may not have been cognizant of her antecedents, Sands' shows conform to a conflation of history and entertainment that has served as the specialty of wandering solo players since time immemorial.

Despite the antiquity of dramatizing history, Sands' work struck critics as inventive and revolutionary. In his paean to *Styles in Acting* for *The New York Times*, Atkinson rhapsodized, "Out of theatre's mute memorabilia, Miss Sands, who is a modernist, has brought romantic history to life."[29] By "modernist," Atkinson probably meant something along the lines of, "one who does something new," which, according to early 1930s Modernism, was the litmus for artistic, literary, and critical value. By "romantic," Atkinson likely meant "Romanticism" (a trend starting in early nineteenth-century literature and arts that celebrated subjective emotion, imagination,

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[27] See Maggie B. Gale, "Going Solo: An Historical Perspective on the Actress and the Monologue," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Actress*, eds. Maggie B. Gale and John Stokes, (Cambridge, UK and New York: Cambridge UP, 2007), 293.
[28] Helen Potter, *Helen Potter's Impersonations* (New York: E.S. Werner, 1891).
[29] J. Brooks Atkinson, "Dorothy Sands, in One-Woman Show, Gives "'Styles in Acting,'" *The New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1932.

and freedom from form). In other words, for Atkinson, Sands had brought form and voice to the impressionistic and muddy past in a new and exciting way.

Sands' work, which seemed to her contemporaries as a move forward into novelty, and also as homage to tradition, reflects a societal psychological response to the Great Depression, and Sands' success may serve as an indicator of the *Zeitgeist* of the nation at large. Theater scholar Mark Fearnow has argued that America responded to the anxieties engendered by the Depression via recourse to the "grotesque," a medieval motif that philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (mentioned in Chapter One) associated with social inversion and visceral excess related to carnival. Fearnow translates Bakhtin's understanding of grotesquerie into psychoanalytic terms, claiming that *grotesque* names, "one's apprehension of an unresolved contradiction among two or more elements in an object, producing within one a sense of tension that nevertheless resolves into a limited pleasure in finding similar conflicts from life to have been 'named.'"[30] In other words, society transforms unresolved (or unresolvable) fears into comic tropes in order to produce objects that defuse nightmare into laughter. Furthermore, Fearnow notes, "People who perceive themselves as standing amid ruins can be expected to look in one of two directions."[31] They can engage in new enterprises (e.g., the New Deal) or reverse into nostalgia, national myths, and a "return to the 'Old Ways.'"[32] Sands' burlesque functions as Fearnow's conception of the grotesque predicts: as an object that simultaneously

[30] Mark Fearnow, *The American Stage and the Great Depression: A Cultural History of the Grotesque* (Cambridge, UK, Cambridge UP, 1997), 14.
[31] Fearnow*, The American Stage and the Great Depression,* 16.
[32] Fearnow, *The American Stage and the Great Depression,* 17.

celebrates novelty and historical traditions, looks both forwards and backwards, and produces laughter in the face of nightmare.

Importantly, *Styles in Acting* articulates an Anglo-American canon, and therefore psychological redemption for a select imaginary. Sands began *Styles in Acting* with an eighteenth-century style rendition of the coquettish character Millament, in William Congreve's Restoration comedy of manners *The Way of the World* (1800) and John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1762). She traipsed into the age of the Victorians as Nellie Denver, in Arthur Jones' melodrama *The Silver King* (1882). Sands transitioned into early Realism with George Bernard Shaw's masterwork *Candida* (1898), and then entered twentieth-century drama with her former 47 Workshop classmate, Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie* (1921), as played by the actress who created the lead female role, Pauline Lord. Sands rounded out the evening with some of her signature *Follies* impersonations, folded into the show through the conceit of narrating Lady Macbeth's "sleepwalking scene" (*Macbeth*, 5.1), as if played by Ethel Barrymore, English character actress Haidee Wright, and the incendiary Mae West. *Styles in Acting* therefore draws a narrative arc from the English Restoration drama, typified by aristocrats delivering barbs at one another in witty speeches, to movie realism inscribed on celluloid. Geographically, Sands limits her history as a migration from England to America. Temporally, the story extends from the turn of the eighteenth century in Sands' present, about 130 years, or about five generations.

As Chapter One discussed, Sands' experience as a white Brahmin in the 1920s "Jewish Rialto" may have reaffirmed her own racial identity. Sands' ancestors

extend back to Norman nobility in thirteenth-century England, and her own nuclear family stood as stalwart Boston Brahmins. By the end of her tenure with the experimental Neighborhood Playhouse, she would have been uniquely positioned to present avant-garde and European, if not world, theater to American audiences. At the Playhouse, Sands participated in multiple theater traditions, creating roles in Yiddish and Sanskrit plays, playing non-white, hegemonic-type roles, and had earlier played a tragic mulatto in Thomas Wolfe's piece at the 47 Workshop. She was engaged with national styles beyond American and English traditions, even after her tenure with the *Neighborhood Playhouse*. She played Chekov with a Russian co-star and director in New York, for example. Nevertheless, the scene choices in *Styles in Acting* eschew variance beyond the Anglo-American stage.

The narrow focus seems strategic. Sands' archives demonstrate an interest in and expertise of period and national styles than her *Styles in Acting* suggests, even within the Western canon. After World War II, Sands became an accomplished period acting teacher in New York with the American Theatre Wing, and her lecture notes contain detailed descriptions of thirteenth-century Italian Commedia dell'arte as well as Elizabethan acting practices.[33] She later wrote (but probably did not perform) a script for *Styles in Acting* in ancient Greek theater in September 1946, which includes trenchant observations regarding the interdependence of classical Greek aesthetics, theater architecture, and theatrical conventions.[34] Yet, from among the possible theatrical styles Sands might have covered in *Styles in Acting*, she only chose

[33] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,565.
[34] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 4: "'Styles in Acting,' Sept. 1946 (on the Greek Theatre)," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

examples between the Restoration to the present (the early 1930s), and from English to American stars. Rather than arbitrariness, the show's focused narrative addresses the question of *whose* history Sands sought to narrate. Her scenes and periods connected with the inherited cultural memory of her perceived audience, just pushing the temporal and thematic bounds of what her paying public could receive. Sands articulated a specific narrative that explained the ascension of Hollywood starlets as a migration from eighteenth-century British comedy across the Atlantic upon the vessel of Realism, and reflective of her own Anglican heritage.

Finally, *Styles in Acting* many contain a precocious feminist impulse towards theater history. As the following close reading of the script will show, the female characters Sands chose to portray push within and against traditional marriage structures. Since Shakespeare, marriage has been the machine of comedy, a convention Sands appears to subvert. Even though many of the scenes *Styles in Acting* are hilarious, whether the piece is a "comedy"—in an Aristotelian sense of bringing haughty characters down to earth—remains to be seen. The distinction is important. If Sands set up strong women as objects of ridicule, then she would have been reaffirming normative gender roles. If she played her characters as sympathetic, then the satire lands on restrictive gender tropes.

Absent film records, there is no way to tell exactly how Sands' played each scene. However, inappropriately agential women characters form a pattern in *Styles in Acting*. To use a present term anachronistically, her piece is filled with "nasty"

women.[35] Sands' characters in *Styles in Acting* either negotiate their subservience to their own advantage, confound marital expectations, or reject men altogether. Also, as Chapter Four will consider, a history of theater based on an armature of actresses and female characters is itself a feminist statement, especially in the gender context of the 1930s. Some of the monologues are funny, and some heartrending, but the overall motif seems to be women pushing against societally imposed restraints.

### *Styles in Acting: A Reading*

#### Act I—Introduction

The introduction to *Styles in Acting* differs slightly between the New York premiere and thereafter. In the original 1932 script for the Booth Theater, Sands invites her audience into the world of theater history using a Shakespearean device. She apologizes, "Just a few years ago this w'd [would] have been a very elaborate production."[36] However, "then the crash came [the Great Crash of 1927]—and our backers—et cetera." Instead, Sands asks her viewers to exercise their imaginations ("involving no expense on your part"), while she fills in the details with *talk* ("which is always cheap.") The bit recalls the "O, for a Muse of fire," prologue to Shakespeare's *Henry V,* in which the Chorus begs the audience, in lieu of "the brightest heaven of invention" (5.1.1-2) to allow the actors, "ciphers to this great accompt, / On your imaginary forces work" (5.1.18). Shakespeare's invocation

[35] "Nasty woman" because an instant meme when Donald Trump cast the aspersion "such a nasty woman" at fellow U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during their third and final presidential debate in 2016.
[36] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 2: 'Our Stage and Stars, 1932,'" Dorothy Sands Papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations in the following reading in this chapter come from the edited 1932 version of *Styles in Acting*.

provides the definitive statement on the magic of the suspension of disbelief in live performance.

Sands subverts Shakespeare's summons. The *Henry V* prologue offers the poverty of the stage as a benefit (prefiguring Jerzy Grotowsky's "Poor Theater," which celebrated theater's penury relative to mediatized drama). The Globe Theater lacked changeable sets, so Shakespeare asked his audience to conjure for themselves, "a kingdom for a stage / princes to act / And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!" (5.1.3-4), and to turn the "accomplishment of many years / Into an hour-glass" (5.1.30-31). In contrast, Sands uses self-aware and self-deprecating humor to make the same point. Her deliberate misappropriation of classic convention provides a wink, signaling to her crowd that her entire project is a burlesque. In a topsy-turvy world, why not make fun of everything down to our Shakespearean roots?

Within grotesquerie, however, Sands offers conceptual rigor by framing her comedy with a theater historiography based on the interdependence of style and theatrical conditions (prefiguring the academic turn towards theater semiotics, or the ways in which signs create meaning, by about fifty years). Following her *Henry V* gag, she continues with a declaration that became the fixed start to *Styles in Acting*: "Style in acting depends mainly on three factors." Firstly, Sands lists the physical conditions that "surround" theatrical events, such as theater architecture. She asks the audience to consider the demands that shifting performance spaces place on performers, from outdoor Greek amphitheaters, to the marketplace platforms of semi-improvisational Commedia dell'arte, to the enclosed yards of Elizabethan playhouses. Secondly, the type of play influences the style that presents it, such as "great

tragedies, high comedies, broad farces." Thirdly, she states that audience composition and expectations influence acting styles. To emphasize the final point, she quotes Samuel Johnson's quip, by tradition assigned to English actor David Garrick, regarding performing at London's Drury Lane theater in 1747, "the drama's laws the drama's patrons give."[37] In other words, to use a colloquial equivalence: *give 'em what they want*. Sands does not attribute Johnson's quotation, perhaps assuming that her audiences would recognize the line's provenance, and/or further grounding her show with a well-fashioned homily that sounds storied and providential (also, Garrick's is an astute and well-put observation in and of itself).

Sands promises the audience to enact scenes that mark changing points across three hundred years of English stage history, so as to illustrate, "the causes and conditions that have bro't those changes about." She does not hold a particular time or style more prized than another, but rather wants to show "how the style of acting always reflects the point of view, the mannerisms and tastes of its particular time." Sands describes a linear evolution of acting styles. Since the Restoration, physical gestures have shrunk ("no longer wool and a yard wide"), as has vocal capacity ("the contemporary thespian prefers not to open his mouth"). The introduction also establishes the structure for *Styles in Acting* as a lecture-demonstration in which Sands will perform pieces in period-appropriate styles in funny ways, alternating with commentary.

**"Millamant" in *The Way of the World* (1700) by William Congreve**

[37] "The stage but echoes back the public voice. / The drama's laws the drama's patrons give. / For we that live to please, must please to live," Samuel Johnson's citation of David Garrick at Drury Lane in 1747, *Prologue and Epilogue, Spoken at the Opening of the Theatre in Drury-Lane 1747.*

Thus underway, Sands begins her history of acting styles with two examples of English Restoration comedy: William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), and John Dryden's *The Conquest of Granada* (1672). The Restoration does not present itself as an obvious starting point for the history of English theater. In historical terms, "the Restoration" refers to the resumption of Tudor monarchy in England with the return of Charles II from exile in France in 1660. The process of restoration continued as a period of nation building for England until the early eighteenth century, ultimately resulting in the union of the Briton, Ireland, and Scotland.[38] For theater, the Restoration represented a rejection of Puritanism (which had included a ban on theater altogether), the introduction of female actresses onto the English stage for the first time, and conversion of smaller urban structures, like tennis courts, into new theaters. English Restoration comedies derived from French masters of language, Molière (1622-73) and Pierre Corneille (1606-84). So-called "comedies of manners" featured aristocrats being mean to one another in flowery witticism and mannered gestures. The Restoration was a theater by and for the upper classes, and exhibited a spirit of Parisian libertine.

Before launching into a Restoration-style monologue, Sands speaks about the physical conditions of Restoration playhouses. She describes the large, thrust stage, with side doors, above which sat boxes that the king "might sit with his favorite of the moment." Flats adorn the stage behind the proscenium and the curtain seldom stays drawn. Denizens of the pit sat on wooden benches. The upper gallery housed the "coachman and foreman and an occasional stray country cousin," whereas the boxes

[38] *The Acts of Union of England and Scotland* joined Briton and Scotland on May 1, 1707, and *The Acts of Great Britain and Ireland* added Ireland on Jan. 1, 1801.

held the glittering marvels of society, "The middle classes had nothing to do with this theater." As Sands described how the Puritan citizens shunned the theater, she might have been talking about critics in her own age, railing against sexual opportunism in entertainment, and who would like to claim membership in high society. Sands talks at length about Restoration performances, from the cost of admission to types of costumes and genres of plays.

In introducing her first scene, Sands presents the work of William Congreve (1670-1729) as the epitome of Restoration comedy ("It never moves you, it never touches your heart, but it is style at its most stylish"). Indeed, theater historian Franklin Hildy notes that Congreve's *Love for Love* (1695) and *Way of the World* (1700) still command respect for their "brilliant scenes, sparkling dialogue, and clear-cut characterizations."[39] Specifically, Sands chooses for her first interpretation Millament, the female protagonist in *The Way of the World,* a play about infidelity. The play also features legal and financial language, themes which may have struck Restoration aristocrats as just as scandalous (or even more so) than the play's sexual banter.

Sands describes Millament as "a fine lady," and her stage directions portray an appropriately staged vision,

> Millament sits in a dazzlingly beautiful gown of voluminous billows of white satin brocade, a tight-fitting bodice with low décolleté and pinched-in waist. Sparkling jewels and feathers ornament her high-pompadoured white wig.

[39] Oscar Gross Brockett and Franklin Joseph Hildy, *History of the Theatre,* Foundation Ed. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon), 223.

She archly flirts a dainty fan and exquisite lace handkerchief . . .[40]

Millament cuts a striking figure just as she cuts into her interlocutor. She applies realpolitik to the sexual marketplace, and is unafraid to bargain with her own sexuality in order to secure the best terms for herself. Throughout the monologue, Sands includes simple stage directions, like "(Fan)," "(Rises)," or "(Low Curtsey)."

In this scene, Millament has just cowed a potential suitor, Sir Wilfull, and prepares to parlay with her paramour Mirabell [which means "good-looking" in badly formed French] in order to come to a prenuptial understanding. Although Millament is at the verge of marrying Mirabell, she flaunts her desirability to others, implying the possibility of a bidding war for her favors. Millament opens the game with a gambit: her suitor ought to pay attention, "Oh, I hate a lover that can dare to think he draws a moment's air independent of the bounty of his mistress."[41] She detests the "saucy look of an assured man, confident of himself." She also feels terror at the loss of independence and solitude. Her demands take on specificity, such as compelling Mirabell not to call her pet names after the wedding, never make public displays of affection, do not go to plays, and otherwise be as "strange" to one another as if they were a familiar married couple. She also requests, with understatement, "trifles," such as leave to have lovers, keep private correspondences, set her own mealtimes, and enjoy privacy in her chambers. In return, she "may, by degrees, dwindle into a wife" (the line almost demands the performer to emphasize the word "dwindle").

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[40] Sands' detailed stage descriptions beg the question of costume changes. Sands researched, built, and photographed herself in elaborately executed costuming for each character, although the script does not clearly indicate full costume changes. In fact, Sands' cue sheets appear to restrict changes to props, wigs, outer garments and accessories. Perhaps Sands' adopted different costume strategies depending on the capabilities of different types of venue.

[41] Sands writes out each monologue in her script and appears to have been scrupulous regarding accuracy in transcription.

Sands provides a signal to audiences that her work will question gender roles by presenting strong female personalities who invert tropes like passivity or modesty from within proscribed gender frameworks. Even in jest, the depiction of marriage as a diminished state, and Millament's demands for prenuptial allowances of future sexual liberation sound a jarring chord from within a patriarchal superstructure that she will continue throughout *Styles in Acting*.

**"Almahide" in *The Conquest of Granada* (1672) by John Dryden**

Sands next programs a second Restoration piece following Millament's monologue, this time a Restoration tragedy. In contrast with Elizabethan tragedy, Sands notes that Restoration tragedies lack "nobility" and "reality," reflecting the spirit of their times. She notes that Charles II's court boasted women who were, "anemic, snuff-sniffing, fops and fashion-worshipping," and too effete to understand the "heroic." Sands describes Restoration tragedy as removed from cultural context, placed in exotic locales, and filled with melodrama. Heroes struggle between love and honor, and heroines are boringly chaste ("desperately pure"). For Sands, Restoration tragedy carries a cartoonish quality, foreshadowing vile villains binding damsels in distress to railroad tracks.

She chooses as exemplar John Dryden's *Conquest of Granada* (1672), set against the final phases of the Spanish conquest (*Reconquista*) of the Moors in Spain in the 1480s. *Conquest of Granada* concerns itself with the conflicts among aristocracy, which Sands qualifies as "full of bombast, rant, and egotism." The plot is illegible ("beyond a crossword puzzle expert to describe"), but also not especially

relevant. Sands gamely takes on the role of Almahide, the last Islamic Queen of Granada.[42] The Sovereign Mother's costume involved a pastiche of anachronistic fashions current in Charles II's court ("individual affairs") such as abundant headdresses, plumes, and green-beige corsets. Sands asks the audience to visualize her, "in bouffant draperies of purple silk and wearing a high white wig crowed with ostrich plumes, entering with majestically measured styles, and accompanying each line with a full armed gesture." The fan and kerchief serve to accentuate gestures, like flags in semaphore or a cheerleader's pom-poms.

In the script, Sands notates this section heavily. Some stage directions appear self-explanatory, like "(cross L)" or "throws dagger away." However, Sands also created a notation system to score arm vocabulary. Each line of text contains two arrows, indicating arm placement or motion, which point in the same or different directions. The lines either extend in line segments or break at the elbow. Crosshatches might indicate fists. Sands' system stresses simplicity. For example, the line "Though strong seducer" receives a double upward movement, whereas "I should hate us both" takes elbows raised to the sides bent so that the hands may cover the heart or solar plexus. The climax of the scene appears to be, "Into my bosom this dagger must thrust / Ah you do repent and deny your lust," at which Almahide discards her dagger. The final image lands on "piety," marked with one hand pointed to heaven, and the other bent at the elbow in a low, acute angle with the hand on the

[42] The character Almahide was ostensibly a Spanish Moor. However, productions from the seventeenth-century through to the twentieth century (and even today) would have cast her (and audiences would have read her) as Islamic in the same way visual artists painted female characters in Orientalist scenes—as a European (white) woman in "exotic" clothes and setting. As Chapter One discussed, Sands did create minoritarian roles in productions like *The Little Clay Cart* and *The Dybbuk*, but *Styles in Acting* audiences would not have perceived cognitive dissonance in the spectacle of a white, English speaking, Christian Moor.

heart or neck. Although difficult to overact Comedy of Manners, Sands likely employed overemphasis for satirical effect, particularly in arm gestures.

**Madame Vestris, "Buy me a Broom" (ca. 1830)**

Sands next speeds through time before performing a song interlude. She speaks about Richard Sheridan (1751-1816), an Irish satirist and author of masterful comedies of manners like *The School for Scandal* (1777) and Th*e Critic* (1779). She touches on fashion ("satin knee breeches and brocaded paniers"), and then mentions the first historical actress in her show, the Welsh star Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), a leading tragedienne of her day, and member of the Kemble family of theater luminaries. Sands glosses over the remainder of the eighteenth century and much of the nineteenth century ("a period of decay and disintegration for the English theater") although she puts in kind words for albeit bowdlerized Shakespearean revivals. Finally, Sands points to the growing importance of spectacle, both due to cavernous new or rebuilt halls (she notes Covent Garden and Drury Lane each held 3600 audience members), and she avers that the court and the theater "were no longer on speaking terms." Untethered by courtly attendance, theaters produced plays for the masses. Sands argued that actors played to the highs and lows of popular demand, playing in ways that would seem "frightfully stilted and artificial" later, but riveted crowds at the time.

Between the Regency-era (1811-37) and the long Victorian period (1837-1901) in English cultural and theatrical history, Sands signals the multi-skilled opera singer/actress/manager Lucia Elizabeth Vestris (1797-1856). Sands praises "Madame

Vestris" (Sands calls her "Eliza Vestris"), as the first female theatrical manager and praises her interest in historically accurate costume and set design. Significantly, Sands discusses Vestris' prowess in "breeches roles," in which female star actresses played male parts. The gender-bending practice carried an ironic echo of the prohibition of female actresses on Elizabethan stages when boys would have played Shakespeare's women with all the latent homosexual and intergenerational eroticism that convention implied. Breeches roles become more understandable in the context of the cavernous performance spaces and lack of stage direction. In large halls, actors delivered speeches along the "rose circle" or downstage area only. From a distance, the actual gender of performers mattered less than their vocal and gestural delivery, and eighteenth and nineteenth-century stars regularly played against age and gender.

To close the first half of *Styles in Acting*, Sands performed Vestris singing a hit song, "Buy me a broom" (1826), set to a traditional Bavarian folk melody. In the 1932 script, Sands writes "Omit" above the song, suggesting that she did not perform the piece in at least one of the previews or openings at the Booth Theatre. Both the Pond and Booth flier list the Vestris number, so Sands must have decided to keep the piece. At least at first, Sands probably did not make an elaborate costume change as she asks her audiences to visualize specific historical detail. Sands writes, "Dressed in Bavarian costume with full, short skirt, a little bonnet tied over her dark curls, and carrying a pack of brooms on her back she [Vestris] enchanted all of London singing this simple little ballad." The script contains a handwritten transcription of the lyrics and piano music for the song, as well as brief notations of the action. In Stanza 1, Vestries addresses the song's refrain to the "ladies." In Stanza 2, she addresses the

gentlemen and then pantomimes her refusal to their offer. In Stanza 3, she pantomimes offering and selling a broom, and then conducts stage business at the door ("makes a date"), before exiting and completing Act 1.

The first act feels like an idiosyncratic recitation of English stage history, at least initially. As significant as Congreve, Dryden, and Madame Vestris may be to English theater historical narratives, they hardly constitute the first "half" of English theater history. What about medieval mystery plays and pageants? What of William Shakespeare, Ben Johnson, or Christopher Marlowe? Nevertheless, the emphasis on Restoration Comedy makes sense when considering Sands' audiences in the 1930s. In the pit of the Depression, audiences thirsted for escapism, a need to which Hollywood and Broadway fulfilled only after a substantial lag. Fred Astaire, starring with his sister Adele in the 500-show run of *The Band Wagon* (1931), had not yet partnered with Ginger Rogers. Ethel Merman still reigned as Broadway queen, and great song and book scribes like Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rogers and Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein, and Cole Porter were still a decade away. The Depression loomed. Americans did not yet have a war effort or Busby Berkeley-scale movie spectacle involving mass choreography of machine-age interchangeable women and cinematic production values to offer escape. The inception of Franklin Roosevelt's "New Deal" of massive government stimulus would not start until 1933, and theater itself faced an unknown future.[43]

Consequently, *Styles in Acting* (1932), as a wittily wrought grotesque, would have spoken to a sense of dislocation and a concomitant thirst for origins. The

[43] The Federal Theatre Project, the government's theatrical component to the New Deal under the Works Projects Association, and headed by Sands' former 47 Workshop classmate Hallie Flanagan, did not exist yet either. The FTP lasted from 1935-39.

juxtaposition of repartee and savagery of the Restoration would have resonated with the need for escapism caused by economic horror in America. Although buffoonish, the coiffured banter of English aristocrats, and the promise of libidinous license beneath codes and petticoats spoke to sexual and economic anxiety. An Anglican imaginary would also have reassured a labor market inflamed with the intermittent nativism that plagues American history, and that was especially overt in the 1920s into the early 1930s, with all of the racial, class, and ethnic overtones that animus connotes.[44] The first half *of Styles in Acting* told Americans where their theatrical traditions began, and the second half would tell them where they were going.

**Act II—"Nellie Hathaway" in *The Silver King* (1882) by Henry Arthur Jones**

In the first half of *Styles in Acting*, Sands set the point of origin for her narrative in the English Restoration. The second half traces a progression across the Atlantic through a genealogy of actresses up to *femme fatales* starlets, indicating a progression from eighteenth-century comedy to Broadway and Hollywood realism. Perhaps all histories try to explain how a community has arrived at an always-evolving present. For Sands' audience, "now" would have been the rise of 1930s movie celebrity, a world of stars like Greta Garbo, Katherine Hepburn, and Rita Hayworth. Therefore, *Styles in Acting* ends its story of English theater with nascent 1930s American celebrity.

Sands begins the second half of her program with the Victorian age, which she praises as the time when, "theater's blood begins to quicken," due to the resurgence

[44] *The Emergency Quota Act* (1921) placed the first quantifiable restrictions on immigration by country. *The Immigration Act* (1924), aka *Johnson-Reed*, limited entry to 2% of immigrant populations already living in the country in 1890.

of royal patronage and interest in theatricals. Sands notes that Queen Victoria herself attended theater and bestowed tokens upon her favorite performers. Sands relates that theatrical spaces became more genteel, with upholstery replacing wooden pallets and gas lights supplanting the flicker of flames in chandeliers. Actors retreated behind the proscenium arch. Designers created dioramic worlds floating in dark auditoria, which themselves shrank from the barns of yesteryear. Playwrights like T.W. Robertson (1829-71) and Dion Boucicault (1820-90) created believable characterizations ("persons who were supposed to dress and act and talk like English people of their own time"). In the Victorian context, "Realism" did not refer to psychological realism—plays still tilted at melodrama ("full of romance and sentimentality"). Like all theater, the Victorian stage reflected, as Sands describes, "the age in which it lives." To use a Victorian household image as a metaphor, Victorian theater is an overfilled curio ("stuffy parlors crammed with haircloth furniture)." Victorian melodrama also moves into the living memory for 1930s audiences, and in Sands' early life and training.

To exemplify Victorian melodrama, Sands chose a scene from *The Silver King* (1882) by English dramatist Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929), which Jones developed in collaboration with former Confederate soldier and writer Henry Herman (1832-94). Sands' choice of melodramas might appear suspect. When asked for advice in writing plays, Oscar Wilde supposedly sniped, "The first rule is not to write like Henry Arthur Jones; the second and third rules are the same."[45] Wilde's aside perhaps signals snobbism against rising middle class-oriented drama, although

[45] Doris Arthur Jones, *Taking the Curtain Call: The Life and Letters of Henry Arthur Jones* (New York: MacMillan, 1930), 156.

admittedly, a student of drama today would be hard pressed to find *The Silver King* in anthologies. Sands agrees that *The Silver King* abounds in "plots and subplots and counterplots." In simplest terms, the overwrought melodrama takes as point of departure William Denver, an alcoholic and alleged murderer, who flees to America, earns riches, returns in triumphant reunion to his family, and proves his innocence. Sands probably took interest in the play's female main character, Nellie Denver. Sands sets the scene as follows,

> Will you look across the gas jets in the footlights at the painted replica of the exterior of the Grange, Gardenhurst, the wood wings on each side—the old neighbors gossiping about as Nellie Denver dressed in a close-fitting blue velvet jacket, a blue and red changeable silk draped skirt with a large bustle, a tiny blue velvet toque trimmed with red roses tipped over her brow—minces out to meet them [her old neighbors].

Perhaps Nellie Denver's moxie appealed to Sands. Denver was a character that did not know her place, but rather pushed back against the collective judgment of her community. Denver confronts her suspicious, small-town neighbors, in a melodrama whose style lends itself to sendup. The script does not reveal much in the way of marginalia, although stage notes in parentheticals like, "breaks down," "sighs," "deep sigh," and "exit sobbing" give a sense that Sands would likely have indulged in affectation.

*The Silver King* monologue is not long, yet Sands may have drawn out the lines, underscoring the lugubrious, and luxuriating in pauses. In the face of her accusing neighbors, Denver sneers, "Welcome, dear friends. You have come, all of

you." She seems to have prepared food, which her old servant, Jaikes, will dispense. Denver signals Jaikes, cries at the thought of his loyalty, then recovers, "Ah—no more!" She tells her neighbors, "Go in and have your dinner." She then reveals to Jaikes her not-well-hidden emotional state, "Yes, Jaikes, I am happy! (*Deep sigh*) Yes, far happier than I ever hoped to be. (*Sighs*)." Looking around, Denver notes how every detail reminds her of her absent husband, Will, such as the trees, the bricks in the house, "every nook and corner brings back to me his dear handsome face." Denver seems resigned to fatalism. She assured Jaikes that what she misses most of her home is her husband, "and you can't bring that back to me Jaikes, no, no—not that, not that. (*Exit sobbing*)." Denver is like a malapropism, single strong woman. She is inappropriately independent (in the eyes of her neighbors), and although she harbors regret for her husband's absence, she tearily accepts the imprisonment of her liberation. As an object of satire, Denver might suggest a reinscription of heteronormative family structure. On the other hand, coming in sequence after Millament, Almahide, and Vestris, Sands establishes a line of impertinent (that is to say, agential) female characters.

**"Candida" in *Candida* (1880) by George Bernard Shaw**

After Victorian melodrama, Sands transitioned to psychological Realism, which Sands interprets as plays that explore the psychological dynamics of relationships. Sands first refers to *A Doll's House* by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). For Sands, Ibsen's story of a disaffected wife who walks out on her family marks the beginning of modern drama ("In 1889 'The Doll's House' by

Henrik Ibsen was produced in London and our modern realistic theater was born"). Realistic plays proliferated (they "suffused the whole theatrical atmosphere and colored the entire drama of Europe.") As in all ages and periods, "realistic" emerged out of contemporary convention. Late-Victorian Realism would seem artificial to twentieth-century sensibilities, but startlingly lifelike to its own audiences. In the present day (the 1930s), Sands claims that Ibsen's style would have been the first thus far surveyed that would feel familiar.

To illustrate Realism, Sands chose to portray the final scene from *Candida* (1880) by the Irish writer and critic George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950). Stylistically, Sands pointed out that plays like *Candida* suited themselves to the intensity that smaller theater spaces tend to engender, and acting styles shifted from grand gesture and almost operatic vocal ornamentation to nuanced portraiture ("quiet searchings of the heart"). Using words like "simplicity" and "truth," and adjusting her own vocal and gestural performance to match, Sands describes Realism in performance as a more poignant, thoughtful style of acting.

Like Jones' *The Silver King*, Shaw's *Candida* questions received notions of marriage. As with the other scenes, Sands begins by detailing the female protagonist's costume, "She [Candida] is dressed in a dark red dress made with a full bell skirt, the fitted waist has large leg-of-mutton sleeves. Her brown hair is twisted into a figure 8 on top of her head." Candida's hair is not the only issue on her head. Candida's suitors, (her husband) James Morrell, a clergyman in the Church of England, and Eugene Marchebanks, a young poet set to rescue Candida from the drudgery of life's banality, corner Candida and argue with one another over to which

of them Candida belongs. Like Millament in *Way of the World*, Candida kinkily collaborates in her own sale on the sexual marketplace, "Oh, I am to choose, am I? I suppose it's quite settled that I belong to one or the other. And pray, my lords and masters what have you to offer for my choice. It seems I'm up for auction. What do you bid, James [Morell]?" Candida's husband offers his "honesty," "industry for your livelihood," and his "authority of position for your dignity." In contrast, Marchebanks proffers, "My weakness! My desolation! My heart's need!" In other words, Marchebanks offers romance, whereas Morell promises security.

After an extended disquisition, Candida eventually choses her husband, because (and her reasoning becomes Shaw's key comic point) she perceives him to be the weaker of the two men. Candida consoles Marchebanks on his way out of the door,

> Oh no—don't go like that. One last word now, Marchebanks. How old are you? Eighteen? Will you for my sake make a little poem out of the 2 sentences I'm going to say to you. And will you repeat it to yourself whenever you think of me? When I am 30, he will be 45. And when I am 60, he will be 75. Good-bye!

For Sands personally, Candida's argument to Marchebanks regarding their relative ages along the sides of the love triangle might have been significant given her own confrontation with ageism in the Neighborhood Playhouse (as discussed in Chapter One). Thematically, Candida represents another example of a strong female character that subverts patriarchal structures from within. In this case, the female protagonist privileges pragmatism over storybook romance, by choosing a "sugar daddy" (to use

a current referent) rather than the dreamy young poet. In truth, in a socio-economic context in which women could not generally earn their own way, Shaw seems to argue, what good does poetry serve if you starve? Choosing exigency over passion probably reflected real women's choices, but to puncture the ideal of courtly romance onstage so baldly must have been shocking, as well as comical. Sands played each Candida, Morrell, and Marchebanks.

**Pauline Lord as "Anna Christie" in *Anna Christie* (1921) by Eugene O'Neill**

For her penultimate scene, Sands brings her audience into the twentieth century. She selects a scene from *Anna Christie* (1921) by former Baker classmate Eugene O'Neill, who won the Pulitzer Prize for drama for the play in 1922. Sands argues that the "contemporary" style differs from styles past, in part, due to the physical conditions of the playhouses which presents its plays. Sands notes that contemporary drama tends to occur in intimate spaces ("Our small, intimate theater where the voice need hardly be raised") which modern lighting instruments support ("reveal the slightest change of expression"). She says that modern plays are "camera studies," that depict shades of gray ("more or less") in emotional tones. Consequently, modern acting became softer, smaller, and more focused on subtlety than the declamatory style.

*Anna Christie* differs from the show up to this point in that Sands employs double-impersonation—not just recreating a historically significant monologue, but also the actress who first created the role. Whereas in Congreve, Dryden, Jones, and Shaw, Sands played strong fictional female protagonists, Sands plays O'Neill's Anna

Christie *as* American stage and film actress Pauline Lord (1890-1950). Lord created the original Christie role on Broadway in 1921 to great success. Propitiously, Sands had previously parodied Lord to great success on Broadway as well. In the 1928 edition of the *Grand Street Follies*, on tour in Detroit, Sands impersonated Lord as Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the scene in which she goes mad (*Hamlet* 4.5). In her *Follies* skit, Sands played Lord as Ophelia in a tragic style, and then repeated the scene as the comedic actress Ina Claire.[46] In *Styles in Acting*, Sands offers Lord as an early pioneer of the then-current acting style in the 1930s. Sands explains that Lord's emotional realism made her interpretation of Christie emblematic of modernism, "Her [Lord's] method was so modern & realistic, she has so completely identified herself with the part that I shall play this scene . . . in the manner of Miss Lord." Sands could have selected from dozens of contemporary or near-contemporary actresses in her repertory of impersonations, but Lord served as an exemplar for early theatrical Modernism and a workhorse caricature.

Sands had studied Lord's style thoroughly. In her dissertation on Herford, Loftus, and Sands, Linda Sue Long selects published interviews in which Sands reports seeing Lord perform repeatedly, assimilating details and ultimately finding the key to Lord's impersonation in her eyes.[47] Indeed, elsewhere in Sands' unstudied materials at the Billy Rose Theater Collection, Sands described Lord's eyes as, "—a hurt, sad dog expression—glances up—far away look [underline in original]." Sands also described Lord's physicality, such as habitual patterns of Lord's mouth

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[46] "I chose 'Ophelia' as my role and chose to carry it off in Pauline Lord's manner, hurt and pathetic and always with a tragic note. Then, still as Ophelia, I act the part as [American stage and film actress] Ina Claire might act it, with a slight comedy tinge, and in every way the exact opposite of miss Lord's impersonation."[46] "Dorothy Sands," *Detroit Free Press*, Nov. 30, 1928.
[47] Long, "The Art of," 74-75.

("tendency to droop at ends"), hands ("nervous, fluttering, unfinished gestures"), feet ("relaxes ankles"), and body ("relaxes—Lean on walls—Drop into chairs").[48] In developing her *Follies* parody, Sands wrote out the scene and annotated the text with line-by-line analysis of Lord's performance.[49]

In introducing *Anna Christie* for *Styles in Acting*, Sands tells the audience that the eponymous lead, Anna Christie, is the daughter of an Old Swedish sea captain who "loathed and loved the sea." Upon the death of his wife, the captain sent Anna away, to protect her from falling in love with "'that ole devil sea.'" Years later, the captain sends for his daughter. Anna, now an adult and a prostitute, emerges from a saloon next to the docks and boards the ship. There, she finds her father, Chris Christie, and her lover, an Irish sailor named Matt Burke (another triangle). The two men are having an argument over which of the two own her (echoing *Candida*) when Anna interrupts. Sands indicates that Anna stands behind a table, wearing a "short skirt" and "shapeless blouse," and that Sands will play all three roles (also like *Candida*) in the emotional show-down.

The scene puts a capstone on female agency, which has by now has become the dominant leitmotif of *Styles in Acting*. After getting the two men's attention, Anna declares, "You's going on's if one of you had got to own me. Well nobody owns me excepting myself. I'll do what I please & no man is can tell me what to do. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe & smoke it. You & your orders!" Anna rails at her father, telling him that his promise that her life on a far-away Minnesota

[48] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,566. Chapter Four examines this scrapbook in depth.
[49] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,566.

farm would be pleasant amounted to "bunk," and that she made her way into prostitution through a cousin in St. Paul. Anna tells Matt that she is trying to come clean and start her life over ("I'm owning up the very thing fair & square"), and explains her choices by saying that domestic life felt just as imprisoning as Matt's isolation on the sea ("I was in a cage, just like you"). Anna blames the two men for her lot. She accuses her father for abrogating his promise to be a father, and indicts Matt for failing to provide. In fact, as a whore, she services servicemen like Matt. She has settled into cynicism, hating both men of the sea and men generally, "your nice inland men & all men—so damn 'em I hate 'em—I hate 'em!" Anna breaks down when neither interlocutor responds.

The scene indicates an astonishing indictment of power asymmetry in the gender-binary. In her final speech, Anna points out that contrition has both condemned and cleansed her, "if I told you that just getting on this barge & being on the sea had changed me, & made me feel different about things & if all I'd been thru wasn't me, & didn't count, was just like it had never happened—you'd laugh wouldn't you?" Caught in a bind, Anna feels that she could not marry Matt without telling him the truth of her past ("I can't marry you with you believing a lie"), but now knowing the truth, he wants nothing but for her to leave. Anna trusted her decision to disclose her fallen status ("Will you believe me if I tell you that loving you has made me clean"), but now has no choice but to give up hope for redemption. In the face of Matt's silence, Anna answers her own question: "Like hell you will! You're just like all the rest!" Sands can safely utter O'Neill's incendiary scene from within the insulating convention of satire, history, and impersonation. However, from

Restoration women bartering their sexuality, to a Victorian melodrama in which a woman confronts her small town neighbor's narrow-mindedness, to a modern anti-heroine beating her fists against double standards, *Styles in Acting* presents strong female characters critiquing the power structures in which they find themselves.

**"Lady Macbeth" in *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare *as if* played by Haidee Wright, Ethel Barrymore, and Mae West**

After the heaviness of *Anna Christie*, Sands concludes *Styles in Acting* with a lighthearted flourish. For the final section, Sands offers the conceit of playing a single scene three ways, ostensibly to compare three styles of acting against a fixed text. She begins, "Finally, just to remind you how many individual styles of acting exist in any one period and to show what different acting methods will do to a single scene, I am going to play part of a the sleepwalking scene of Lady Macbeth [*Macbeth* 5.1] as I think three types of actresses might play it." This strategy bears similarly to the abovementioned 1928 *Follies* sketch in which Sands played Shakespeare's character Ophelia tragically, as Pauline Lord, and then comically, as Ina Claire. Here, a triple interpretation of Lady Macbeth allows a diachronic representation of acting. The device also allowed Sands to showboat three of her signature impersonations: the English *grande dame* and character actress Haidee Wright, the imperious late-Victorian Ethel Barrymore, and the ever-evocative Mae West. Audiences would easily have identified the references. Programmatically, the final scene would have created a sense of crescendo and climax, encouraging ovations at the final curtain.

The three actresses would also allow Sands to display her parotic range. Sands characterizes Wright as the "breadth and power" of the classic tradition.

Barrymore was as an accomplished stage actress, but also a celebrity in the modern sense of term of a performer propelled by the force of her own personality and public image, "the Queen of our theatrical Royal family." West was Sands' signature impersonation from the *Grand Street Follies*, and in *Styles in Acting* Sands characterizes West as an incendiary artifact of a rapidly retreating world, a "phenomenon that mostly disappeared with the burlesque queens of the pictures." As discussed in Chapter One, Sands' impersonation of West as "Diamond Lil" become so prominent on Broadway, West's managers supposedly approached Sands to cover with West in the case of her arrest for obscenity charges. Sands asked her audience to imagine Wright in "simple classic robes," Barrymore in "exquisite chiffon draperies," and West, "would wear a black lace nightgown for which she would be immediately arrested."

Sands launches into Shakespeare's well-known lines from "The Sleepwalking Scene" (5.1.39-76) in *Macbeth* which begins with Lady Macbeth trying to scrub her hands of the blood of Duncan who, as the current king, stands in the way of Macbeth's ascension to power. Lady Macbeth intones, "Out, damn spot" indicating her desire to cleanse herself of both the physical and moral trace of murder. Lady Macbeth censures her husband for his cowardice, and finally ends her monologue with "What's done cannot be undone! To bed! To bed! To bed!" Of all the female characters who contest power relations within marital context in *Styles in Acting*, Lady Macbeth is perhaps the most morally complex.

Unfortunately, the scripts provide limited insight into Sands' choices. In neither the 1932 script nor the later manuscript does Sands indicate stage directions.

Also in both texts, Sands writes out the scene as Barrymore, but not for Wright or West. The Barrymore text contains some notes for stage business, such as the stage direction, "(crossing with Barrymore stare)." Whatever the "Barrymore stare" might have constituted must remain a lost fact of theater history, but Sands' audiences presumably understood the visual reference. Also, Barrymore seems to have had the habit of slurring words together, as Sands writes out one of Lady Macbeth's lines (as Barrymore) as "Whatneedwefearwhoknowsitwhennonecancallourpowertoaccount?" As for West, Sands would have assuredly reveled in excess, and we might only imagine what sort of innuendo Sands as West would have imparted to the line, "To bed, to bed, there's knocking at the gate." The omission of Wright and West in both scripts, and the minimal markups for Barrymore perhaps indicate a level of comfort with these impersonations. In any case, Sands lets Mae West have the final word in *Styles in Acting*.

Having surveyed styles in acting from the Restoration through to the present, Sands leaves the audience with a series of strong female characters resisting traditional power dynamics within marriage—from the Restoration wasps Millament and Almahide; to the gender-inverting star Madame Vestris; to the confrontational Nellie Denver, played by Pauline Lord; and finally the quintessential "unsexed" character, Lady Macbeth, played by a doyenne of English stage (Wright), a numinous stage celebrity (Barrymore), and a smoldering burlesque queen (West). As a comedic piece, *Styles in Acting* might offer subversive female agency as a farcical object—something to laugh at—in which case the play reinscribes normative gender roles. Alternatively, working within a comedic framework, these women characters (and

Sands' interpretations of them) might constitute subversive figures. In that reading, Sands' history of theater, then, is a story of the tension between men and women over power, and the onstage representation of women's agency. Also, presenting theater history as a sequence of female characters and actresses was itself a transgressive history, a theme later chapters will explore.

### *Changing History*

Dorothy Sands adapted her tale of English stage history in response to playability and shifting audience composition and expectations throughout the 1930s and beyond. Sands cut the "talk is cheap" introduction. Her original script includes the marginalia "For N.Y. 1931," but the joke regarding her bare bones premiere does not seem to have traveled outside of New York.[50] Although clever, perhaps Sands felt that the reference to collapsed production budgets would not read beyond Broadway aficionados. She did, however, add additional details to the history of stage fashion and its reciprocal influence on and by acting styles over the course of her scripts. In discussing classical Greek theater in the 1932 script, for example, Sands still starts with stress on theatrical architecture, but her later script moves on to the importance in understanding the reasons for the *cothurnus*, or built-in shoes in costumes, enlarging and distorting masks, and provided vocal amplification.[51] Likewise, Sands goes into greater detail in the physical conditions of market-place Commedia dell'arte "buffoonery," and how, in open-air Elizabethan theater, "we can

[50] Ibid.
[51] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 1, 'Original copies of my two one-woman shows,'" Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

see that robust romantic plays offer a lusty, roast-beef eating public called for a power and vigor in action and elocution that would have blasted us out of our seats in our cosy modern theaters." From the 1932 script to her later (undated) script, Sands goes into finer granularity regarding physical stage conditions, the physical conditions of the audience, and how each of these factors impacts the others.

The later script contains changes that reflect subtle shifts during her solo career. For example, in the Lady Macbeth sleepwalking scene, Sands changes her description of Ethel Barrymore. Whereas the 1932 script states, "Then as Ethel Barrymore, our first lady of the theater (the perfect exponent of the star system)," the line changes to "Then as Ethel Barrymore, our beautiful and glamorous lady of the theater." Traditionally, star actors and actresses traveled England and America, appearing with local stock companies along the way. By the late 1920s, the star system had transformed into one ruled by theatrical impresarios and magnates.[52] Apparently, as the 1930s went along, audiences no longer recognized the allusion to the "star system," or why identification with it merited praise.

More substantively, changes in wording underscore shifting target markets away from an idealized Anglo-American audience and towards a (relatively) heterogeneous, middle-class market. For instance, in discussing the plays of T.W. Robertson and Dion Boucicault in the 1932 script, Sands changed a line from, "they [Robertson and Boucicault's plays] were about English people who were supposed to dress and act like English of their own times who their friends might recognize," to

[52] Valleri J. Hohman chronicles the ascension of Jewish managers David Belasco, Morris Gest, and Otto H. Kahn, working with Russian theatre talent. See especially Chapter Two of *Russian Culture and Theatrical Performance in America, 1891-1933 1933* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2011), 57-100. Sal Hurok and the Schubert family also participated in the trend towards professional agents and managers.

"they were about people who were supposed to dress and talk like English people of their own time."[53] The change from "English people" to "people" and cutting the phrase "who their friends might recognize" favor economy, but might also reflect a softening of the show's normative Englishness of audiences.

Counter-intuitively, Sands' touring in the 1930s and 40s occurred during a slowdown of immigration to the United States. The *Immigration Act (Johnson-Reed)* of 1924 set entrance quotas per country, and the *National Origins Formula*, also of 1924, set an overall immigrant quota to the United States. Furthermore, the Great Crash in 1927 and the subsequent Depression made America less desirable a destination than previously. By Sands' premieres in 1932 and 1933, the influx of Eastern and Southern European immigrants had ended. However, as Sands toured, she would have encountered ethnic groups that settled in regions across the United States, such as Poles in industrial northern and northern mid-west cities, Germans in the Upper mid-west and Texas, the Dutch in Michigan and Ohio, and other European and non-European groups. These populations faced pressures to disappear in to the "melting pot," but did not necessarily hail from Norman nobility, as had Sands. Sands' canon still reflected an Anglo-American arc, and the normativity of that tradition, but changes in wording indicate a growing awareness of a more multifaceted America, at least among its European constituents.

Also, Sands' development of passages on theatrical space in theatrical history contain clues about shifting notions of social class. For example, in her section on the Restoration, Sands developed new passages that explained how Charles II brought

[53] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 1, 'Original copies of my two one-woman shows,'" Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

back theatrical novelty from Paris and granted theatrical patents for royal companies. However, she also removed details regarding encircling overhead boxes from her original 1932 script, disparaging comments regarding the "country cousins," and comments on how the oversexed courtesans were as, "depraved and licentious as the men." Sands excised an entire paragraph that discussed class restrictions in the Restoration playhouse ("practically a court theater"). She keeps in a line explaining that, "the middle classes had nothing to do with this theater," but at the same time invites her middle class audiences to scoff at aristocratic fops and flirts, just as they might sneer at the excesses of the Great Gatsby-types of the 20s.

The conflation of space and class also lends the piece philosophical nuance. On the one hand, Restoration houses (the first theaters "in the modern sense of the word") mark a radical innovation in theater architecture. Sands argues, "I think if we could visualize for a moment those Restoration theaters and their audiences that we might appreciate the conditions that created a very special type of acting." However, Sands' discussion of theatrical space also recalls philosopher Jürgen Habermas' distinction between the "public sphere" (*Öffentlichkeit*) and the "private sphere." For Habermas, the public sphere involved shared space in which the seat of power engaged in discourse with those ruled, whereas the private sphere excluded (overt) state power, marking realms such as labor or domestic life, a split that Habermas says happened in the eighteenth century.[54] For Habermas (a denizen of coffee shops, literary societies, and salons), the public sphere included venues like coffee shops,

[54] Primarily, Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft), trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1962 trans 1989).

literary societies, and salons, but the critical component of public space was the act of speech. Within Habermas' conception, theater spaces become paragons of political space.[55] Sands' discussion of space necessarily involves social class, and therefore economics and power. Sands created, in Habermas' terms, a public space of discourse across class and time.

In sum, script changes in *Styles in Acti*ng suggest an artist attuned to national/racial and class changes in her target audiences during the 1930s. On the other hand (and in contrast to *Our Stage and Stars*), *Styles in Acting* remained remarkably stable in content and format throughout its lifespan. As the next chapter will show, Sands' second work, focusing on American theater history, required more preparation and rewrites. Sands continued to perform both shows even after her return to Broadway after the end of the Second World War. Despite its Anglo-American specificity, *Styles in Acting* succeeded with audiences of increasingly diverse heritages as America passed through its greatest economic downturn. The female characters' stance against passivity in marriage might have resonated with women's rights advocates (women's suffrage only hailed back as far as 1920), yet because Sands framed the show as a comedy, such political commentary seemed safe for viewers of all political persuasions. The show's incisive, consummately performed scenes straddled the growing gap between the moral uplift lecture-demonstrations by platform readers of the nineteenth-century, and the emerging entertainment culture of celebrity spectacle.

[55] The Greek word for "stage" (*logeion*), meant literally "speaking place."

# Chapter Three: A Show of One's Own (1933-42), Act II – *Our Stage and Stars*

### *A "Little" Introduction*

The previous chapter provided the theatrical context and marketing strategy for Dorothy Sands' first woman show, *Styles in Acting* (1932), and conducted a close reading of the scripts, taking an edited 1932 draft as the source text. This chapter repeats the exercise for *Our Stage and Stars* (1933), Sands' revue of American theater history from the Revolutionary War period up until the stars of the silver screen. However, this chapter goes into greater detail than the last regarding social and political contextualization in America, since the show consciously performs "American-ness." Also, more extant evidence exists for Sands' dramaturgy for *Our Stage and Stars*, and she revised the piece more heavily than *Styles in Acting*. As America worked to redefine its identity during the Depression, so Sands struggled to dramatize the nation's theater history. This chapter begins with a "little" introduction of the Little Theatre, where Sands premiered *Our Stage and Stars*, in order to provide a sense of materiality for the starting point of Sands' decade-long hiatus from New York in favor of solo touring, followed by a due consideration of the shifting cultural context Sands would have encountered in the nation at-large.

The Little Theatre, now the "Helen Hayes Theatre," resides at 238-244 West 44th Street in mid-town Manhattan, about a five-minute stroll southwest from Times Square (or about ten minutes north and west of Bryant Park) and stands adjacent to

other historic theaters, such as the Booth, Shubert, and Majestic. In the present, a sushi restaurant and a stylish Aeropostale clothing store confront passerby. The Little blends into the aesthetic cacophony that makes New York dizzyingly unique, and the rushed visitor may very well walk past the house unawares. Upon closer inspection, The Little boasts a neo-Colonial/Georgian façade. Red brick, white window trim, and parallel columns frame the entrance, lending a formal, fusty tone. A historic landmark since 1982, the aptly named Little helped launch the Little Theatre Movement in America, focusing on psychological realism within smaller auditoria.

Despite its diminutive stature (the playhouse originally clocked in at under 300 seats), the New York Landmark Commission assures the tourist that the Little, "contributes to the totality of the [New York theater] district's history by virtue of its participation in that history."[1] Capturing the emerging voice of American playwrights in the early twentieth-century, the Little produced George Baker products like Sands' former classmates at Harvard, Eugene O'Neill and Philip Barry. The theater also championed challenging plays from Norwegian iconoclast Henrik Ibsen to the American Pulitzer Prize Winner Elmer Rice.[2] In November 1933, the Little also served as Dorothy Sands' last local port of call before barnstorming nationwide.

Sands premiered her solo work in the midst of two paradigm shifts in American entertainment. Following technological innovations in the 1920s, Al Jolson's Vitaphone-brand sound film, *The Jazz Singer*, appeared in 1927. By the early 1930s, sound features had overtaken silent film. In so doing, sound cut into one of the characteristics of live theater: the presence of performers' voices. In addition

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[1] New York Landmarks Preservation Commission, "The Neighborhood Playhouse," New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Report LP-2433 (New York, Mar. 22, 2011), 1.
[2] The Little Theatre, "History," http://thelittle.org/history (accessed November 17, 2016).

to displacing silent stars who could not transition to the new media, film critics have bemoaned the advent of sound film for its degradation of cinematic artistry. Although much silent cinema followed formulae, the visions of silent film directors like Soviet genius Sergei Eisenstein, German directors like F.W. Murnau (director the vampire classic *Nosferatu*) and Fritz Lang (who created the Marxist science fiction classic *Metropolis*), or the spectacle-oriented American director Cecil B. DeMille, gave way to Hollywood boilerplate. When Sands began touring, silent and sound film stars would have both been current to audiences as the two types of film vied for market share.

So-called "talkies" also created a need for a new style of acting, which took time to fulfill. Previously, performers could pass between film and stage. Sound film sundered the two types of performance before acting methods had time to adapt.[3] As film theorist Charles O'Brien writes, "It wasn't until the mid-1930s that sound-film conventions became stabilized, and a single form of classicalism began to define film practice worldwide; even then, sound-film practices seen today as alternatives to the mainstream survived throughout the 1930s and into later decades."[4] In other words, Sands developed her solo work in an interstitial space between silent and sound film, radio and stage, when stage actress of the day and the previous generation still maintained name recognition along with silent films stars, as well speaking and mute screen stars and disembodied radio personalities. Sands could exploit the differences

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[3] Eisenstein, for instance, had been a disciple of Soviet director Vsevelod Meyerhold. The timing of rise of the Group Theater's Stanislavski-inspired "Method Acting," in America in the 1920s and 30s (e.g., pedagogues Harold Clurman, Cheryl Crawfod, and Lee Strasberg), which lent itself to sound movies on the large screen, is not coincidental.

[4] Charles O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound: Technology and Film Style in France and the U.S.* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2005), 9.

in acting styles across media for comedic effect, and could assume that general audiences would understand intermixed references to theater stars, radio drama stars, silent film stars, and sound film stars.[5]

"Hays Code," "Production Code," or more simply "Code" provides a second contextualizing feature to Sands' work in the early 1930s. Named after Will H. Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) from 1922-45, the Hays Code called for voluntary Hollywood censorship of sexual and political themes, starting in 1930, and set into law in 1934. The Hays Code suppressed overt sexuality in movies for the next thirty years, giving rise to alternative strategies for signaling steam (and controversial themes generally).[6] Previous to Hays, films pushed the limits of explicitness in an incessant drive to fuel ticket sales. As media critic Andi Zeisler notes, films of the early 1930s also featured female roles that questioned social norms. Zeisler notes *The Divorcee* (1930), starring Canadian ingénue and sexual free spirit Norma Shearer. Shearer's character responds to her husband's marital infidelity by having her own affair, which causes her husband to leave the marriage, both calling into question double standards—and garnering Shearer an Academy Award.[7] Needless to say, Shearer's experience demonstrates the irony that the same performance can earn critical accolades, only to become smut four year later due to a change in political climate. For Sands, the Hays laws meant that audiences still had memories of pre-Code sex objects even in the new

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[5] To give a sense of the rapidity of mediatization in entertainment, Italian inventor Enrico Marconi conducted his first experiments in radio waves in the 1890s, and mass radio programming dates from the 1920s. Color film arrived a mere fifteen years later, in 1935, and the landmark color film *Wizard of Oz*, in 1939.

[6] Just as the Victorian age was a golden age of pornography, Hays' America, if anything, increased society's collective sexual pressure.

[7] Andi Zeisler, *Feminism and Pop Culture* (Berkeley: Seal Studies, 2008), 30.

period of official prudishness, a mismatch ripe for comedy. The new taboo laws provided richness to subtext. In short, the Hays era became a golden age of tease. Zeisler refers to iconoclasts like Jean Harlow, Clara Bow, Mae West, and Marlene Dietrich, all of whose caricatures Sands possessed in her repertoire. With her Boston Brahmin sensibilities, Sands would have known how to gently titillate conservative mores while making clear subtextual references.

Ironically, the Depression marked an ideal environment in which Sands' solo work could thrive. Expansion in railroad and performing arts circuits such as Chautauqua since the late nineteenth century provided logistical means for a solo artist to tour. Sound movies brought actresses' images and voices into towns and small communities across America that would only have known Broadway stars at a remove. Sands could travel to small town audiences that would find her New York credibility fashionable, but also be able to laugh at her movie references. Although speaker circuits had existed for decades, the ever-increasing ease of travel meant that Sands could physically get to more performance opportunities and thereby capitalize on a reenergized puritanism in the heartland, where she could tickle audiences with pitch-perfect renditions of scandalous sex symbols. Sands spent most of 1932 building a body of critical testimonials for *Styles in Acting* through select preview performances at New York and east coast theaters, as well as women's colleges while simultaneously developing *Our Stage and Stars*. After her premiere of *Our Stage and Stars* at the Little Theater in 1933, Sands focused on full-time touring for the next decade.

Like *Styles in Acting, Our Stage and Stars* alternated brief lectures on periods in theater history with enactments of representative scenes in period styles. However, whereas *Styles in Acting* began with English theater and finished with female Hollywood icons, *Our Stage and Stars* began and ended with American traditions. Sands traipsed from Revolutionary copies of English comedies of manner; through frontier theater; Gold Rush mining camp fare; the "Romantic" 1870s; Lillian Russell's debut in 1880; Realism in the twentieth century; and "Vampires—Now and Then," featuring impersonations of Greta Garbo, Mae West, and silent film vixen Theda Bara (since Bara did not speak in her films, Sands pantomimed her part). Sands also employed "double-impersonation" (playing a role *as* a recognizable actress) more prominently than she had in *Styles in Acting*. She played five of the seven scenes in *Our Stage and Stars* as young incarnations of famous actresses playing representative plays. Sands also referenced specific productions in her history, like Lillian Russell at Tony Pastor's, or theatrical impresario David Belasco's 1909 run of Eugene Walter's *The Easiest Way*.

Audiences responded to both shows. Sands left dozens (possibly hundreds) of small civic venues happy in her wake, but could play to large crowds also. Barry Sharnbough, the chairman of the lecture board for The State University of Iowa in Iowa City (now University of Iowa), wrote to Lee Keedick, that Sands' standing-room-only house numbered an enthusiastic 1500 attendees. Sharnbough praised Sands' performance of *Our Stage and Stars*, writing, "The historical conception of the program, the accuracy of the costuming, the literary quality of the introductions to the several numbers, and the skill and artistry of the acting made the performance an

event of unusual significance," and one that "every college and university in the country should have an opportunity to see."[8] Sands' historical-based solo work hearkened back to the earliest traditions of storytelling, but struck audiences as something revolutionary.

***Our Stage and Stars – Sources***

In additional to fragments of scripts and abundant play development research (featured primarily in Chapter Four), Sands' archives at the Harvard Theater Collection contain two complete drafts of *Our Stage and Stars*, both of which present problems with dating. In particular, Sands seems to have added title pages with dates to both scripts later, but the information on each title page might be misleading. The first script, marked with edits (catalogued at the Harvard Theatre Collection as "Notebook 1"), contains the title page, "1938 Our Stage and Stars or American Theater Highlights."[9] Sands did not begin referring to her American show as *American Theater Highlights* until after World War II, which ended in 1945 (the end of this chapter will address the significance of the name change in a mandatorily patriotic postwar America, and why Sands would focus on "Theater highlights" even though she concludes the piece with screen stars).

The second notebook's script's title (catalogued at Harvard Theatre Collection as "Notebook 2") page says, "Written in 1932," but also, "Played in every state of the

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[8] Chairman of the Senate Board on University Lectures to Mr. Lee Keedick, Mar. 21, 1935, MWEZ + n.c. 4641 #3. See also, "From 1787 to Mae West, Dorothy Sands to Mimic Famous Theatrical Stars," *The Daily Iowan*, Mar. 13, 1935.

[9] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 1: 'Original Copies of my two one-woman shows: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932 and 'Our Stage and Stars or American Theatre Highlights' 1938," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Union—Canada—London—Germany (for State Department)."[10] The State Department program in Germany almost certainly refers to the Berlin Airlift, which Sands participated in during 1948-49. Operating between May 1945 until December 1949 under General Lucius D. Clay, the Office of Military Government, United States (OMGUS) sought to supplement the physical and economic reconstruction of post-war Germany with educational and cultural programming. Sands' orders from the Educational and Cultural Relations Division (E&CR) under OMGUS had her report to Frankfurt from London for a twenty-one day tour as a "European Expert Consultant"—essentially a "run-of-the-show" contract with access to American military bases, transportation, and security, starting June 22, 1949.[11] There is no way to tell exactly when Sands wrote this script (the title page does not necessarily date from the same time as the script itself), and the script contains heavy editing. However, when Sands wrote "1932," she seems to have meant that she originally wrote the show in 1932—this script probably dates from later on, and the edits could date up until after 1949.

Confusingly, the script labeled "1938" (Notebook 1) seems to have been written *prior* to the one labeled "1932" (Notebook 2). Notebook 2 contains words that appear as inserts in Notebook 1, and does not contain words crossed out on Notebook 1. Although there is no way to know for sure, positing Notebook 1 as the earlier script and Notebook 2 as the later seems the simplest explanation. In choosing one as the source text, Sands might have wanted us to use the later version as

[10] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 2: 'Our Stage and Stars, 1932,'" Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[11] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Bill Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,444.

definitive (Notebook 2), since it is the most developed and polished articulations of her project. As with the previous chapter, this analysis will choose the version that the largest number of audiences would have been likely to have seen. Since neither script likely reflects the first performances of *Our Stage and Stars*, the chapter will select the earliest of the available options—Notebook 1. However, like the previous chapter, the end of this chapter will explore the changes in *Our Stage and Stars* (which becomes *American Theater Highlights*) as a way of reading insights into changing audiences.

## ***Our Stage and Stars***

### **Post-Revolutionary Theater: The first American Comedy, Royall Tyler's *The Contrast* (1787)**

Sands begins her survey of the American theatrical tradition with the comedy *The Contrast* (1787) by Revolutionary war veteran and Vermont Supreme Court Justice Royall Tyler. Tyler modeled his play on English comedies of manners and Richard Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (1777), specifically. The play features stereotyped characters like the Hero "Col. Manly," the Dandy "Mr. Billy Dimple," Coquettes "Charlotte" and "Laetitia," and, most importantly, "Jonathan," the plain-speaking, backwoods Yankee. In a memorable scene, Jonathan, new to the city, unknowingly wanders into a theater and mistakes the action onstage for actual events.[12] The play satirizes English aristocratic values and decries their lingering presence in the liberated colonies. Sands argues that the "contrast" the play draws is

[12] "Why, I vow, as I was looking out for him, they lifted up a great green cloth and let us look right into the next neighbor's house. Have you a good many houses in New York made so that 'ere way?" (*The Contrast*, 3.1).

that between "the corrupt and frivolous world of fashion which aped British manners" and homespun American identity.[13] Not harmless, Sands also describes *The Contrast* as "the first Isolationist propaganda," calling attention to newly risen nationalistic terrors present in both the Old and New worlds in the 1930s which Sands' audiences would have witnessed rising.[14]

The script follows the conceit of a journey, with Sands as guide. She begins *Our Stage and Stars* with a fictional couple arriving at the theater,

> Late in the afternoon of April 16, 1789 Mr. and Mrs. Van Rensaler's coach and four came clattering over the cobbles and with other coaches and sedan chairs drew up before a red modern building sitting some sixty feet back from the street. It was the John Street Theater in New York City where just two years from now the manager in full dress of black satin and his hair elaborately powdered white holding two wax candles in silver candlesticks would conduct George Washington (the first President of the United States) into his box shortly after his first inauguration.[15]

Sands leads the audience's imagination through a wooden shed that served as the theater entrance, up a narrow staircase, and into a box where servants have been holding seats for the past hour. After relating details of Mrs. Van Rensaler's slippers, hair, and gown, Sands takes the audience around the theater, from brightly adorned patrons to the vendors selling peanuts, candy, and fruit, "which later might be

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[13] Unless otherwise stated, all references to *Our Stage and Stars* come from Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 1: 'Original Copies of my two one-woman shows: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932 and 'Our Stage and Stars or American Theatre Highlights' 1938," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

[14] And, given a global turn rightwards, which includes Britain's "Brexit" vote to the leave the European Union and Donald Trump's 2016 election in the United States, forces that the world is meeting again.

[15] Transcripts are not corrected for punctuation.

somewhat ungraciously bestooned upon the actors." She invokes how the harpsichord and fiddles strike up an overture, and smells the smoke of candles in the chandeliers. A brief uncanny silence interrupts the playgoing experience just before curtain, "broken only by the rustle of silk, the snap of a snuff-box." Finally, the "green baize curtain" rises on American theater.

In the opening scene from *The Contrast*, Charlotte gossips to her friend Laetitia about the marital prospects and vapidity of the virtuous Maria. A satirical character, Charlotte attempts European affectation, "I now see that the finest assemblage of features, the greatest taste in dress, or the most brilliant wit, cannot eventually secure a coquette from contempt and ridicule."[16] Charlotte also addresses her brother, Col. Manly, a hero recently returned from overseas, "And you, my dear brother, I have learned that probity, virtue, honor, tho' they should not have received the polish of Europe, will secure to an honest American the good graces of his fair country, woman, and, I hope, the applause of the audience." As this speech ended the first section of *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands would have presumably hoped for the applause of the audience as well.

**The Frontier Theater: M.G. Lewes' *Adelgitha, of the Fruits of a Single Error* (1800, published in 1806)**

Continuing the conceit of a guided tour, Sands turns next to "The Frontier Theater," and tells the audience, "I am supposing that I am member of one of the first theatrical touring companies in the United States in the early 1800s," that struck out

[16] As in *Styles in Acting*, Sands seems to have been scrupulous in transcribing scenes in *Our Stage and Stars*.

onto the frontier in order to bring plays to the towns and hamlets, "springing up like mushrooms in the Mississippi Valley." Plumbing her own memory, Sands could very well have been speaking of her own conflicting emotions in her first tour with Martin Flavin's *Children of the Moon* in 1924, as discussed in Chapter One. Sands describes how established actors in the eastern cities felt reluctance to confront the hardships of touring such as wolves, hostile Native American tribes, and unappreciative audiences (not necessarily in that order). Sands notes that members of those touring companies deserve approbation as much for "enthusiasm and powers of endurance" as much as "their histrionic abilities" or professional training.

At the same time, Sands indulges in the eternal dream of the traveling player, "We play in whatever shelter the town offers, a hall, a garret of a tavern, a room in a log cabin with two bed-spreads sewed together for a curtain and tallow candles stuck in potatoes for footlights." The repertory of her imaginary frontier company comprises "practically everything on Polonius's list." The list to which Sands refers belongs to the bumbling counselor in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, who hails a traveling company of actors, as "[t]he best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, Plautus too light" (*Hamlet* 2.2.1477-1482). In other words, the early American touring companies could do anything, though Sands mentions tragedy, farce, and intre-acte solo performances in particular. Theater in an expanding America involved not just stages, but riding for days on wagons with trunks of scenery and costumes, changing landscapes, and loading horse and wagons onto river

flatboats.

After completing their day's travels along the Ohio River, Sands' imaginary company prepares to play M.G. Lewes' five-act *Adelgitha, or The Fruits of a Single Error* (Sands notates 1800, referring to the first performance, although Lewes published the play in 1806). Hardly a canonical masterwork, Sands describes the play's style as "absurdly bombastic" and the acting "extravagant and crude to your sophisticated modern eyes." She reminds her present-day audience that the frontier patrons sustained rough conditions. Pioneers would have forgiven unevenness in style and staging comprised of barrels and tarp. In fact, the settlers would have enjoyed overwrought language, convoluted plots, and fantastical settings, since these elements, "transported them [the settlers] from the grim realities of their fight-for existence to a world of glamorous romance." For inhabitants of American towns on the borders of known lands, theater provided relief and escape from the pressures of survival. Likewise, for Sands' audiences in the depths of the Depression, theater and film spectacles provided analogous escape. Just as a play like *Adegiltha* took frontier audiences to another world, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, dancing through ballrooms in formal eveningwear, or director Busby Berkeley's increasingly elaborate choreography of identical showgirls sporting glittering bathing suits and dazzling smiles, likewise provided straightforward avenues for escape from grim reality.

The fictitious company plays its scene, set in the Adriatic in 1080, with a single, soiled backdrop to represent gardens, groves, and ports. Sands describes the setting for her fictitious company, making the frontier theater seem as exotic in its roughness as the fantastical adventure in the play itself. Like *Hamlet*, Sands creates a

play within her play. For the monologue itself, she plays three roles: the villain Michael, an outcast Byzantine ruler; the hero Guiscard, who is trying to recapture Byzantium for the unworthy Michael; and the eponymous heroine Adelgitha, "Guiscard's loving and devoted wife." Sands conflates the five-act work into three scenes. In the first, Adelgitha deflects an unwanted sexual advance by Michael, who in turns reveals his knowledge of Adelgitha's sordid past. In the second scene, Adelgitha parlays with her husband. In the final scene, Adelgitha takes revenge on Michael and confesses her sins to Guiscard.

The piece must have been fun to watch and fun to play. Michael enters in with a long black cape thrown over his shoulder, black hat, and mustache. With "a fiendish chuckle," he declaims, "Ha! Ha! Ha! Adelgitha—Oh princely dame, unbend that gloomy brow and scorn me not! Some years are past since at the chase." Sands tears off the hat, cap, and mustache to reveal the heroine Adelgitha and repulses the attack. Sands might have milked the melodrama, as evidenced by stage directions like, "arms outstretched in supplication…hands in tragic gesture of despair." When, as Adelgitha wracked by remorse, she cries, "If I'd [I had] a dagger and a heart I speak (*pantomimes stabbing self*)," we might assume that Sands refrained from restraint and exaggerated melodramatic style (if such a thing is possible) for comedic effect. The prose is, speaking plainly, ghastly, "He's here—I'll tell him all—/ I'll dare it —/ Tis the crisis of my fate." The demand of writing five acts in verse posed a daunting standard for all but the most accomplished playwrights, a membership to which, Sands implies, he perhaps did not qualify.

Nevertheless, as Sands donned the cape again and threw on a helmet, she played the hero Guiscard, speaking with "breathy, bumpkin voice" and arm upraised and striking his bosom in the passion of his speech. Upon finishing, Sands removes the cape and helmet, at which point Adelgitha confronts Michael, ultimately stabbing him with a dagger, confesses her past sins to Guiscard, and then kills herself. Sands completes the scene with an invocation to heaven and the stage direction, "*The death rattle*," and the words "She dies," in a double underline. The absurdly minimalistic props—black cape, white hat, and mustache for Michael; helmet and sword for Guiscard; and dagger and red handkerchief for Adelgitha, would have been funny precisely for their inadequacy, and probably would have also provided Sands opportunities for additional stage business.

**Theater of the Gold Rush Era: Lotta Crabtree in Charles Dickens' *Little Nell and the Marchioness* (1867)**

Continuing with the conceit of traveling players, and paralleling the narrative of westward expansion in American history, Sands next leads her audience's attention to the theater of the Gold Rush.[17] Sands' troupe thus continues its peregrinations, "Now climbing into a covered wagon we join the Gold Rush and make our way to the Pacific Coast." In this scene, Sands signals a specific actress of the past playing roles characteristic of period styles. Sands impersonates Lotta Crabtree (1847-1924), a comedic singer, dancer, and actress raised in the gold hills and who retired to riches and philanthropic work. Sands describes Crabtree's father's departure west, "Trembling with excitement John Crabtree pulled down the shutters of his shop for

[17] A prospector named James W. Marshall first discovered gold at Sutter's Mill California on January 24, 1848, which set off waves of colonization, following pent-up population and economic pressure.

the last time." An English bookseller in New York, Mr. Crabtree joined a wagon train to follow the dream of "the gold that lay glittering" in California. Sands relates how he sent for his wife and six-year old daughter a year later, in 1853.

Fortuitously for the Crabtrees, an iconoclast named Lola Montez, "mistress of a king, actress, adventuress" also arrived in the Crabtree's mining town in the Sierra Mountains. Montez took an interest in Lotta, who at that time was, "a tiny slip of a girl with a mass of red curls and sparkling black eyes," and taught Lotta singing and dancing. When John Crabtree's gold dreams failed to pan out (literally), he cashed in on his daughter's talents. Lotta began to accompany Montez on mule-train tours through the mining towns, at night, "creeping along the dark trails in absolute silence." Avoiding nighttime dangers, the local troupe played barrooms ("which were also the village store") where tables, candles, and mining tools comprised the scene.

Sands describes how children were an unusual sight in the rough-and-tumble mining areas. Crabtree must have provided a splash of sunlight in her "simple white cambric dress with puff sleeves and a blue sash." As she sang, the work-beaten miners would "laugh and weep and cheer, and empty their pockets." Lotta's parents took a keen interest in the nightly take, but even so, they set aside a portion of Lotta's earnings. These early engagements provided the basis for Lotta's future fortune, "when Lotta died in 1924 her will disposed of millions of dollars." In fact, an audience in 1933 might have remembered Crabtree as an old-time actress secondarily to her philanthropic efforts. In her own time, Crabtree started out as a child star, and

a possible template for later child actresses. Sands' physical description of Crabtree sounds like Shirley Temple (1928-2014), with the substitution of red curls for blonde.

Sands describes how Crabtree progressed from variety performance on the San Francisco waterfront to eventual societal sanction via successes on the "legitimate" stage. Sands also points out how Crabtree achieved iconic status beyond theater, "she was not only a successful actress, she was a household word, an idol, a national craze." Here, Crabtree enters into Sands' purview as celebrity impersonator. Apparently, Crabtree had a prop, as she, "always produced her banjo, sang and danced." Sands replicates Crabtree—complete with banjo—in John Brougham's *Little Nell and the Marchioness* (1867), a stage adaptation of novelist Charles Dickens' *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). Dickens' serial-turned-novel tells the maudlin tale of Nell Trent and her grandfather, who flee into the London underworld after losing their curio shop due to debt. Sands plays Nell as a "wistful, little Cockney" tragic heroine with "rippling laughter" and antics. Sands took banjo lessons in order to provide authenticity to the rendition.[18]

The scene itself provided Sands with technical acting challenges. Nell starts the scene sitting on a table, shuffling and playing cards, while sniffing and coughing. Vocally, the scene also requires giggling and laughing, as well as playing the banjo and singing. Sands notates the scene in her script with International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols in order to work out the execution of Nells' working-class Cockney accent. She also summarizes sound shift rules for the accent at the bottom

[18] "How Dorothy Sands Began Her New Program 'Our Stage and Stars,'" *Boston Sunday Herald*, Jan. 14, 1934, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 4641 #3. Also qtd. in Linda Sue Long, "The Art of Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands within the Tradition of Solo Performance" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1982), 80.

of the scene, written in IPA symbols, dealing with vowel substitutions, vowel length, and glides/diphthongs. In today's acting environment, dialect coaching information is readily available from voice teachers, stage dialect guides, and the internet. In 1932, Sands had to make her own dialect analysis.

In the scene, Sands as Crabtree as Little Nell plays cribbage with herself while Dick Swiveller, a gullible youth who initially thinks to marry Nell for her money, revives from a three-week near-death illness. Nell begins, "Two for 'is 'eels (*as she pegs*) 15—2, 15—4 (*at a sound from the bed, she looks up*—)." She takes up a speech to Dick, who remains unresponsive. Nell shares how she snuck about the house at night, finding the key to his room, and scraps of food for herself. Orange peel in water simulates wine ("If you make believe very much it's quite nice"). She demurs to Dick, as if he had expressed concern for her sacrifice of food, possessions and even Dick's clothing for his medicines ("Awno, I haven't wore myself out—not a bit of it"). She offers to sing for Dick to take his mind off their sorrows. Pulling out a banjo, Sands/Crabtree/Nell plays a song called "Oh You Little Darling" as she dances. Sands does not indicate show she played the final stage direction, although it gives a sense of Dickens' melodrama (*"When the curtain closes she [Nell] waggles her toe outside it—and takes another curtain call crawling out from under the table"*).

**The Frontier Theater: Lillian Russell at Tony Pastor's (1880)**

From the California mining communities of the Gold Rush, Sands slingshots back to New York to the 1880s and "Tony Pastor's Variety Theater on 14th Street,

New York City, next door to Old Tammany Hall." Sands here refers to Tony Pastor (1832-1908), an American impresario who helped develop Vaudeville from a loose constellation of variety performance circuits into an economic superstructure. Pastor proved particularly innovative in providing Vaudeville theaters with social and physical safety for female audience members and mixed-gender audiences. Previously, theaters were boisterous and at times violent spaces, and male patrons took unaccompanied women for sex workers.[19] Sands slips in a subtle commentary when she adds that his theater was "next door to Old Tammany Hall," the building associated with the Democratic Party New York political machine, back-door deal-making, and political corruption. That is to say, which building was seedier, Pastor's or Tammany Hall?

Sands paints Vaudeville as a formulaic experience, and claims that variety shows remained fairly constant in format from their inception until their "fatal contest with the movies" (that movies replaced Vaudeville as mainstream popular entertainment during the 1920s). At least some of Sands' audience would have been old enough to remember Vaudeville of the 1880s, and she could have relied on her audience's cultural memory to adapt to minor differences, such as the lack of introductory newsreels, no emcee, and that, "the gas lighting will be less colorful and garish than our brilliant 1000 watt spots." At this point in the show, Sands' history begins to approach the present.

Sands asks the audience to imagine a series of late-Victorian flash acts: a family of acrobats, a song and dance team, a ventriloquist, and a troupe of trained

[19] See, e.g., Eric Ferrarra, *The Bowery: A History of Grit, Graft, and Grandeur* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011), 84-85.

dogs. However, Sands concludes that the highlight of the show would have been the impresario, Tony Pastor himself, "in his swallow-tail coat and brightly polished top boots." Twirling his mustache between his fingers, he would ordinarily have been happy to take top billing in his own entertainment. However, on hearing a young prospect sing at a friend's house, Pastor offered her fifty dollars a week to perform for his variety show, Sands relates. She states that this "girl whose beautiful face and elegantly-gowned hour-glass figure will become the toast of the gay nineties" and would become the "queen of the musical comedy" for the next twenty years. Like pulling a cloth, Sands reveals, "Her name is 'Lillian Russell,'" the American singer and actress as famous for her portrait as her performances. As Russell, Sands sings three popular "torch songs" (sentimental ballads) about unrequited love, popular in the 1880s: "See that my grave's kept green," "The picture that was turned towards the wall," and "Take back your gold." The script does not contain the sheet music for the ballads, but they would have been recognizable as popular songs of the period.

**"The Romantic Seventies": Ethel Barrymore's debut in Clyde Fitch's *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (1901)**

Sands continues with Ethel Barrymore's debut in *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines* (1901) by dramatist Clyde Fitch (1865-1909), the leading Broadway writer at the end of the nineteenth century. The title of this section, "The Romantic [Eighteen] Seventies" is a conflation. "The Gilded Age," or "Gay Nineties" usually refers to the period of economic prosperity in the 1890s, although the era also entailed growing economic inequality across social classes in the face of rapid industrial-age capitalist expansion. The period took on the moniker for the spirit of *jouissance*

among the American economic aristocracy, such as the Vanderbilts, the Rockefellers, or the Carnegies. Romanticism, on the other hand, refers to the artistic and literary movement that emphasized emotion and the subjective experience of the artist, and primarily flourished from 1800-1850.[20] The "Romantic Seventies" seems to split the difference and Sands perhaps intended the phrase as a *bon mot*.

Not a familiar title today, Sands lists several reasons for including *Captain Jinks and the Horse Marines* in her history. She praises Clyde Fitch, calling him the first American playwright "to possess real distinction" the main reason for her selection. Also, the play serves as a "picture of America" in the 1870s—specifically of a post-Civil War theater environment, which included *Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes*, the first spectacle-driven revue featuring high production values and interchangeable women.[21] Finally, Sands plays this piece since doing so allows her to feature Ethel Barrymore, one of her signature impersonations. Sands parodied Barrymore in the *Grand Street Follies*, and also in the final segment of *Styles in Acting*, when she plays Lady Macbeth in the "sleepwalking scene" as Barrymore, Haidee Wright, and Mae West. Sands describes Barrymore as the inheritor of an American acting lineage, starting with Mrs. John Drew, who managed the Arch Street Theater in Philadelphia in the 1870s, and whose descendants include members of the Barrymore acting clan, John Barrymore, Ethel Barrymore, Lionel Barrymore, John Drew Barrymore, and Drew Barrymore. In *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands recreates

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[20] For a standard text, see Peter Child, *Modernism: The New Critical Idiom,* 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2008).

[21] British dancer and burlesque star Lydia Thompson (1838-1908) produced the mythological *Ixion* (1868), which featured women wearing tights and playing men's roles. Thompson's burlesques (especially her so-called "British Blondes") made vast sums of money and helped established burlesque in America. See Robert Clyde Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

Ethel Barrymore's breakthrough debut in 1901 as Madame Trentoni, the heroine in Fitch's *Captain Jinks and the Horse Marines*.

In her introduction to this section, Sands relates an anecdote that focuses on the play's Philadelphia premiere. Ethel Barrymore's grandmother, Mrs. Drew, operated her stock company in Philadelphia. According to stage lore, Barrymore ran out of breath during a wild dance that occurs at the end of Act II. Supposedly, a voice called out from the upper galleries, "We loved your grandmother, Ethel, and we love you too."[22] Whether true or apocryphal, the story illustrates Drew's popularity as a female actress-manager, Ethel Barrymore's homegrown celebrity, and the success of Clyde Fitch's Broadway plays.

Sands sets the scene: we are at port in the 1870s as a steamer ship arrives in New York. Madame Trentoni, a famous opera singer, leaves the ship last. She graciously greets a crowd of journalists. Her subsequent monologue gently teases received notions of American celebrity and patriotism. As Trentoni runs down the plank, she trills, "Hip, Hip, Hurray! Here we are at last on American soil—planks—never mind, soil—E Pluribus Unum!" As she reaches the reporters, Trentoni preens, "(*She shakes hands around with each of them*) I'm so glad. I'm dying to be interviewed." Trentoni explains that she is "mad to go to A.T. Stewart's shop" (the nineteenth-century Manhattan version of Costco), and plays the caricature of a European traveler to America, "(*speaking in a stereotyped manner*) It's so enormous, so great a country! I'm amazed at its size"—even though she has not seen anything besides the docks. Trentoni confuses Hoboken for Boston and has only a fuzzy sense of Niagara Fall's location.

[22] Like many theater legends, the provenance of this quotation has been lost to time.

The scene satirizes a long tradition of idealistic European surveys of America, perhaps beginning with Alexis de Tocqueville's *De la démocratie en Amerique* ("On the Democracy in America") of 1835, which shaped a generation of European's perception of America.[23] In music, the spirit of European perceptions of America took soaring form with composer Antonin Dvorak's *Symphony No. 9* ("From the New World"), which featured musical themes that surge from pastoral to magisterial, and suggest in the American richness in unexplored territory. In philosophy, Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed the idea of the "noble savage," an objectification of pre-industrial populations that locates members of indigenous cultures closer to nature and therefore (in a Romantic context) on a higher spiritual plane. Writers and thespians made their own pilgrimages to America as well in the late nineteenth-century, such as Oscar Wilde, Charles Dickens, and Fanny Kemble.[24] Madame Trentoni single-handedly bowdlerizes this tradition.

Trentoni confides to the journalists, "You know I'm really an American. Yes, my father came from Trenton, New Jersey. That's how I got my name." In precise opposition to the practice of Americanizing European immigrants' names, "Trentoni" transposes the capital of New Jersey into fake Italian. The scene jibes America's search for identity following the waves of European immigration up until the 1920s. "Madame Trentoni," started out as "Aurelia Johnson." Trentoni quips, "of course that ['Johnson'] wouldn't look well on the bills." Through the Trentoni character, Jinks (and Sands) comments on America's desire for an American theater, but with

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[23] For a translation, see Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
[24] For a comprehensive account, see Gloria-Gilda Deák, *Passage to America: Celebrated European Visitors in Search of the American Adventure* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).

the imprimatur of European heritage. Consequently, American stars and would-be stars adopted Russian, Italian, and French names in an effort to appropriate Old World legitimacy, even if only through the inane strategy of changing their surnames. Trentoni admits, "Do I know the Royal Family? Er—not intimately." Soaring paeans to American virginal forests and untethered social strata that occur in travelers' tales, such as de Tocqueville's, vanish in favor of Trentoni's run-in with the quayside custom's official. She parts company with the reporters as well as her cargo, exclaiming, "Gentlemen, I leave not my home, but something much more fragile, I leave my wardrobe in your hands! Good-morning!" At that, Trentoni swishes away.

In one comic speech, Fitch levels irony at migratory politics, the buffoonery of would-be worldly travelers, and the inanity of the distinction between *nouveau riche* and older wealth. Trentoni is an evocative character for Sands to have chosen. Given the stigma of being an immigrant during one of America's nativist thrushes, Trentoni moves in the exact wrong direction: from domestic to foreign. As an object of derision, Trentoni might reinforce xenophobic tropes (what could be more ludicrous than *wanting* to be foreign?), although more likely Fitch uses the character to call attention to our simultaneous reviling and desiring of objectified outsiders. As nativism and isolationism mounted in America in the years running up to American involvement in the Second World War, this particular joke would have been well placed.

**Realism in the Early 1900s: David Belasco's Production of Eugene Walter's *The Easiest Way* (1909)**

Sands moves the clock forward with a section titled, "Realism in the early 1900s." In *Styles in Acting*, Sands broached Realism with George Bernard Shaw's *Candida* and Eugene O'Neill's *Anna Christie*. In *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands' entrée into a specifically American Realism feels much grittier than Shaw's archly stylized language. To add to the discussion of Realism from the previous chapter, "Realism" (in art history) refers to a period and style that represents reality in an unadorned manner, devoid of stylized convention.[25] This definition is problematic, however, as art in any period follows culturally informed conventions, otherwise artwork would be illegible to viewers.[26] In theater, Realism in the early twentieth century implies a style of theater that explored characters' emotional responses to forces beyond their control. Unlike plays of previous ages, Realistic plays feature ordinary people facing believable problems.[27] Realism emerged from changes in theater technology (like electric lighting) and new plays (from writers like Chekov and Ibsen).

To represent Realism in America, Sands selected *The Easiest Way* (1909) by American playwright Eugene Walter. Not all scenes in *Our Stage and Stars* hinged on comedy, and *The Easiest Way* takes a turn to the somber. The play follows the travails of its main character, Laura Murdock, an actress who rejects the boy-next-door in favor of a wealthy older man. She then has an affair with a newsman and leaves her benefactor, but later asks him for a loan for an upscale apartment. She ultimately loses both her lovers. Laura goes home to her family, where her salt-of-

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[25] Specifically, Realism began in painting in France as a rejection of Romanticism in the 1850s, spurred by the failed liberal Revolutions across Europe in 1848.
[26] Personal communication, Franklin Hildy, Spring, 2013.
[27] For an in-depth account of the origins of theatrical Realism in France, see J.L. Styan, *Modern Drama in Theory and Practice 1: Realism and Naturalism* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1981).

the-earth young neighbor still waits for her. Audiences would have been familiar with a 1931 MGM film adaptation starring 1920s and 30s "society" type actress Constance Bennett as Laura, and featuring leading men Robert Montgomery and Clark Gable. Although she spent most of her career in silent-film, *The Easiest Way* helped make Bennett one of the highest paid film stars in the early 1930s.[28] Pre-Code, the 1931 film was able to deal frankly with a female protagonist's negotiation of sex and survival.

As per her conceit of representing stars in their historical periods, Sands impersonates the actress who created Laura on stage, Frances Starr (1886-1973), a long-lived and versatile performer who starred both on stage, silent films in the 1920s, and talkies in the 1930s. Starr was also a rough contemporary of Sands. In fact, the two later acted in televised stage adaptations in the 1950s, although not together. Significantly, for *The Easiest Way* Sands not only specifies an historical actress, but in this case also cites the director. She tells her *Our Stage and Stars* audience that she will show them a scene from the first New York performance of David Belasco's production of *The Easiest Way* (1909). Belasco (1853-1931), a Jewish New York director who helped pioneer Realism in theater, produced over 100 Broadway plays, and worked with the luminaries of Hollywood and Broadway of his age, and also introduced now-standard principles of theatrical lighting.[29] He died two years before *Our Stage and Stars* premiered, and his name would still have been familiar to Sands' audiences.

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[28] Clive Hirschhorn, *The Warner Bros. Story* (New York: Crowblishers, 1979), 106.
[29] The authoritative text on Belasco is probably still, Lise-Lone Marker, *David Belasco: Naturalism in the American Theatre* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974), although see also Kim Mara, *Strange Duets: Impresarios and Actresses in the American Theatre, 1865-1914* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006).

Sands frames *The Easiest Way* in terms of Code politics, which both reminds the audience of the film adaptation, and also furthers an arc in her solo show from rough Revolutionary-era stages and movie acting (and how Realism served as a significant bridge in this progression). After citing critical testimonials of the production, she points out that John Fitzgerald, the mayor of Boston from 1906-08 and 1910-14, stopped the show in Sands' home town despite its successful two-year New York run. Sands quotes Fitzgerald, who claimed that *The Easiest Way*, "tended to familiarize young girls with the intimate details of low life in a great city and wear away the fine bloom of their innocence." The Boston major's condemnation touches on the perennial white terror of the threat of the "other" to (supposedly) virginal young white women. In 1915, filmmaker D. W. Griffith used the same strategy in the notorious *Birth of a Nation*. In the climax to Griffith's epic, the Ku Klux Klan rides to self-immolating glory in response to the unwanted sexual advances of a brutish black man (played by a white actor in blackface) against a chaste, innocent white woman, played by actress Lillian Gish.

A connection seems possible between Mayor Fitzgerald's thinly veiled racism in Boston and racialized sexual politics exemplified by *Birth of a Nation.* Griffith's film premiered the year Sands graduated from Radcliffe College in Cambridge. *Birth of a Nation* sparked black protests nationwide, but specifically in Boston.[30] Graduating from Harvard's Radcliffe College during the year of the film's release, Sands almost certainly would have been aware of Griffith's blockbuster and controversies surrounding it. Sands perhaps draws an understated line between

[30] See Mark Calney, "D.W. Griffith and 'The Birth of a Monster, How the Confederacy Revived the KKK and Created Hollywood," *The Atlantic Almanac*, Jan. 11, 1993.

Mayor Fitzgerald's comments and racism illustrated in a cultural product like *Birth of a Nation*. In *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands refers to politics of geography when she notes how poorly critics south of the Mason-Dixon Line received *The Easiest Way*, "in various Southern cities it [*The Easiest Way*] was cited as new evidence of 'The downward trend of the drama in recent years.'" In any case, Sands does not hold up Fitzgerald's actions as laudatory.

Sands praises Walter's play as a daring departure from frivolity, "It was a play which in an age of pleasant successes and happy endings dared to be a tragedy." In retrospect, Sands seems to have predicted Walter's influence on later works that focused on gritty tragedies of common people, like Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* (1949) or Lorraine Hansberry's *Raisin in the Sun* (1959). For Sands, *The Easiest Way* was a commonplace tragedy, profound in its banality, a tragedy "without a gun-shot, a tragedy of just going on living." She says that, thirty years on, the play "still stands as a sincere and moving piece." In the midst of the Depression, the tragedy of "just going on living" would have been immediate. Sands probably played this scene as a tragedy.

In *The Easiest Way*'s climactic apartment scene, Laura cuts off her liaison with her young lover, Will, "I've given you everything I've got, and now I want to live right and decent, and he [her older lover] wants me to, and we love each other." The young man refuses to leave, which causes Laura to panic, "You've got to go, do you hear? (*Pushes him out*) I want to be happy. I'm going to be married! I'm going to be happy! (*Sits down exhausted. Hears out door slam.*)" Laura's benefactor, John, walks in with an unsigned marriage license in hand, though Will has still not

left. For his part, John has heard gossip about Laura's lover, which Will's presence seems to confirm. Both men leave. Laura breaks down, and calls to her serving girl, "Get my new hat, dress up my body and paint my face! It's all they've left of me. (*To herself*) They've taken my soul away with them." Laura's monologue ends with self-referential declaration, "Doll me up, Annie. I'm going to Pastor's to make a hit—and hell with the rest!" The final line has the added meta-theatricality of reminding the audience of the previous Lillian Russell scene at Tony Pastor's, and also the idea that theatre is an escape from an unbearable reality.

**Vampires: Greta Garbo, Theda Bara, and Mae West**

In earlier versions of *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands appeared to have included, as a penultimate scene, her impersonation of San Francisco born actress Pauline Lord as Anna Christie in Eugene O'Neill's play by that name (1921), which repeats a section from *Styles in Acting* (her later script omits the O'Neill section). In introducing *Anna Christie* in *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands observes that Eugene O'Neill was the first American playwright, "whose work achieved the stature of serious literature and received international recognition." This claim is defensible, although Thornton Wilder (1897-1975), Arthur Miller (1915-2005), and Tennessee Williams (1911-1983) were not far behind. Also, despite the feminism implicit in a dramatized theater history built on actress genealogies, Sands neglects now-important women playwrights like Susan Glaspell (1876-1948), whose work *Trifles* (1916), is today well-included in American theatrical canon (in Sands' time, ironically, Glaspell's primary claim to fame was in discovering O'Neill at the Provincetown

Players theater in the 1910s).[31] On a personal level, Sands was classmates with O'Neill at George Baker's 47 Workshop at Harvard University during the 1914-15 academic year (Sands' senior year). Although not involved with *Anna Christie*, Sands did poke fun at another of O'Neill's works, *Desire Under the Elms*, when performing in the 1925 *Grand Street Follies* skit titled "Mr. and Mrs. Guardsman," about the perils of married couples performing together.[32] This chapter will not repeat the scene analysis, except to say that presence of the same scene in both *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars* is itself noteworthy. Like roads merging, Sands seems to argue, the story of English and American acting share a nexus (stylistically) at the moment of Realism, exemplified by writers like O'Neill.

Sands concludes *Our Stage and Stars* with a parallel conceit to her first show. In *Styles in Acting*, Sands played Haidee Wright, Ethel Barrymore, and Mae West as Lady Macbeth in the famous "Sleepwalking Scene" from Shakespeare's *Macbeth* for comic effect. Sands also ends *Our Stage and Stars* with a resume of three of her signature roles—in this case the "Vampire Vixens" of the Silver Screen: Greta Garbo, Mae West, and silent film star Theda Bara. In so doing, Sands draws a narrative arc in American theater dramatics from post-Revolutionary War imitations of English Comedies of Manners (in turn, derived from French Restoration comedies) to Realism and finally movie acting. Sands makes this progression explicit, "…many of our stage stars—as well as playgoers—have deserted the theater for the moving

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[31] Dinitia Smith, "Rediscovering a Playwright Lost to Time," *New York Times*, June 30, 2005. Glaspell co-founded the Provincetown Players, with her husband George Cram Cook, which led to her discovery of O'Neill.

[32] "Grand Street Follies of 1925" playbill, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,447.

pictures." Living in a transitional time, Sands seeks to conclude her sketch of theater history with one foot on the floorboards and the other in celluloid.

In "Movie Vampires," Sands explores the *femme fatale* archetype: the powerful and deliciously evil female character. Characteristic of *film noir*, the fatale is charismatic, mysterious, and ultimately dangerous.[33] "Vampire" for Sands does not refer to fearsome, erotic, blood-sucking demons (although for one of Sands' vampires, Theda Bara, this characterization does apply), but rather strong female characters or actresses who play those roles, who may turn on the male hero without warning, and who the audience may voyeuristically desire. Also, since she is a villain, and will inevitably meet a mortal end, she may be intelligent, resourceful, independent, and in charge of her own sexuality, even in the 1930s.

In this scene, she plays three vampires in a scene from *Mata Hari* (1931), an MGM film starring Greta Garbo that portrayed the life and trial of the Dutch exotic dancer and courtesan Mata Hari, executed by the French for alleged spying during World War I. Mata Hari is a fascinating historical figure, and Sands had considered giving her an expanded role in an alternative one-woman show concept.[34] In *Styles in Acting*, Sands offered the device of playing one role in the styles of three actresses as a comparative analytic. In *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands offers no rationale for concluding with three of her show-stopping impersonations, although ending her

[33] The femme fatale archetype canvasses time and culture. For a reading of the 19th-century European origins of the cinematic "vamp," see Elizabeth K. Mix, *Evil By Design: The Creation and Marketing of the Femme Fatale* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006).
[34] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 26,060.

theater tour with movie actresses makes the case for the supremacy of mediatization in American entertainment history.[35]

Sands tells the audience that her final scene involves "the glamorous lady spy," who is "endeavoring to inveigle" sensitive documents from a feckless French diplomatic official. *Mata Hari* enjoyed popularity across the United States in 1931, so many of Sands' audience members would have still remembered the movie in 1933, if not the specific scene. Noting that the action is "of course played on a chaise lounge in the lady's apartment," Sands adds that she will play the scene as Greta Garbo, who originally played Hari in the MGM film. Then, changing her make-up onstage, she plays the scene as "the first movie vampire who as Theodosia Goodman of Cincinnati, Ohio, made a hit in her first film." Sands is referring to Theda Bara (1885-1955), a smoldering sex symbol of the silent film era, and who Sands included in her impersonation notebook (discussed in Chapter Four). Finally, Sands again changes make-up onstage to transform into her signature impersonation, Mae West.

The scene's stage directions call for a *chaise longue* (a sofa-shaped upholstered chair) and pillows. Sands stands center stage as Garbo as Hari, "(*R.Hand to cheek—lifting cheek bone line*)," and says, "You are a very strange young man. How can you think I would betray you?"—which is, of course, exactly what she is attempting to do. In the script, Sands notates physical actions, following the MGM sequence. Presumably pantomiming the action with an imaginary scene partner, Hari alternatively seduces and rejects the young diplomat, first "(*Running her hand over his head*)" and then "(*Pushing him away*)." Greta Garbo would have little difficulty

[35] A sea change that would relegate Sands to comedic spinster walk-on roles on television in her later years, even as she continued to play leading roles in live theater into the 1970s.

seducing a young government employee. She purrs, "How short a memory you have! You cannot remember Paris in the spring, now that it is autumn.[36] How like a man! (*as he comes close above her*) Ah you do remember." Ensconced on the sofa, Hari completes the theft, "(*A long kiss leaning further and further back—right hand drawing papers from his inside pocket. Puts papers in her own bosom*)." Finally, Hari claims fatigue and reminds the diplomat of his mission, and so dismounts, "(*Swings off*)," assuredly to enthusiastic applause.

In order to transform into silent-film star Theda Bara, Sands drew attention to her own artifice, a strategy she might have borrowed from Bertolt Brecht, the great German director who believed in creating theater pieces that signaled their own theatricality.[37] After her Garbo impersonation, Sands walked to the dressing table in the middle of the stage, took off her wig and cape, and put on instead an instantly recognizable long black-haired wig in order to become Theda Bara (See Appendix). Since Bara, a silent film star, did not speak in her films, Sands did not speak either when impersonating the quintessential screen vampire. Consequently, Sands scripts the Bara section as a pantomime.

Sands' Theda Bara would have been recognizable to audiences, probably hilarious, and difficult to overact. The stage directions begin, "T.B. [Theda Bara] slinks on to the stage, Crosses to left pantherlike—writhing. Wriggles body." To the threnodies of French Romantic-era composer Jules Massenet's funereal composition *Élégie*, Op. 24 (1872), Bara deploys "goo-goo eyes," caresses her figure with her

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[36] A reference to *Casablanca* when Humphrey Bogart's character tells Greta Garbo's, "We'll always have Paris," *Casablanca*, Dir. Michael Curtiz, Perf. Humphrey Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Raines, Conrad Veidt, Peter Laurie, Sidney Greenstreet, Warner Brothers, 1943.
[37] Brecht called this idea, "the Alienation Effect" (*Verfremdungseffect*, lit. "foreignizing effect").

hands, and then turns her attention to the doomed civil servant. She gazes deeply and luxuriantly into his face, and with effort, draws away, "panting." Bara follows her quarry around the stage with her eyes, "gloating." She then assumes the iconic Bara image—hair pulled around her throat while rolling her eyes. Drawing attention to body parts in turn—her bare back, hair, heart, Bara indulges in ever-increasing exaggerated actions: groping, heaving, crawling over the couch.

Bara pauses to gaze at her prey, "leaning over end on elbows…hands clasped under chin." She finally convinces the young man to lie down on top of her, and she draws him in with "a strangling embrace." After some spatial problem solving, the vampire mounts her man, smothering him with kisses. At this point, she draws back, indicating, "Now, give me the papers." The man refuses, so she strikes at his throat and suffocates him with pillows. Once he is dead, she takes the papers. She then hoists the documents aloft in triumph to the audience, and puts them "in her bosom." She takes hold of the ends of the wig and ends the scene by "holding up the long strands of her coal black hair." The sequencing of Bara's rendition of Mata Hari after Garbo's is clever on Sands' part, since the audience would have already had the chance to learn the narrative. Sands' pantomime was probably demonstrative, but knowing what was going to happen next (and knowing that the civil servant did not know) would have added to the comic effect. Also, like variations on a theme in music, audiences would have enjoyed watching Sands play the same action three different ways.

To complete *Our Stage and Stars*, Sands played the Hari scene as Mae West, her signature caricature. As with Bara, Sands relied on minimal costume shifts. The

direction reads, "Take off wig, black lines under eyes—Put on blonde wig, diamond jewelry for Mae West [underline in original]." Then, as she "swings across center with a suggestive eyebrow lift," West turns to the spy and opens, "What's the matter, baby? Don't you trust me? Well hundreds have." Coming closer, she says, "Let's see what color eyes you got?" and then gives him "(*a long look).*" She apparently likes what she sees, as the next stage direction reads, *"(Hands smooth down over her body—a purr——mnnnnnnnnnnnn—*) Oh boy, with lamps like yours we don't need no light." The spy appears hesitant, so West says, "Don't be a dope. You know I'd never double-cross you." Sands crosses over to the *chaise longue* (which she calls a "chaste lounge"), and invites him to sit. Playing hard-to-get, she complains, "Don't crowd me!" She plays coy only momentarily, though, and pouts, "Other guys give me diamonds and you won't come across with a bunch of lousy papers. Don't you like me a little?" West's words "diamonds" and "little" play on West's incendiary Broadway play *Diamond 'Lil* (1928), for which West faced possible incarceration. Diamonds also allude to Dorothy Sands' impersonation of West in *Diamond 'Lil* in the *Grand Street Follies* at the Little Theatre (the same venue that opened this chapter), which catapulted Sands herself to stardom as a New York comedic actress in the late 1920s, so the groan-worthy pun operates on multiple levels.

Going for a quick knockout, West pulls the diplomat on top of her, sits up and adjusts her hair, "Ok. Kid, you got me!" She calls for a serving maid, "Jennie," to bring the man a drink, "(*sotto voce*) (*and you know the kind I mean*)." West stalls by telling the diplomat that he is pursuing the wrong vocation and that she could use him in her line of work. Naturally, she follows with the obligatory proclamation, "Why

don't you come up and see me sometime?" The drink arrives, West thanks Jennie, and offers the drink to the civil servant. She declines his offer of a sip for herself with the ironic, "No thanks. I'm a teetotaler." The man drinks and expires from poison. With a might-as-well attitude, Sands transfers the papers to her own bosom. Thus Sands completes her history of American theater, as Mae West as Mata Hari sprawled on a coach with a dead diplomat, calling out, "Jennie, peel me a grape!"

***Evolving History***

*Our Stage and Stars* evolved throughout its touring life in the 1930s and 40s. Most prominently, Sands changed the name to *American Theater Highlights* after the end of World War II. The transition was gradual. She titled the show *Our Stage and Stars* from 1933 until 1938. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Sands provided a cover page for her script with the header "1938 *Our Stage and Stars or American Theater Highlights*," although a 1941 notice still referred to the original title, *Our Stage and Stars*.[38] In 1949, Sands delivered a lecture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art entitled "Highlights of the American Theater," and seems to thereafter have presented *Our Stage and Stars* as *American Theater Highlights*.[39]

In part, the change in title fits into Sands' unremitting reevaluation and revisions of her conceptual genealogies in theatrical and women's history. For example, as late as 1935-36, Sands considered creating additional monodramas. A

[38] "Dorothy Sands at Ogunquit," *Lewiston Evening Journal*, July 5, 1941.
[39] Sands appeared alongside theatrical producer Arthur Hopkins and scenic designer Lee Simonson as part of the Met's Sunday Lecture series and in support of the exhibition "Behind American Footlights." Costume Institute Records, 1937-2008, Finding Aid, Subseries III.BB, Behind American Footlights (Feb.4-Sept. 1949), The Metropolitan Museum of Art Archives, New York.

brochure for her Redpath Chautauqua manager, Lee Keedick, described a new effort that Sands may or may not have actually developed, *Stars of Today and Yesterday*. Playing on her name, the brochure's blurb states, "the sands of time will be running up and down for fair," as Sands presets a series of impersonations of starlets of the day, including Julia Marlow, Helen Hayes, Haidee Wright, Anna Held, Ethel Merman, Katherine Cornell, Leslie Carter, "Mrs. Fiske," Tallulah Bankhead, and others. According to the flier, Sands apparently had to, "read hundreds of plays, extract suitable scenes, cut them to length, write her show, hunt up the correct costumes for the parts, have the costumes made and then go to the wigmakers and have the wigs built that will, as it were, cap the climax."[40] Hopefully Sands did not invest the amount of time the brochure boasts, as no evidence appears in Sands' scrapbooks or the general record for even preview performances.

In addition to her drive for experimentation and reconceptualization, Sands probably adopted the title *American Theater Highlights* to reflect surging patriotism associated with the war and its aftermath. The older title, *Our Stage and Stars*, implied either a universality or an exclusivity: who are the "we" that "our" implies? Up until the 1930s, Sands' audiences could still perform an America built around small-town women's clubs filled with Americans with English, Western European, and Northern European heritages. Sands' audiences understood who they were even if they faced increasing anxiety over immigration. Most audience members probably

[40] In this scrapbook, Sands affixed a flier from Keedick's agency. There are two columns and three rows of squares of copy. The uppermost left reads, "Lee Keedick Stars for 1935-36," and lists 30 talents on the Keedick roster, including Sands, and writers Edna St. Vincent Millay and Thornton Wilder. The uppermost right box contains an ad for Dorothy Sands presenting *Styles in Acting*, *Our Stage and Stars*, "and—for next season," *Stars of Today and Yesterday*. Sands clipped two short columns regarding the third show, "Dorothy Sands Eliminates Some of her Luggage, but Nary a Baggage," and "Sands of Time," and taped them on top of the remaining boxes, Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,557.

did not hale, as Sands did, from Norman nobility via New England gentry, but they could still project their own identities into a White Anglo-Saxon Protestant imaginary. American victory over Germany and Japan forced American into a new internationalism. The xenophobia that began with the Johnson Reed Act of 1924 peaked with the internment of Japanese Americans from 1942-44. The shift in personal pronouns in Sands' title in fact reveals a change from a gently simmering melting pot into a roiling racial cauldron, suppressed by a post-war normativity based on white flight to suburbs and the Red Scare. *American Theater Highlights* implies American exceptionalism as a subject, instead of a shared identity, as in *Our Stage and Stars.*

Sands never revealed her own political views, but no evidence exists to suggest that her display of patriotism diverged from her core beliefs. While an undergraduate at Radcliffe College, Sands wrote a one-act in honor of World War I American soldiers.[41] In New York, she participated in war bond efforts for both world wars, and traveled to post-war Germany as part of the Airlift. At the same time, wrapping herself in patriotic colors amid rising McCarthyism had the added benefit of serving as a survival strategy. If her previous association with an avant-garde Jewish theater troupe in the Lower East Side could have caused her problems as fellow actors succumbed to red-baiting, her celebration of American theatre inoculated her from censure. Sands' name does not appear in any of the McCarthy Hearings transcripts, for example.[42] On the contrary, the State Department sent Sands

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[41] Dorothy Sands, *The Spirit of the Falls*, Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[42] Senate Committee, *Historic Senate Hearings Published, U.S. Senate Joseph McCarthy Hearing Transcripts*, 83rd Cong., 1st and 2nd sess, (1953-54), S. Prt. 107-84, available at U.S. Senate, "Historic

to Turkey on a Rockefeller Grant in 1958 to direct former Baker classmate Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness* for the Turkish National Theater.[43] Her selection marks a show of faith on the part of the U.S. government, as Cyprus in the mid to late 1950s had become an active war zone, threatening to pull Greece, Turkey, and the entire Balkan region into chaos. Turkey in 1958 was a top Cold War priority, and American's representatives there were chosen with care.

In addition to its new title, Sands' scripts reveal streamlining, perhaps for playability. In her later script ("Notebook 2"—as discussed at the top of the chapter), Sands downplays the arrival of the Van Rensylers, and instead fronts her piece with the following declaration,

> There are a great many lengthy volumes on the History of the American Theater. To give any adequate summary of its plays, or to do justice to the luminous personalities that gild its memories, would be a matter of weeks or months. So from a very long theatrical bill-of-fare I have selected a few typically American dishes that have appealed to the tastes of past and present generations of theater-goers.

Perhaps reflecting the sense of Modernism in the post-War years, Sands' new introduction highlights master narratives and the importance of authoritative texts.

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Senate Hearings Published," U.S. Senate Joseph McCarthy Hearing Transcripts (S.Prt. 107-84), Vol. 1-5 + Index, Unites States Senate Website, http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/generic/McCarthy_Transcripts.htm (accessed September 7, 2015).

[43] The award report reads, "Miss Dorothy Sands, New York: to aid in the development of acting instruction in the Drama Department of the National Conservatory of Ankara; $3000," *The Rockefeller Foundation Annual Report, 1956* (New York: The Rockefeller Foundation, 1956), 242. For Sands' travelogue, see primarily Dorothy Sands Scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theater Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,445.

The "Notebook 2" script also reflects the simple passage of time. Sands cut lines in all of her scenes, probably to trim running time, while also writing more stage directions throughout. In the Frontier Theater, she takes a greater interest in Jonathan, the "first stage Yankee, progenitor of a long line of honest Rubes that have appeared in American plays down to 'Lightnin'' and even 'Our Town'." *Lightnin'* (1918) was a long-running American-themed comedy by Winchell Smith and Frank Bacon, which enjoyed a popular revival in 1938. *Our Town* (1938) is a classic American study by Thornton Wilder about the inhabitants of a small town named Grover's Corners. Thus, as late 1930s Broadway took an interest in early twentieth-century America roots, Sands revisited her material for American archetypes as well.

Some of the changes to laugh lines in the light-hearted sections of the piece suggest changes in what audience might have found funny. In some cases, Sands simply thought of new jokes. For example, for *Adelgitha* in The Frontier Theater section, Sands adds a twist,

> Michael, the villain, is of course played by the 'heavy' of the company and Adelgitha by the leading leady, but unfortunately the leading man twisted his ankle as we docked this morning, so the stage manager and understudy must go on as Guiscard.

On the other hand, some changes in humor reflect changing mores. In *Our Stage and Stars,* Sands originally performed the following speech as Madame Trentoni in *Captain Jinks and the Horse Marines* yet excised it later:

> Oh yes, I adore politics. Don't all women? Oh yes, the campaign between Grant and Greely. Yes I remember it perfectly. Why I twas 13 years old.

> (Laughs) Oh well, that's only operatically. I'm 18, but politically I'm 22. Of course I never approved of but one kind of slaves—men slaves. (Bows to them) Bravo! Now you know an Englishwoman wouldn't have tho't of that till to-night and then he'd mailed me a post-card.

Towards the end of the 1930s, the concatenation of gender and politics had become a hot-button issue. The Nineteenth Amendment, granting women the right to vote, only passed in 1920. During the late 1930s, women surged into the workforce and into higher education, but retreated into the home (normatively) towards the end of the War. An "Equal Rights Amendment" to the Constitution, reached critical mass in Congress at about 1938, but lost momentum as a result of the 1940 election.[44] By the 1930s, the line, "Oh yes, I adore politics. Don't all women?" might have been too contentious to be worth a laugh.

The reason for excising the slavery joke seems less obvious. Unfortunately, race relations in America had not changed appreciatively during the 1930s. However, according to historian Harvard Sitkoff, Franklin Roosevelt's inclusion of racial issues in his speeches, aggressive recruitment of (male) African-Americans in New Deal programs, and in the military, began to reframe national perspectives. Although few concrete changes in race relations occurred (for instance, Southern legislators filibustered Roosevelt-endorsed anti-lynching laws in 1935 and 1938), Sitkoff argues, "something vital did begin in the New Deal, breaking the crust of quiescence that had long stifled even the dream of equal opportunity and full participation in American

[44] See Mary Frances Berry, *Why ERA Failed* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986).

life. The New Deal gave blacks hope."[45] Perhaps perceiving themselves as allies to a slowly emerging civil rights consciousness, artists like Sands began to reflect more carefully on their own rhetoric viz. race.

Finally, Sands appears to have customized *Our Stage and Stars* for specific appearances. For example, When she took her show to London, under the name *Contemporary Theatre Highlights*, she replaced Greta Garbo and Theda Bara with British-born actress and spouse of actor Alfred Lunt, Lynn Fontaine (1887-1983) and libertine actress Tallulah Bankhead (1902-68).[46] (Unfortunately, the dates for Sands' London performance have not surfaced in her archives or in secondary literature. However, the cover page to "Notebook 2" discussed at the beginning of this chapter reads, "Played in every state of the Union—Canada—London—Germany (for State Department)." If Sands wrote these venues in chronological order, she would have played London sometime before 1949, but after performing in every U.S. state, so probably in the mid to late 1940s). In speaking to her English audience, she refers to Fontaine as, "the distaff side of your most famous acting team [i.e. she and Lunt]." Sands admits that Bankhead was born in America, but, "had her early stage successes in London," and thereafter returned to America with the benefit of English stage polish. Also, she tells her audience "[t]hat extraordinary American star," Mae West, "visited your shores last year."[47] Except for the final scene, Sands appears to have left all of the other sections intact for her London performance.

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[45] Harvard Sitkoff, *Toward Freedom Land: The Long Struggle for Racial Equality in America* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2010), 40.
[46] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 1: 'Original Copies of my two one-woman shows: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932 and 'Our Stage and Stars or American Theatre Highlights' 1938," Dorothy Sands Papers, circa 1932-1973, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[47] Ibid.

The overall takeaway from *Our Stage and Stars* differs from *Styles in Acting*. The choice of canon in *Our Stage and Stars* marks a progression from Revolutionary and Frontier American archetypes and rough-and-tumble stage conditions through the silver screen, whereas *Styles in Acting* traced a lineage from Restoration Comedy to a hybrid context of stage, silent, and sound movie styles. Sands makes the argument that (sound) movies mark the apotheosis of evolving stage techniques more clearly in *Our Stage and Stars* by concluding the piece with three iconic screen actresses. The two works are similar in that they both chronicle histories of theatrical styles through female characters and performers. However, *Styles in Acting* featured strong female personalities who worked within and against traditional patriarchal structures, such as marriage and codes for women's sexual behavior.

In contrast, the scenes in *Our Stage and Stars* carry a sense of trespass. Each of the characters intrude inappropriately, and in so doing either become comic or tragic figures. Not only are Charlotte and Laetitia vapid gossips, they cling to an inane interest in (what they imagine to be) fashions on the far side of the Atlantic. Adelgitha, a queen, pays the price for attempting to hide her sordid past. Little Nell lurks about the house, pretending that citrus infused water is wine. She nurses Dick Swiveller back to health, but she also helps herself to his clothes during his sleep, albeit to sell for his medicine. The angelic child actress who created Nell, Lotta Crabtre, must have seemed an incongruous presence in the Gold Rush-era saloons and brothels in which she performed. Similarly, Lillian Russell would have seemed like an interloper at Tony Pastor's. Madame Trentoni is a buffoon who misappropriates an Irish immigrant identity. Laura Murdock lives by herself in an

expensive apartment, funding for which she wheedles out of one of her two lovers. Literally and metaphorically, Anna Christie finds herself at sea when she steps aboard her father's ship. Mata Hari uses her charms to steal state secrets from a government servant before murdering him for comic effect (a female assassin would have been a malapropism—the historical Mata Hari shocked Americans as much for her gender and execution as her alleged espionage).[48] Each of these characters strays beyond the accepted confines of behavior, which is what makes them interesting.

The effect these female characters might have had on audiences would have changed over time. In the early 1930s, these roles might have served as objects of derision, reminding everyone (especially women and immigrants), to mind their places, which would partially account for Sands' success in conservative small towns across the heartland. During World War II, the act of transgressing the established order became part of the narrative of American uniqueness. Like Rosie the Riveter, the tool-wielding wartime poster icon, women's ingress into male spheres became not only laudable, but also patriotic.[49] The women in *Our Stage and Stars* would have become symbolic of American doughtiness. Ignorant of limitations, Americans (and the women of *Our Stage and Stars*—by this time, the retitled the jingoistic-sounding *American Theatre Highlights*), achieved victory through tradition-smashing pluck. By the war's end, national narratives shifted back to gender-based divisions of public and privates labor spheres, about the time that Sands stopped touring. Had she continued her solo work, audiences in the 1950s might have reacted to the women in

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[48] Husband and wife Julius and Ethel Rosenberg would not be convicted and executed on charges of passing nuclear secrets to the Soviet Union until 1953.

[49] 19 million women held jobs during World War II. In addition to her fame on posters, "Rosie the Riveter" became a song in 1942, by Redd Evans and Jacob Loeb. In 1944, the U.S. government reversed the gender narrative and started a propaganda campaign to place women back in the home.

*Our Stage and Stars* with the same primness/prurience as those of the 1930s. Even so, audiences from the early 1930s to the late 1940s enjoyed Sands' American theater history, for different and ultimately opposite reasons. *Styles in Acting* remained largely unchanged during its performance lifecycle, since America's shared theatrical history with England had ended. *Our Stage and Stars* continued to evolve, because America herself transformed throughout the twentieth century

# Chapter Four: Chameleon Dramaturgy

## *Introduction*

The previous two chapters offered a critical examination of Dorothy Sands' solo works, *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*. Through close readings of her previously unstudied scripts and a tracking of the edits and changes made in the scripts over time, these readings allow me to make inferences about evolving audience expectations in the 1930s and 40s. This chapter now turns to Sands' strategies in developing both of her one-woman shows. Sands' performances required intensive research, as they consist of lecture-style expositions of historical periods that introduce reconstructed physical and vocal acting styles, often in impersonation of specific actresses from the past.

This chapter begins by describing Sands' *methodology*, which includes her approach to developing celebrity caricatures in her *Grand Street Follies* work, and how she extended these processes in order to recreate and caricature performances of stars of the past. The narrative then turns to Sands' process of conceptualizing her shows, and her interest in celebrating women's contributions across history. Next, the chapter examines evidence for the historical research Sands conducted for *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*. Finally, the chapter charts Sands' strategy of using rehearsal-hall improvisation with reconstructed garments, wigs, and props to recover gestures, and ultimately theatrical styles. The problematics of Sands' attempts to retrieve the past provide a means to explore the nature and limitations of

historical retrieval of performance styles generally.

### *A Point of Departure: The Long and Short of Long*

The only other work that substantively addresses Sands, Linda Sue Long's dissertation on Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands, provides a point of departure for a discussion of Sands' process of play development.[1] As she does throughout, Long relies on interviews, reviews, and features that Sands clipped and collected in her scrapbooks, housed at the Billy Rose Theatre Division. From these selections, Long argues that Sands' working methods derive from her "power of preparation—research."[2] In particular, Long presents quotations from Sands' clippings that focus on her process of parody in both Sands' work with the *Grand Street Follies* and her solo shows.

Long reports that Sands' method of caricature first comprised repeated viewings of subjects, in order to reproduce their traits with increasing levels of fidelity. Sands developed her impersonations through repetition, beginning with broad brushstrokes and then progressing into details. Sands claimed to begin with actress' voices, and move on to "gestures, movement and facial expression" secondarily.[3] Sands also looked for idiosyncrasies as entrée into her studies. These peculiarities helped unlock each impersonation Sands created, "[w]ith Pauline Lord, it was her eyes; with [American stage and film actress] Florence Reed, the tonal quality

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[1] Linda Sue Long, "The Art of Beatrice Herford, Cissie Loftus, and Dorothy Sands within the Tradition of Solo Performance" (PhD diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 1982), 70-83.
[2] Long, "The Art of," 54
[3] Wilella Waldorf, "Forecasts and Postscripts," *New York Evening Post*, Jan. 20, 1933, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 73.

of her voice."[4] Reiteration provided both a means to polish impersonations, and also to uncover qualities that opened up difficult subjects.

In Long's account, Sands differentiated caricature from depiction. Sands claimed, "Where impersonation differs from mere imitation is in the added comment on the personality supplied by the impersonator."[5] The impersonator's contribution could be subtle or overt, "The comment ranges all the way from the very slightest overemphasis of certain details to broad caricature," Sands noted.[6] Sands made similar statements elsewhere. She told the *Christian Science Monitor*, an impersonation is "a combination of acting and imitation plus 'in some subtle way, the actor's comment on the character.'"[7] Some stars, such as Mae West, required little restraint, "it would probably be impossible to exaggerate Mae West," Sands quipped.[8] But, whether cartoonish or subtle, impersonation involves authorship, "you add the plus thing which is your component."[9] Artistry emerges through imparting meaningful (and usually comedic—but not always) layers onto otherwise faithful depictions.

Methodologically, an imitation-through-observation approach presupposes the availability of models for repeated viewings. For contemporary stage stars, Sands attended multiple performances; for film celebrities, Sands could (and did) hunt down old reels. When recreating a younger version of a living actress, Sands worked from

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[4] "Dorothy Sands Seeks a Clue," *New York City American*, Jan. 22, 1933, in Scrapbook MWEZ + n.c. 25,450, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 4.
[5] Waldorf in Long, :The Art of," 73.
[6] Long, "The Art of," 75.
[7] "One-Woman Repertory Theater Ideal Plan of Dorothy Sands," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 16, 1934.
[8] "Dorothy Sands Seeks a Clue," *New York City American*, Jan. 22, 1933, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450, qtd. in Long, 4.
[9] "One-Woman Repertory," *The Christian Science Monitor*.

the present backwards. For example, in order to portray Haidee Wright playing the sleepwalking scene in Macbeth, Sands visited and interviewed Wright on recreating her younger self.[10] In cases where Sands was unable to access a subject directly, Sands claimed to extrapolate from available sources. As Long notes, when set the challenge of satirizing Elinor Glyn, Sands recounted, "I had never seen Miss Glyn, nor did I know anyone who had ever met her. I was really in a quandary when I learned that I had to do her [for the *Grand Street Follies*]."[11] Sands first tried to tap another parodist whose repertory included Glyn, unsuccessfully. Instead, she spoke with a *Vanity Fair* gossip writer on the phone who described the film actress. Paramount Studios also provided Sands a short clip of Glyn posing on top of a staircase. From these fragments, Sands composed a sketch of Glyn convincing enough so that when the *Vanity Fair* author saw Sands' performance, "He [the *Vanity Fair* writer] couldn't believe I hadn't seen her," Sands told an interviewer.[12] Similarly, in order to impersonate Lotta Crabtree, the California dance hall star from the 1860s, Sands tracked down people who remembered Crabtree and mined their memories of what, "Lotta used to do and how she did it."[13] Sands' method for impersonating actresses of the past followed successive levels of inference.

Long reaffirms Sands' self-narrative that solo work emerged as the natural progression of her career. Long offers a quotation in which Sands says that her

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[10] At the very least, Sands' effort pleased Wright. Sands told an interviewer that the elderly and infirm Wright braved a storm to see Sands' performance of her and led the applause, "One-Woman Repertory," *The Christian Science Monitor*.
[11] Thomas Van Dycke, "The Eyes Have 'It,'" n.d., in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 16,895, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 192-93.
[12] Van Dycke in Long, "The Art of," 192-93.
[13] "How Dorothy Sands Began Her New Program, 'Our Stage and Stars,'" *Boston Sunday Herald*, Jan. 14, 1934, in Dorothy Sands Scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 4641 #3, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 79.

interest in the theatrical past stemmed from her fellow Neighborhood Playhouse members' lack of knowledge regarding historical acting styles.[14] Long also notes the breadth of Sands' investigation, which included reading primary sources; procuring difficult-to-access film reels, like those of Greta Garbo and silent film star Theda Bara; seeking out audience recollections of past performances; and engaging in costume and prop reconstruction. For Long, Sands was a one-woman playmaking powerhouse, who researched, produced, scripted, and directed her own works.

Long's account of Sands' working methods is helpful as an initial sketch, touching on elements of Sands' toolbox: direct observation of contemporaneous stars, working backwards from the present to the past, library research in to past cultures contexts, and the importance of recovered artifacts such as costumes, wigs, and film. However, the Billy Rose Theatre Division provides more evidence for Sands' process of play development (and caricature) than Long utilizes. Long looked for "research" in Sands' own comments to journalists about her process. For example, Long claims that evidence exists for Sands' development process for *Our Stage and Stars* but not for *Styles in Acting* because the popularity of *Styles in Acting* impelled journalists to take an interest in how Sands' created her next piece.[15] Long is probably correct in assessing the lacuna of print commentary about *Styles in Acting* dramaturgy. However, this chapter will examine the notebooks and papers that Sands did not share with the press—significant material that records her research and thinking about her solo show development. Sands' archives contain a wealth of information about her

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[14] Hope Ridings Miller, "Clothes Create the Mood of Era, Miss Sands Thinks," Feb. 27, 1935, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,557, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 77.
[15] Long, "The Art of," 78-79.

creative journey that offer insights not only into her play development, but to the field and practice of dramaturgy more generally.

### *An Eye for Detail*

One of Dorothy Sands' understudied notebooks in The Billy Rose Theatre Division catalogues her caricature studies, revealing a depth and specificity that Sands' comments to the press do not convey.[16] The notebook is untitled, but the remainder of this dissertation will refer to it as her "impersonation guide," since it catalogues her notes for most of her repertoire, and its similarity in format to another guidebook will play an important role in Chapter Five. The impersonation guide is astonishing as a glimpse into praxis, and so lends insight into her creative process. Sands seemed to have intuited its significance when she bequeathed it to the New York Public Library. On the first page, after assorted notes on loose paper, she wrote, "This book might be useful in the archiving of the New York Public Library Drama Department. I have promised [New York Public Library director] George Freedly to give copies of my two one-woman shows to them also—as my last will and testament."[17] Sands signed and dated the cover page "1944," by which time she had returned to Broadway and had reestablished a career in ensemble productions.

The impersonation guide's design facilitates ongoing use. The guidebook itself is a three-ring binder filled with handwritten pages, on which Sands made notes

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[16] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,566.

[17] Freedly was an influential figure in the formation of American theater archives, serving in leadership capacities for numerous institutions, including the New York Public Library from 1931 until his death in 1967. Despite her "last will and testament," the scripts of Sands' one-woman shows never made it to Lincoln Center, but currently reside at the Harvard Theatre Collection.

about how she fashioned her impersonations of stage and screen actresses. As a working tool, Sands could add, remove, and reorder pages over time. A handwritten index page contains a list of twenty-one "present" and six "past" celebrity studies in Sands' repertoire (See Table 1). Some of the names have checks after them, perhaps indicating inclusion in a *Follies* edition or some other rehearsal cycle. Also, the book contains detailed notes for thirty more star studies not listed in the index, such as Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Katharine Hepburn, and Mary Pickford. All of the studies in the book contain the star's name and at least one black and white photograph. The photos are generally headshots, sometimes in profile or at an angle, and the images typically feature the star in costume for a specific role. Besides the photographs or occasional clipping, entries contain notes written in Sands' hand. Individual studies differ in length, from a single image and a few lines to several pages, as in the case of Mae West, and some entries make references to other notebooks not present in the archives.

| "Present" Stars | "Past" Stars | Not Indexed |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Ethel Barrymore<br>2. Irene Bordoni<br>3. Tallulah Bankhead<br>4. Mary Boland<br>5. Jane Cowl<br>6. Katharine Cornell<br>7. Ina Claire<br>8. Laura Hope Crewes<br>9. Lynn Fontaine<br>10. Ruth Gordon<br>11. Helen Hayes<br>12. Gertrude Laurence<br>13. Eva La Gallien[n]e<br>14. Pauline Lord<br>15. Beatrice Lillie<br>16. Ethel Merman<br>17. Alla Nazimova<br>18. Florence Reed<br>19. Frances Starr<br>20. Mae West<br>21. Haidie Wright | 1. Theda Bara<br>2. Mrs. Leslie Carter<br>3. Mrs. John Drew<br>4. Lotta [Crabtree]<br>5. Lillian Russell<br>6. Madame Vestris | 1. Maude Adams<br>2. Judith Anderson<br>3. Ruth Chatterton<br>4. Fanny Brice<br>5. Joan Crawford<br>6. Marlene Dietrich<br>7. Greta Garbo<br>8. Elinor Glyn<br>9. Katharine Hepburn<br>10. Laurette Taylor<br>11. Mary Pickford<br>12. Sophie Tucker<br>13. Lenore Ulrich<br>14. Mrs. Patrick Campbell<br>15. Mary Ellis<br>16. Libby Holman<br>17. Irene Franklin<br>18. Lillian Gish<br>19. Texas Guinan<br>20. Eugenie Leontovitch<br>21. Elsa Maxwell<br>22. Helen Menken<br>23. Edna May Oliver<br>24. Helen Morgan<br>25. Zazu [ZaSu] Pitts<br>26. Molly Picon<br>27. Sybil Thorndike<br>28. Marie Tempest<br>29. Marie Bonfanti<br>30. Supe Velez |

*Table 1: Dorothy Sands' Impersonation Repertoire. Dorothy Sands' scrapbook. New York Public Library. Billy Rose Theatre Division. MWEZ + n.c. 25,566.*

The impersonation guide does not contain dates for entries, but Sands probably used it from 1924 into the early 1940s. The *Grand Street Follies* ran from 1922 and then from 1924-29. Sands had not yet moved to New York for the *Follies*' 1922 inauguration, and did not participate in the 1924 edition, but starred in the

productions from 1925-29. Presumably, she would have been around rehearsals in 1923-24, and spent at least part of 1924 developing both the capacity of impersonation as well as specific material for the *Follies*. The impersonation guide contains references and images to stars in movies through the 1940s, and (again) the cover page is dated 1944, so the book probably spans a twenty-year body of work, from 1924-44.

In the impersonation guide, Sands made detailed descriptions of each star she studied. Under each analysis, she divided her observations according to features, such as "eyes," "hair," "voice," "mouth," "hands," "gestures," and "costume." Most entries include information about the movie or play associated with the facing image of the actress and some also provide sample lines of text from movies or plays. For example, stage and screen star Tallulah Bankhead's eyes struck Sands as having "Heavy lids—Dropped as if weights on them" that she tended to close "a great deal." Ethel Barrymore also had sleepy, blinking eyes, although she "Blinks hard Lowers head & looks up…Eyes swing from l. to r. turn head to profile—lower eyes, look up, wild look." Barrymore bit her lower lip, smiled as if from the center of her mouth, made lanky gestures with her large hands, moving form the elbow, and tended to make quick lifts of the head. Katharine Hepburn, in the film *The Philadelphia Story* (1940), exhibited a "loose mouth," "loose joints," and "relaxed lope." The notebook focuses on observable characteristics. From an acting perspective, these kinds of notes are all actionable, and a two or three page list of such actions led to complete portraits of well-known stage and screen celebrities. An window into Sands' process, her impersonation guide presages contemporary solo artists like Anna Deavere Smith,

who collects first-person narratives from multiple racial, gender, class, and sexual perspectives, and then enacts these narratives as characters in her one-woman shows.[18]

Although primarily a vehicle for the *Grand Street Follies*, several of Sands' *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars* scenes begin in the impersonation guide. For example, the guidebook includes an entry for silent film star, Theda Bara. For a facing illustration, Sands selected an iconic Bara image from her classic 1915 silent film *Sin*, in which the screen "vampire" holds up her long hair in two strands, her weight shifted into her left hip, as if to call attention to her form-fitting black dress (see Appendix). Sands embellished her note regarding Bara's hair with the comedic instruction, "wrap around throat." Bara's black eyes were "Heavily made up" with "Black line below," and had a quality of "Popping, staring." Theda Bara does not appear in any of the *Follies* programs, so Sands either created or used this study for *Styles in Acting*.

Despite its inherently visual nature, the impersonation guide also records Sands' approach to vocal mimicry, apparently one of Sands' outstanding skill sets. As Chapter One discussed, Sands studied at, and then taught for, Samuel Silas Curry's School of Expression in Boston, a noted elocution academy. In her study of the *Grand Street Follies*, Margaret Knapp surmises that Dorothy Sands proved especially adept at vocal impersonation. Knapp notes that whereas Sands' co-star, Albert Carroll, dazzled with physical imitability, Sands possessed an uncanny ability

[18] For example, in *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, Deavere Smith explores the Rodney King riots, embodying people across race, gender, social class, and political views who she interviewed for her solo production.

to mimic voice and gesture.[19] In the impersonation guide, Sands made notes about celebrities' voices, with written examples from scenes. For example, in her observations regarding Florence Reed's voice (Reed is perhaps best known today for her portrayal of Mrs. Harvisham in the 1934 film adaption of Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*), Sands notices three vocal registers: one is "very high," one is "cracked" and in the medium range, and the other is a "very deep," lower register. Reed also apparently had a cackle, shook her shoulders when laughing, and accentuated an accent with long inflections.

According to Sands, the husky-voiced wit, Tallulah Bankhead, boasted a "rich" and "deep" contralto, and emitted a "gasp like a sob" before speaking, whereas German actress and singer Marlene Dietrich whispered in a "low breathy voice." Sands also made use of lines above or below sample words and phrases to indicated pitch patterns, and sometimes wrote words or phrases in the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in order to notate values for stars with foreign accents or regional dialects. The process in visual, kinetic, and vocal observation might have served multiple ends. Perhaps these entries helped Sands hone details; operated as a mnemonic tool; provided technical exercise (in the same way that artists practice figure drawing to maintain dexterity of hand and eye); and, to risk ascribing motivations, probably brought Sands pleasure in the doing.

Unfortunately, neither media recordings of Sands' work with the *Grand Street Follies*, nor film of Sands solo shows have surfaced to see the results of Sands'

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[19] Margaret M. Knapp, *Theatrical Parody*, "Theatrical Parody in the Twentieth-Century American Theatre: 'The Grand Street Follies,'" *Educational Theater Journal* 27, no. 3 (October 1975): 357. Also, Long quotes critics who praised Sands' vocal abilities, in particular her tone, classically trained diction, as well as her pleasing sense of vocal rhythm and timing. See Long, "The Art of," 130.

observational work. However, a newly uncovered audiotape of the first two scenes from *American Theatre Highlights* (*Our Stage and Stars*) reveals Sands' facility in vocal performance and character shifting.[20] In her lectures between scenes, Sands' voice vibrates with shrill clarity. In direct address to the audience, Sands trills her "r"s and resounds with the faux-Received Pronunciation declamatory popular in late Victorian theater. In Royall Tyler's *The Contrast*, Sands raises the musical pitch of her speaking voice, varies her use of tempo, and provides singsong embellishment in order to depict the young coquettes Charlotte and Letitia. For "The Frontier Theater," Sands abuses M.G. Lewes' melodrama *Adelgitha, or the Fruits of a Single Error*. Her entrance of the villain Michael explodes with extended warbles, a deep chest voice, and a hint of brogue. The opening line, "Ha! Ha! Ha! Adelgitha—Oh princely dame, unbend that gloomy brow and scorn me not!" sounds like a combination of the Wicked Witch of the West and the evil villain tying a damsel to the railroad tracks. For the hero Guiscard, Sands speaks in an even lower voice, overemphasizes iambic pentameter, with a sound profile resembling the Disney cartoon character Goofy. For Adelgitha, Sands sets a pitch in the middle of her range, slows her tempo, and increases her vibrato, as if to exaggerate melodrama (if such a thing is possible) to the point of absurdity. Sands' performance in the late *American Theatre Highlights* recording supports Knapp's claim to Sands' vocal virtuosity and give a sense of how Sands' impersonation book notes translate into performance.

Finally, the impersonation guide contains studies of fellow comedians and impersonators, themselves celebrities. For example, Sands made detailed notes on

[20] Dorothy Sands, "American Theatre Highlights," audiocassette, in Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Vaudeville mimic and Hollywood comedic star Ina Claire: "mouth—up a little at ends," "eyes…blinks quite a lot," and "voice:—Crisp, clear, deep tones and then high shrill ones." Sands also clipped an article (the citation is not evident, unfortunately) about Florence Desmond (née Florence Dawson), a British imitatrix, who appears to have had similar targets as Sands, including Tallulah Bankhead, Greta Garbo, Lupe Velez, Marlene Dietrich, and Mae West. Sands may have been comparing notes, since she underlined Desmond's comments in the article on imitating Garbo, "slow, definite speech and deep chest tones, her fatalistic movements, her heavy eyelids, that strange imperturbability." Sands also made a study on *Ziegfield Follies* and radio show star Fanny Brice (paying particular attention to Brice's performance of a Yiddish accent). Impersonating fellow impersonators adds an additional wink, as when Sands impersonated the impersonator Beatrice Lillie in the North Pole in the 1926 *Grand Street Follies*.

***From Caricature to Show Concept***

The impersonation guide provides an in-depth look at Sands' process for creating caricatures. However, in 1932, Sands still needed controlling concepts for her one-woman productions. She could have put together tribute shows, composed of her *Follies* impersonations, in which case all she would have had to do was to select "best of" impersonations from her repertoire.[21] Although Sands folded some of her

[21] The "homage" caricature show has probably always existed. Famous impersonators since Sands have included American standup comics Rich Little and Jim Carey, and English entertainer Mike Yarwood. Celebrity and political impersonation has also been the staple of the evergreen sketch comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, often with devastating effect. Tina Fey's pitch-perfect impersonation of right-wing Alaska governor Sarah Palin arguably ended Palin's political career, and

caricatures into her shows, Sands elected not to take this route. Rather, she chose the more difficult and research-intensive theme of enacting shifting styles of theater history across time. How did Sands move from *Follies* sketches to *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*? And, how did Sands develop the shows themselves?

The impersonation guide contains hints at Sands' initial thinking. On one of the pages, Sands wrote down one-line solo-show ideas, such as "Old Actress killing effects"; "The Girl on the Magazine Cover"; "The Dog Show, types of people & dogs" (this one might have had legs, as it were); and "Types from 'The Graphic.'" These concepts appear only as titles, without additional commentary (at least in extant notebooks). However, their presence in the impersonation guide suggests that Sands had already started thinking beyond impersonation sketch comedy to concept-driven solo work. These titles also suggest that Sands began thinking of conceits that could act as structures within which to place her caricatures, and also that Sands was willing to choose subjects that would necessitate additional research. "The Girl on the Magazine Cover," for example, would have required surveying magazine covers, and arranging the scenes according to some kind of narrative.

The show ideas Sands include in the impersonation guide mark only an initial brainstorming list. A separate notebook catalogues a dizzying journey through Sands' show development process and helps us to understand how Sands arrived at her produced productions.[22] Sands does not title this thick tome, but the first entry on

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recent renditions, like Kate McKinnon's impersonation of Donald Trump advisor Kellyanne Conway, or Mellissa McCarthy's virtuosic portrayal of Trump communications director and press secretary Sean Spicer have been incendiary.

[22] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, New York Public Library, MWEZ + n.c. 26,060. For the sake of ease of readership, this dissertation will refer to this notebook with the nickname, "Notes on Famous Women."

the handwritten contents page reads, "Notes on Famous Women," which will ultimately underscore the importance of gender in Sands' work. The "Notes on Famous Women" notebook might span more than two decades of Sands' thinking. The volume contains developmental work on characters and scenes from *Styles in Acting*, so at least parts of the notebook date from before 1932 (although Sands could have also been attempting to rework segments of her first show into new monodrama concepts). The notebook also contains brainstorming lists of solo show ideas, including suggestions for titles for *Our Stage and Stars*, which places at least some sections of the notebook before 1933. The final section of the notebook includes letters from 1940. At some point, Sands inserted a 1954 *New York Times* article on the first page, well after her return to New York and the end of World War II. Therefore, the notebook chronicles the years 1933-40, which covers the most of Sands' solo touring, although Sands might have worked with this volume as early as 1932 and as late as 1954.

The first section of the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook consists of lists of potential show concepts/titles shows, matching the format Sands employed in her page of show ideas in the impersonation guidebook. Hypothetical show concepts Sands' wrote in "Notes on Famous Women" include *Famous Actresses in Famous Scenes*, such as Mrs. John Drew (Louisa Lane Drew 1820-1897, English-American actress and Barrymore ancestor) as Mrs. Malaprop in *The Rivals* by comic playwright Richard Sheridan (three of the six scenes on this list did end appearing in her two solo shows). The "Notes on Famous Women" ideas continue with a potential "lecture recital" of actresses in famous roles (in fact, a lecture recital of actresses in famous

roles is the format that Sands ultimately chose, but at this point in her thinking, she explicitly rejects costume changes). Sands also considered *A Study of Wives* in plays, a heading under which she includes Candida in Bernard Shaw's *Candida* (1903), Katherine in William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* (ca. 1590-92), Millament in William Congreve's *The Way of the World* (1700), Lady Teazle *in* Richard Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (1777), Maggie Wyley in 47 Workshop classmate Philip Barry's *What Every Woman Knows* (1908), Mrs. Dodsworth in Sidney Howard's *Dodsworth* (1934—although Sinclair Lewis' novel dates from 1929), Alkmene (The Greek wife of Amphitryon and mother of Hercules by Zues) in Titus Maccius Plautus' (c.254-184 BCE) *Amphitryon*, Hedda in Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabbler* (1891), and Nora in Ibsen's *The Doll's House* (1879). Also, as Chapter Two indicated, the characters in *Styles in Acting* confronted patriarchy from within marriage structures. If Sands composed this list before developing *Styles in Acting*, then this page is where she first explored marriage as a show theme. In addition, these lists also array women across time, which becomes the structure of both *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*.

The first section of the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook contains additional show concepts, mostly in list form. *Yesterday and Today* would have been a "one-woman show <u>in costume</u> [underline in original]" of pairs of notable women in differing genres: Comedy, Musical Comedy, Tragedy, Movies, and, intriguingly, Dance. Within "Dance", Sands lists lighting design innovator and mistress of fabric Louie Fuller and modern dance matriarch Martha Graham. Sands did not pursue this concept, although her stage treatment of Fuller and Graham would have been

fascinating.[23] Another concept, *Some Stage Favorites—Then and Now*, contains check marks next to seven out of seventeen potential impersonations, including Berlin-born American actress Katherine Cornell playing Juliet; and Washington, D.C. native star Helen Hayes as Mary, Queen of Scots. *Some Stage Favorites* moves Sands' focus back into the present tense.

Further idea lists range across time and genre as Sands grappled with groupings. *Interesting American Woman, Radio* would have been a monodrama (or a series of monodramas) featuring elements from twenty-nine possible components, including Brigham Young's wives, Susan B. Anthony, the Salem Witches, Southern Women, Emily Dickenson, or Dolly Madison. Other ideas for solo show formats included *President's wives* or *American types from American novels*, whereas *Lillian Russell vs. Ethel Merman* might have become a revue show. Yet more titles for unrealized works include, *The Old and the New*; *1890-1930*; *Theater Contrasts*; *Then and Now*, *Stars of Today and Yesterday*, and *Theater Memories*. While brainstorming, Sands mixed and matched stars and roles, and also worked up costume and property budgets. Perhaps these budgets indicate that Sands was interested enough in particular studies that she made cost estimates, and perhaps found that they were too expensive. Also, these lists demonstrate that Sands was willing to go across media and genre (e.g. novels, radio, dance) in sets for solo shows.

The second section of the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook indicates that Sands thought beyond entertainment in her search for compelling female characters to

[23] Martha Graham had been active in Henry Street since 1921 and formally joined the faculty in 1928 (Graham's musical collaborator/lover Louis Horst, Agnes de Mille, and Anna Sokolow were active at Henry Street as well). Dorothy Sands was a full member of the Neighborhood Playhouse from 1924-27 and star with the Grand Street Follies until 1929. Therefore, Sands would almost certainly have met Graham, and possibly have taken class with her during this time.

dramatize. Sands composed a register of important women across history that she culled, in part, from *Womankind in Western Europe from the Earliest Times to the Seventeenth Century* by Thomas Wright.[24] Sands arrays notable woman in history on alphabetized pages, with address book-style lettered affixed on the side of the pages. For instance, the "A" page includes Aspasia (the intriguing newcomer to Athens and Pericles' lover and mother of his son), novelists Louisa May Alcott and Jane Austin, and the "W" page (Sands did not write examples of women with last names starting with "X", "Y", or "Z") boasts Martha Washington, Mae West (who appears in the impersonation notebook as well), and Peg Woffington (the protagonist in a 1853 British novel by Charles Reade). Few pages contain more than a half-dozen entries, as if Sands began this compendium, but did not sustain the effort.

The names in the "Notable Women" section of the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook stand out for their breadth across time and context, and includes saints, queens, actresses, and stateswomen. Anne Boleyn, Cleopatra, or Jezebel, are well-known figures. Dutch exotic dancer Mata Hari achieved notoriety when France sent her to the firing squad on charges of espionage for Germany during World War I (and who Sands uses as the device for the concluding section of *Our Stage and Stars*, as discussed in the previous chapter). Beatrice was a thirteenth-century Florentine noblewoman who inspired the poet Dante Alighieri, and appears as one his guides in his masterwork, *The Divine Comedy*. Perhaps Sands used the list as an idea bank, from which she drew ideas or characters for her shows. However, reading over the list has the effect of surveying a landscape of women across time. Mid-way through

[24] Thomas Wright, *Womankind in Western Europe from the Earliest Times to the Seventeenth Century* (London: Groombridge and Sons, 1869). Sands includes a reference to Wright at the conclusion of her survey of historical women, although she also includes female historical figures from after 1869.

the names, Sands writes a list titled "Qualities," under which she lists, "Intuition, Ingenuity in emergency, Courage, Patience, Understanding, Forgiveness, Self-sacrifice, Endurance, Faith, Devotion, and Loyalty," as if Sands were foreshadowing chapter headings in the seminal feminist epistemology manifesto, *Women's Way of Knowing*.[25]

Sands' ideas in the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook simply do not cease. After the "Notable Women" section, Sands turned to consideration of producing her solo works as radio plays. Under potential one-woman radio play ideas, Sands lists *Famous Queens*; *Famous Women in Fiction*; *Famous Women of the Past*; *One-Act Plays*; and *The Lady* or *Ladies of different periods*. Sands does not appear to have developed these ideas, but the fact that she considered radio as a medium for her work indicates a level of comfort with a non-visual form of performance, and also that she was prepared to consider life beyond the boards. Also, the sheer volume (and in some cases redundancy) of Sands' ideation is telling. She did not alight upon *Styles in Acting*, but struggled to find controlling themes.

The fourth part of the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook differ from the preceding sections in that Sands includes preliminary drafts for three short pieces, rather than lists of potential show titles. One is a scene of social reformer and wartime nurse, Florence Nightingale, "at work in hospital." A second scene dramatizes Madame (Thérèse) Lafarge, one of the principal villains in Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. Sands visualized the scene in which Lafarge stands "at the guillotine and before the tribunal," having suffered conviction for murdering

[25] Mary Field Belenky, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1969)—although perhaps better known in its 1986 and 1997 editions.

her husband with arsenic. For the third piece, Sands wrote a first draft and also a revision for a short radio monodrama about Joan of Arc, the fifteenth-century warrior maiden who the English burned at the stake. Keeping marketability in mind, she wrote on the cover page of her Joan piece, "Doubtless too highbrow for enough general interest." Perhaps we should read "highbrow" as a code for "confrontational." The three pieces are striking in their emphasis on violence. Nightingale treated dismembered and dying World War I soldiers, LaFarge faced execution through decapitation, and Joan of Arc possibly suffered gang rape in prison before burning alive. As Chapter Two discussed, *Styles in Acting* featured women who bucked against martial constraints, and Chapter Three showed that *Our Stage and Stars* starred characters that transgressed boundaries. Sands took an interest in female agency, but at the same time perhaps realized that she needed to first sell tickets in order to change hearts and minds.

The "Notes on Famous Women" notebook contains two more sections worthy of attention. Whereas the impersonation guide contained succinct notes on dozens of impersonation studies, here Sands conducts six in-depth studies of luminaries of late nineteenth and early twentieth century theater (Maude Adams, Mrs. Fiske, Tallulah Bankhead, Julia Marlowe, Mrs. Leslie Carter, and Helen Hayes). These case studies read like scouting reports, in which Sands copied quotations from newspaper reviews germane to physical description and acting motivation for each actress, as well as scenes with annotation and observations. For example, for Minnie Maddern Fiske ("Mrs. Fiske"), one of the premier American actresses of the early twentieth century, Sands wrote seven pages of notes from critical sources. Based on these commentaries

by Fiske's contemporary critics, Sands distilled a set of Fiskean gestures (e.g., "R. hand to eye—2 fingers together," "very fidgety,"), as well as vocal mannerisms ("Dry," "pause to remember & then rush when does remember").[26] Sands then copied a passage from one of Fiske's signature roles, Nell in *Salvation Hell* (1908) by Edward Sheldon, and wrote in acting notes in the margins (e.g., "intimidating," "biting," "tender," "smiling").

Sands follows these six studies with shorter analyses of notables, such as Ethel Merman, based on historical newspaper reviews. Sands culled information about voice and posture, as well as observations about elements like costume and gait. Also, since Sands could read and write music, for her notes on Anna Held (the Polish-French stage actress and impresario of the *Ziegield Follies*, and wife of Florenz Ziegfield), Sands copied the notes and lyrics of "I Just Can't Make My Eyes Behave" by Cobb Edwards, a song from Held's 1906 Broadway hit, *A Parisian Model*. These studies reflect a mature methodology for parody, based on the collection and distillation of first and second-hand analysis along multiple axes of performance, including posture, habitual gesture, vocal qualities and mannerism, costumes, wig, movement, script reading, and music. They also reflect Sands' growing confidence in applying her impersonation methods to subjects of the past, using newspaper reviews and other primary source material as a basis.

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[26] Fiske lived from 1864/5-1932 and would have been a grande dame by the 1920s *Grand Street Follies*. Evocatively, Sands might not have developed the Fiske caricature for herself. In the 1928 *Grand Street Follies*, Sands' co-star, Albert Carroll, played both Mrs. Fiske and Ethel Barrymore in drag in a scene from Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Perhaps Sands helped Carroll with his impersonations? See George Halasz, "The Curtain Rises," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 3, 1928, Sunday edition.

Finally, the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook contains correspondence between Sands and Eva vom Baur Hansl, a pioneering woman in radio journalism during the 1940s and early 1950s.[27] Sands seems to have inquired about a radio series vom Baur Hansl produced, titled *Gallant American Women*, a collaboration between the National Broadcasting Corporation, the United States Office of Education, the Federal Security Agency, and the Works Progress Administration. *Gallant American Women* ran forty-on half-hour segments from 1939-41.[28]

In particular, the *Gallant American Women* series aired an episode called *Behind the Footlights* (*Gallant American Women* #26) on April 23, 1940, which examined, "The part women have played in the development of American theatre."[29] The correspondence consists of a note from vom Baur Hansl's secretary to Sands with an enclosed show outline.[30] Evidence has not surfaced if Sands helped create the episode, but the show outline reads like something Sands would have conceived: "Women first permitted to act," "Pioneers who made acting a respectable form for women," "How women have gone into every phase of theater work," and "Breaking the molds for a better theater." Subheadings follow beneath each of the four headings, such as "Beginning of famous theater families with women members,"

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[27] Vom Baur Hansl is another understudied female voice. The Radcliffe Institute houses a collection of her papers, *Eva Elise vom Baur Hansl Papers, 1939-1954*; Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Vom Baur Hansl herself curated a substantial archive on women's roles in American society, which is now at *Eva vom Baur Hansl Collection of Women's Vocational Materials*, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries.
[28] The Digital Deli Too, "Gallant American Women," http://www.digitaldeliftp.com/DigitalDeliToo/dd2jb-Gallant-American-Women.html (accessed November. 27, 2016).
[29] Gallant American Women's archives are at Princeton University, "'Gallant American Women', Behind the Footlights, April 23, 1940, Miriam Y. Holden Collection, Box 57, Folder 9; Manuscripts Division, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library, Princeton, NJ.
[30] Ruth Dick to Dorothy Sands, Mar. 14, 1940 in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 26,060.

"See History of Burlesque," "Playwright," or "School of Natural Acting—Mrs. Fiske."[31] The preceding section of "Notes on Famous Women" contained Sands' in-depth impersonation study of Mrs. Fiske, which does not seem coincidental.

In sum, the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook provides insight into Sands' transition from *Follies* star to solo artist, and probably her continuing search for new categories of significant women for dramatization. Admittedly, parts of the notebook probably date from after Sands' creation of *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*, in which case some of these show ideas might indicate Sands' interest in creating new shows to follow her women in theater revues. However, the endless brainstorming contradicts Sands' self-narrative that her solo work sprang from James Pond's chance meeting with her at the Cosmopolitan Club like Athena from the forehead of Zeus or Aphrodite from the sea foam. Rather, Sands worked hard to generate ideas (and she may very well have begun the process before meeting Pond and continued it long after), and she sustained an open-ended inquiry into women's roles in history and entertainment (and especially the history of entertainment). The catalogue of women in "Notable Women" section of the "Notes on Famous Women" notebook indicate that Sands was interested in arguing for the value of women's contributions to not only Western theater but Western civilization. The six in-depth case studies of past-tense stars show how Sands began to extend her methods for impersonation, which worked so well for the *Grand Street Follies*, to performers farther back in time. Her correspondence with vom Baur Hansl suggests that Sands communicated her interest in women in theater to others, and the existence of (presumably) unperformed

[31] Minnie Maddern Fisk a.k.a. "Mrs. Fiske" (1865-1932), leading actress in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, fought against established theatrical booking monopolies, and helped bring Realism to America through her interpretations of Henrik Ibsen's female protagonists.

monodramas show that Sands tested alternative ideas before, during, and after creating her solo shows based on theater history.

**Styles in Acting *Dramaturgy***

The preceding discussion described Sands' process for developing present and past celebrity caricatures, in particular, her ongoing interest in women in history and the substantial amount of dramaturgical musings (research and critical considerations) that she recorded in her "Notes on Famous Women" notebook. The notebook establishes the thoughtfulness and rigor with which Sands brainstormed, vetted, and envisioned her work, and the pages record her conceptual peregrinations, like footprints in snow. The almost incessant search for structuring patterns bespeaks a commitment to articulate (and theatricalize) underappreciated contributions by women in history. The question now becomes: how did Sands select and develop material that contributed to the formation of *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*? To a certain extent, Sands rolled her signature impersonations from the *Grand Street Follies* into her solo work (e.g., Pauline Lord, Mae West, Greta Garbo). Also, as a theatrical professional with an interest in theatrical traditions, Sands likely drew from the repository of stage lore inherited from the collective cultural memory of her profession. Even so, *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars* required extensive research both in reconstructing period styles, as well as in writing the information-rich introductions for each of the scenes. This section of the present chapter will discuss Sands' play developmental materials for *Styles in Acting*, and the following section will survey those for *Our Stage and Stars*.

Sands' archives do not contain an extant research notebook designated specifically for *Styles in Acting* (whereas, as the next section shows, they do for *Our Stage and Stars*). However, housed among Sands' papers in the Harvard Theatre Collection, there is a Sands notebook that lists reference texts she likely consulted. Catalogued as *Styles in Acting, 1946*, this volume differs from the script covered in Chapter Two, in that *Styles in Acting, 1946* contains an essay apparently intended for publication.[32] On the cover of the notebook, Sands wrote "Styles in Acting and Bibliography," and on the inside of the cover inscribed, "For Encyclopedia Americana," thereby referring to one of the largest English-language encyclopedias—and the first encyclopedia series to be published in the United States. The essay that comprises most of this volume (the other contents are two bibliographies, discussed momentarily) appears to be dated from October-December 1946. The piece runs thirty handwritten pages, and Sands writes the number "3357" at the end, perhaps indicating word length. Upon inspection, Sands seems to have adapted her script for *Styles in Acting* into a scholarly article for inclusion in *Encyclopedia Americana*. The essay describes shifts in theatrical convention across Greek theater, Commedia dell'arte, Elizabethan theater, Restoration Comedy, Romanticism, Realism, and "Oriental Theater." The text of this version of *Styles in Acting* (intended for print and amended accordingly) departs from the stage production. For instance, the scene reconstructions no longer appear. Also, the encyclopedia article version of *Styles in Acting* takes broader cultural perspectives than the version intended for performance.

[32] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 5: 'Styles in Acting,' Sept. 1946," Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

The *Styles in Acting, 1946* essay is helpful in guessing Sands' 1932 play development because it demonstrates a consistent approach towards historical reconstruction. The essay begins with the same contention that her 1932 stage version of *Styles in Acting* articulates—that acting styles emerge from and in turn influence the physical conditions of theatrical events. Mirroring her 1932 text, *Styles in Acting, 1946* starts by stating that styles in acting depends on, "[t]he architecture of the playhouse, the shape of the stage and size of the auditorium as well as the quality of the lighting and the proximity of the audience."[33] Sands argues that the genre of the play, costume and other design elements, cultural context also help determine acting style. Taking a performer's perspective, Sands' uses theatrical conditions as a means to infer acting performance practices. In other words, exigencies suggest stylistic solutions.

For example, in discussing Greek theater, Sands observes in the *Styles in Acting, 1946* essay that, "Great amphitheaters carved out of the hillsides under the clear blue sky presented the first problem for the Greek actor. The chorus, composed of twelve or fifteen, danced and chanted their antiphonal strophes in the orchestra, the flat circular space between the front seats and the stage itself where the two or three main actors performed." Sands then lists further details regarding stage architecture, (literally) setting the scene in which Greek actors played. Continuing her analysis, Sands considers costuming, masks (which included sound amplification), playwrights' styles, audience size and response, and the requirements of Greek poetic meter as contributing elements that affected Greek acting. Taking all of these factors

[33] Dorothy Sands, "Notebook 5: 'Styles in Acting, 1946,'" Dorothy Sands Papers, circa 1932-1977, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

into account as shaping forces, Sands concludes that, "Greek tragic acting was formal and stylized, had statuesque dignity, great power and breadth and utter simplicity." She also felt that for Greek actors, "Slow measured movements, simple majestic, full-armed gestures and rich, sonorous tones were necessary to carry to the highest tiers of those great out-door amphitheaters." Sands' conclusions might seem facile or stereotyped (although who is to say?). However, her emphasis on stage conditions in discussing ancient acting styles is consonant with current approaches in theater scholarship.[34] Further in the essay, Sands conducts similar analyses for how stage conditions and cultural context helped shape Italian Commedia dell'Arte, Elizabethan acting, Restoration comedy and tragedy, French and English Romanticism, Naturalism, Soviet Realism, and classical Chinese and Japanese theater.

As insight into her original research in 1932, *Styles in Acting, 1946* is helpful for two reasons. The essay shows that Sands maintained an interest in materials stage conditions as an entrée in acting styles, a strategy on which the second half of this chapter expands. Sands seems to have informed her study of historical critical reception with immersive study of period cultural products. Based on an interview with Sands regarding her preparation for *Styles in Acting* conducted in 1934, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported, "If it was a Sheridan play, she [Sands] learned all she could about the people of Sheridan's time. She read their literature, studied their paintings."[35] For example, in developing poses and movement vocabulary for her reconstruction of "Millamant" in Congreve's *Way of the World*, Sands could have

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[34] E.g., David Wiles, *Greek Theatre Performance: An Introduction* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2000).
[35] "One-Woman Repertory Theater Ideal Plan of Dorothy Sands," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Jan. 16, 1934.

pored over eighteenth-century images and descriptions of fans and handkerchiefs. Sands' 1934 interview communicates the same belief that materiality could grant access into past styles as her the *Styles in Acting, 1946 essay*. By learning about the physical conditions of performing conditions, immersing herself in cultural products, and thereby developing a sense of the *Zeitgeist* of place and time, Sands apparently made educated guesses regarding the physicality of acting choices for "Almahide" in Dryden's *Conquest of Granada*, "Nellie Hathaway" in Henry Arthur Jones' *The Silver Kin*g and "Candida" in Shaw's *Candida*.

Secondly, the notebook contains bibliographic information that likely includes Sands' 1932 materials. At the front of the *Styles in Acting, 1946* notebook, Sands includes a reference list of works by category: seventeen listings for "Greek Theater," twenty "General Works," two books at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, six "Greek and Roman," nine "Medieval," five "Renaissance," fourteen "Elizabethan," and nineteen "Restoration." Based on these works, Sands primarily relied on The Museum of Modern Art, The New York Public Library, and the Widener Collection (a collection of 2000 pieces of sculpture, paintings, and porcelains National Gallery of Art co-founder Joseph Widener opened in 1939) for her 1946 research.[36] She would not have had access to the Widener collection in 1932, but the combination of the New York Public Library and the Museum of Modern Art supports a view that Sands' research combined reading with immersion in visual information.

[36] "The Widener Collection" could also refer to Widener's major 1907 literary bequest to the Harvard Library system. See Harvard College Library, "The Harry Elkins Widener Memorial Collection," http://hcl.harvard.edu/libraries/houghton/collections/widener/index.cfm (accessed November 28, 2016).

Sands did her best in reading the standard theater histories available, however, and her *Styles in Acting, 1946* bibliography reads like a prompt for a doctoral comprehensive exam question like, "Using examples from across theater history, explore the relationship of cultural and performance context to acting styles." For general information, Sands appears to have paid special attention to R. Gilder's *Enter the Actress (1931)*, Karl Mantzuis's six-volume A *History of Theatrical Art in Ancient and Modern Times (1903, trans. 1937)*, and Sheldon Cheney's *The Theater (1947).* For Greek and Roman times, she liked Margaret Bieber's *History of Greek and Roman Theater* (1939) (she notes "authentic" next to the title—indicating she felt that Bieber's text gave insight into classical acting). For Medieval times, she notes E.K. Chambers' two-volume *Medieval Stage* (1903), and for Elizabethan acting, Alfred Harbage's *Elizabethan Acting* (1939).

At the end of Styles in Acting, 1946, Sands includes a second bibliography of sixty-eight sources, forty-two of which date from 1932 or earlier, which raises the strong possibility that these early works were the ones that Sands used when first developing her 1932 stage production of *Styles in Acting*. The publication dates do not prove that Sands referenced these books in 1932 (or even read them for her 1946 encyclopedia entry), but she likely would not have jettisoned her original research for the 1946 piece either. The most likely explanation is that in 1946 Sands added new citations to the reference list that she had built when developing the original 1932 stage version of *Styles in Acting*. If so, the list not only contains Sands' sources for her 1932 *Styles in Acting*, but also show how Sands' interests had shifted by the end of the 1940s. Intriguingly, the bibliography at the end of the notebook contains

entries for world theater and topics that transgress the Anglo-American purview of *Styles in Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*, such as citations related to the Moscow Art Theater, Russian theater pioneer Vladimir Nemirovitch-Dantchenko, Sanskrit theater, Chinese drama, and Japanese Noh theater. These headings indicate that Sands pursued knowledge of (and an interest in) the theatrical well beyond the racial, cultural, and temporal confines of her two solo shows. Even late versions of *Styles in Acting* (and *Our Stage and Stars*) omit mention of these topics, which buttresses the contention that Sands strategically limited her shows to appeal to her perceived target market.

The bibliographies in the *Styles in Acting, 1946* essay hint that Sands engaged in extensive study in preparing her original 1932 show script, which would have provided the basis for her introductions to each of the scenes in the performance. Yet, what did she do to reconstruct period acting styles for the scenes in *Styles in Acting*? Probably, Sands culled rich descriptions of past stars by their contemporary critics. However, words can only approximate sights and sounds, and also rely on a shared semiotics. For example, what would a nineteenth-century critic mean by saying that an actress' performance was "ethereal?" Perhaps Sands guessed at what performances of the past were like, although given the methodical quality of every other aspect of her working methods, arbitrariness would be out of character.

In sum, Sands used a synergy of strategies in developing *Styles in Acting*. Sands studied standard theater histories, conducted in-depth scene analysis, familiarized herself with period-specific cultural products, and built appropriate vocal performances. For contemporaneous characters, she would have been able to roll

actress impersonations in directly from her existing repertory. The sleep-walking scene from Lady Macbeth as Haidee Wright, Ethel Barrymore, and Mae West was a crowd-pleasing carrier for Sands' signature impersonations, and would have been intended and received as such. For near-contemporaries reconstructions, Sands would have extrapolated backwards from the present tense. For Pauline Lord's debut as "Anna Christie" in O'Neill's *Anna Christie*, Sands created a younger version of the living Pauline Lord, based on personal interviews, historical reviews, and photographs.

**Our Stage and Stars *Dramaturgy***

Dorothy Sands' developmental process for *Our Stage and Stars* is easier to retrace than *Styles in Acting*, since her research notebook for the show resides at the Billy Rose Theatre Division.[37] On the cover page, Sands writes her family's address on 44 Street in Cambridge, Massachusetts, even though she had not lived there in many years.[38] On the following page she wrote, "'Styles in Acting' written January—1932"; "'Our Stage and Stars; written summer of 1933" and "Played in Booth Theater, NYC—Toured thruout [sic] country" (underlines in original). These entries provide invaluable information into the chronology, although just because she wrote the script for *Our Stage and Stars* in the summer of 1933 does not preclude research and play development before that date. Sands titles the notebook, "Research

[37] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library, MWEZ + n.c. 26,058.
[38] The notebook also contains a receipt from the manufacture of the binder, on which Sands wrote and crossed out her New York address, 133 East 60th Street. The meaning of the addresses is unclear, although she seems to have wanted to be associated with her Cambridge address for this document.

Material for 'American Theater Highlights,' First titled 'Our Stage and Stars.'" She signed her name, under which she wrote "1932—1934."

This chapter will refer to "Research Material for 'American Theater Highlights,' First titled 'Our Stage and Stars'" as "*Our Stage and Stars* development volume" since Sands did not call her piece *American Theatre Highlights* in 1932-34, and the 320 pages in this volume contain not only background research, but early drafts and production information. Like her scripts, Sands seems to have collected and titled the *Our Stage and Stars* development volume at a later date. The notebook starts with a handwritten text for a radio address in which Sands wished the city of Boston a happy Christmas in 1939 in the voices of Lotta Crabtree, Ethel Barrymore, and Lynn Fontanne. The header "1932-34" therefore probably refers to the research inside of the notebook specifically pertaining to *Our Stage and Stars* development (which is almost all of the contents). The date header is useful because "1932-34" indicates that Sands spent a year developing *Our Stage and Stars* before its premiere in 1933, and then continued working on the piece for an additional year into touring.

Also, as she had indicated in the impersonation guide, on the O*ur Stage and Stars* development volume title page, Sands states that she donated the notebook to New York Public Library director George Freedley, "who gave me valuable assistance with suggestions for reading and eventually tracking down *Adelgitha—the Fruits of a Simple Error* [italics added]." This inscription indicates that Sands knew Freedly personally, that Freedly helped Sands develop bibliographies for her research projects, and that he went as far as hunting scripts for Sands upon request. Freedly's assistance would have been in character. Freedly helped establish the Performance

Arts Library at Lincoln Center (and performance archiving in the United States, generally), and tirelessly worked with performing artists in building his collection.[39] Sands went as far as to send Freedly a lock of hair from the wig she had made to impersonate Lillian Russell in *Our Stage and Stars*, which presumably functioned as gesture of thanks for his help on the show.[40] From the inscription, we can assume that Sands spent time on-site at the Performing Arts Library in 1932, and worked with its curator in researching *Our Stage and Stars*.[41] Sands' dedication to Freedly shows that, as with the impersonation guide, Sands seems to have intended the *Our Stage and Stars* development volume to endure and be accessible to future readers.

As if giving a nod to the amount of effort Sands expended in conducting the research that the *Our Stage and Stars* development volume's 320 pages contain, the script for her live performance opens with, "There are a great many lengthy volumes on the History of the American Theater [underline in original]. To give any adequate summary of its plays or to do justice to the luminous personalities that gild its memories would be a matter of weeks or months. I have one short evening."[42] Within the *Our Stage and Stars* development volume Sands relied on specific "lengthy volumes of the History of American Theater" in particular, as evidence by her extensive handwritten notes on the then-definitive two-volume *History of the American Drama* by Arthur Hobson Quinn, and sections of George C.D. Odell's ten-

[39] Personal communication with Doug Reside, Digital Curator, Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library, July 8, 2016.
[40] Dorothy Sands' hair lock from Lillian Russell wig, Cage, T-Cabinet, Drawer #4, Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library. This truly odd artifact provides symmetry to the (real) lock of Ethel Merman's hair in Dorothy Sands' papers at the Harvard Theatre Collection.
[41] Sands' time at the Billy Rose Theatre Division developing her work is haunting, since I spent considerable time at the Billy Rose Theatre Division studying Sands.
[42] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 26,058.

volume *Annals of New York Theater*.[43] Sands appears to have used Quinn and Odell to gain a sense of the overall contours of American theater history, before investigating specific periods and styles.

For example, in the "Frontier Theater" section of *Our Stage and Stars,* Sands made voluminous notes on popular plays, audience composition and context, theatrical conditions, and theatrical management.[44] Sands also did due diligence in researching particular figures. For instance, she made a detailed study of the actress Lotta Crabtree, compiling lists of her songs and roles, and copying critical commentary regarding Crabtree's interpretation of specific roles, which include observations that likely helped Sands build an impersonation (e.g., "Light and graceful figure & merry face…quips, pranks, songs & dances, sudden turns in speech & action"). Similarly, Sands compiled of critical reviews of Ethel Barrymore in Clyde Fitch's 1870 *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*. For example, according to a January, 1901 reviewer, Barrymore was "so frail" that she apparently passed out in each rehearsal after finishing a second-act ballet sequence. Sands' notes on the American frontier reveal that she cast a wide net. In order to understand Barrymore's performance in a broader context, she not only studied *Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines*, but followed the fortunes of Clyde Fitch's entire career.

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[43] Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A history of the American drama from the civil war to the present day,* (New York: Hobson & Bros, 1927); George Clinton Densmore Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* (New York: Columbia UP, 1927).

[44] Sands drew from Noah Miller Ludlow, *Dramatic life as I found it; a record of personal experience; with an account of the rise and progress of the drama in the West and South, with anecdotes and biographical sketches of the principal actors and actresses who have at times appeared upon the stage in the Mississippi Valley* (St. Louis: G.I. Jones and Co, 1880); "Sol Smith 1801-1870", *Historical Incidents* [Sands might be referring to several of Smith's works, e.g., *Theatrical Management in the West and South for Thirty Years: Interspersed with Anecdotical* [sic] *Sketches.* New York: Harper & Bros. (New York: Harper & Bros, 1868)]; G.B. Carson, *The theatre on the frontier: the early years of the St. Louis Stage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932); Walter Prichard Eaton, *The Actor's Heritage* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1924).

Sands maintains her methodical approach to researching her show across the *Our Stage and Stars* development volume. Like a locomotive engine, Sands barrels across American theatrical history. She mixes miscellany like the origins of Battery Park in New York, social customs in colonial America, the location of actress Jenny Lind's performances in 1850, character breakdowns for *Adelgitha*, and the offerings in an 1865 playbill for Tony Pastor's Variety Theater. Sands lays out her research in order of her scenes in the show, including opening night credits, character analyses, and quotations from critical reviews for the actresses (and, if possible, the roles Sands' portrayed them playing) in her own show. The granularity in the *Our Stage and Stars* developmental volume reveals an exhaustive survey of American theater traditions and a boon for the researcher. Sands even includes her production costs. She spent $35 on her "red gold" curly wig for Charlotte in *The Contrast*, whereas Adelgitha's wig was $33, Lotta Crabtree's $20, Ethel Barrymore's $15, Lillian Russell's $1.50, Francis Starr's $15, Mary Pickford's $35, Helen Hayes' $30, Theda Bara's $35, and Greta Garbo's $30 (plus $1 for eyelashes).[45] She also spent $21.75 on Victrola records and $323.84 on costumes, for a total design budget of $561.09.

***Redressing the Material Past***

The *Our Stage and Stars* developmental volume satisfies the question of sources for Sands' information on American theater history, just as the *Styles in Acting, 1946* research notebook contains bibliographic citations that likely include Sands' sources for *Styles in Acting*. For Sands' live performances of both *Styles in*

[45] Pickford and Hayes are intriguing since their names do not appear in *Our Stage and Stars* programs. Perhaps Sands substituted them in one-off performance engagements.

*Acting* and *Our Stage and Stars*, the question of how Sands reconstructed period styles for *Our Stage and Stars* remains. Indeed, philosophical problems arise for any attempt to recover past performance practices. How much can we retrieve live performance? How can we test our surmises? Since audiences differ across time and cultural context, are we even recreating the same performance?

These quandaries are important problems to consider in the present day, and Sands may have consciously confronted them as well. In the 1930s, she would have found scholarship lacking in the history of acting practice. Returning for a moment to Sands' *Styles in Acting, 1946* research notebook, Sands placed an asterisk next to the citation of a 1939 article on Elizabethan acting by the mid-century Shakespeare scholar Alfred Harbage.[46] The piece is incisive, since Harbage provides commentary on how Sands' reconstruction of period acting styles pressed against the limits of theater history at that time. Harbage notes of Shakespearean acting studies in the 1930s, "All direct contemporary testimony concerning the Elizabethan manner of acting proves, upon analysis, as equivocal as Hamlet's advice to the players."[47] Harbage also writes that the "Elizabethan style of acting" does not appear in the then-definitive four-volume *The Elizabethan Stage*, and the term "acting" is absent from the index.[48] Perhaps the lack of available information on styles in Shakespeare contributed to Sands' choice to start her histories in the eighteenth century. However, in the 1930s Sands would have found a similar lack of performance historiography

[46] Alfred Harbage, "Elizabethan Acting," *PMLA* 54, no. 3 (September 1939): 685-708.
[47] Harbage, "Elizabethan Acting," 690.
[48] Herbage, 685 "Elizabethan Acting," Herbage refers to E.K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1923).

regarding acting styles across time, as historical acting reconstruction had not yet cohered as an academic specialization.[49]

In taking the play development process of *Our Stage and Stars* (and *Styles in Acting*) into the rehearsal room, and lacking scholarly support for reconstructing acting practices, Sands supplemented her library research with extensive experimentation—what we would term today "practice-based research." In particular, Sands utilized improvisation to uncover movement vocabularies that reconstructed garments and stage objects themselves suggested. Absent academically rigorous studies on original practices, Sands relied on her own embodied explorations with materials to generate mannerisms for her performances. Sands copied from original performances when available (as she did with bootlegged films of Greta Garbo), developed skill sets when necessary (as when she took banjo lessons to recreate Lotta Crabtree's performance), or engaged in design research (as when she researched the costume Lillian Russell wore in 1882 and commissioned a replica of it).[50]

Meticulous fashion research and reconstruction constitute a key component of Sands' creative process. If Sands' freehand sketches of historical costuming across her archives are an indication, Sands took joy in costume research for its own sake. For example, Sands executed an expert sketch of the Lillian Russell dress, that Sands christens, "The 'Clorinde Basque and 'Anastasia'" skirt" from the 1880s.[51] She also

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[49] Personal communication with Bruce McConachie, July 14, 2016.
[50] "Personalities of the Stage and Screen," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 10, 1933.
[51] "Chlorinde" is a kind of butterfly. Perhaps this refers to the short story by Miriam Michelson, "Her Guard of Honor" (1900), in which the protagonist, Paul, sees a Carmen-like figure, Pauline Berthier, in a vision of white as the critically-acclaimed character Chlorinde—that is to say, a harlot in white, *The Smart Set* 2, no. 5 (December 1900): 1-22.

noted that hair should be, "[d]rawn back from face—massed at back with curl hanging down," with roses and violets woven in the hair; corsage and rose bows along the left front; and the puffed skirt draped over the train. The facing page contains references to nine books on the history of fashion, six of which she seems to have been able to access at the Library of Congress (she wrote "LOC" and placed check marks next to them).

Sands' scrupulously executed costuming also appears to have been a draw for audiences. A perspicacious reviewer at the Garden City-Hempstead Community Club in New York State gives a detailed account of Sands' couture in *Our Stage and Stars* at the Cherry Valley auditorium:

> In mimicry there first came Lotta Crabtree, famous in mining camps at San Francisco dance halls in the [18]60's, playing 'The Marchioness' adapted from Dickens' *Old Curiosity Shop*. In her percale print apron, cap and high shoes, Miss Sands caught the spark of hoyenish merriment attributed to the Marchioness and climaxed her scene with a song and jig for Dick Swiveler, accompanying herself on the banjo. Next came Ethel Barrymore at her theatrical debut in 1901 as Madame Trentoni in Clyde Fitch's 'Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines.' Her costume, with its bustle, ermine, plumes, curls and mitts was a replica of Miss Barrymore's and her impersonation ably reminiscent of the Barrymore mannerisms…"[52]

[52] "News of the Community Club," *The Hempstead Sentinel* (Hempstead, New York), "Garden City News," Oct. 11, 1934. The strongest part of Long's sections on Sands for her dissertation is an extended description of Sands' costumes, as reported by critical reviews, along with photographs of her costumes. See Long, "The Art of," 132-56.

The reviewer goes on to describe the abovementioned Lillian Russell dress, "shapely pink satin gown, quaintly shirred"; Frances Starr's, "voluminous lacey tea gown," and so on through American theatrical fashion history.

Beyond audience appeal, Sands connected working with period costuming to discovering period acting, a relationship Sands makes explicit in a chapter she wrote as part of an acting textbook. Towards the end of her life, Sands co-authored a plastic spiral-bound, *21-Lessons in Acting*, with actor Donald Wait Keyes, a friend from the Baker days at Harvard who had acted with Sands and her younger sister, Mary. The book does not indicate if Keyes and Sands collaborated or divided up the chapters, but Sands probably wrote Lesson 19, "Styles in Acting," since that matches the name of her first one-person show. Much of the chapter emphasizes costuming. An extended example gives a sense of her attention to detail,

> A beautifully coiffured white wig made her conscious of the lift of her head and the tilt of her chin. The gentleman of this period also wore a powdered wig and dressed in satin knee breeches with velvet coat, lace frilling his cuffs and his jabot (ruffle on shirt bosom). He carried a lace-trimmed handkerchief and took a pinch of snuff from a tiny jewelled [sic] snuff-box with as nonchalant an air as the 18th century hero flicks the ashes from his cigarette.[53]

Sands goes on to describe stylized behavior, such as the woman's curtsy to the man, the man's kiss of the woman's hand, and their dancing, "with flowing gestures and measured grace."[54] For Sands, dress, comportment, and even speech are of piece. She writes, "The style of speech was equally important, and this 18th century lady

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[53] Donald Wait Keyes and Dorothy Sands, *21 Lessons in Acting: A Workbook for the Actor: Teacher's Manual* (Croton-on-Hudson, NY: World of Modeling, Inc., 1980), 57-58.
[54] Ibid.

and gentleman matched the elegance of their dress and manners with precise and polished diction."[55] Sands seems to be arguing that since all of the codes regulating this eighteenth-century couples' behavior emerge from the same culture, their styles of dress can provide actors insights into styles of behavior, in this case formal greetings, dance, and diction.

Apparently, Sands devoted considerable energies improvising with costumes, wigs, and props as part of her rehearsal process. Certainly, exploring the material potentialities of costumes and props contains much wisdom. For Sands, even though she is (also) recreating images of the past, a broom is still a broom, a corset still limits movement in the torso, and a banjo still has four strings, regardless of temporal context. Working with objects to see what they do before performing with them in front of a live audience seems intuitive. For example, although studying pictures of Restoration-era ladies with fans provides static poses, working with an actual fan in motion can reveal technical challenges, as well as deeper understanding of how and why women used them.

Improvisation with reconstructed artifacts raises exciting possibilities for testing theories of past performance against materiality. Scholars have examined the ways in which objects take on meaning. For example, in *The Stage Life of Props*, Andrew Sofer argues that objects become props through the actor's use of them. Even placing an object onstage imbues it with additional resonance. As Sofer writes, "Simply by virtue of being placed on stage before an audience, objects acquire a set of semiotic quotation marks, so that a table becomes a 'table.'"[56] At the same time,

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[55] Ibid.
[56] Andrew Sofer, *The Stage Life of Props* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2003), 31.

objects still maintain sensible characteristics like weight, tensile strength, texture, and size. To take another furniture example, a folding chair may become the Queen of England's throne on sage, but it is also a folding chair. Stage objects exist both as objects and representations, what Bert O. States calls "binocular vision."[57] By acknowledging costumes, wigs, and props as both signs and objects, Sands achieves the overlap of perspectives that States promotes.

At the same time, Sands' approach suggests its own limitations. Through direct interaction with material objects, Sands would have gained invaluable familiarity with period costumes, wigs, and props, but would have also risked projecting her own culturally-informed assumptions onto artifacts of the past, and possibly producing stereotyped styles. Why should we assume inhabitants of the same costumes found the same movement solutions? Sands seems aware of this danger. In her "Styles" chapter, Sands admits, "When the style of acting becomes completely conventionalized we call it 'stylized.' Some nationalities, such as the Chinese and Japanese, have developed stylized acting to a very high degree and their classic dramas are performed with a special stage language of symbolic attitudes and gestures."[58] Cultures codify subsets of possible movement choices for complex reasons. Just because a garment can move a certain way does not mean that a previous culture selected that movement choice as part of their stylization. For example, working in a kimono for two weeks in a rehearsal studio will result in movement discoveries inherent to the fabric, but will not recreate classical Noh

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[57] Bert O. States, "The Dog on the Stage: Theater as Phenomenon," *New Literary History* 14, no. 2, On Convention: II (Winter 1983): 373-88; Bert O. States, "The Phenomenological Attitude," in *Critical Theory and Performance*, eds. Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1992), 369-80.
[58] Keyes and Sands, *21 Lessons in Acting*, 58.

drama. For this reason, Sands seems to have engaged in improvisational research with costumes and props *after* she immersed herself in historical and cultural information. Cultural artifacts like novels, performance reviews, popular songs, and from imagery in paintings and illustrations, provided static points of reference. Once in the studio, Sands engaged in her own explorations in order to connect the dots. Although speculative (and an intended as comedic renditions), Sands' reconstructions were best possible educated guesses.

Sands' reliance on material reconstruction in historical retrieval imbues embodied knowledge into theater history, and finds resonance in other feats of reconstruction in (and of) performance history. For example, in 1987, the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago presented a performance of Vaslav Nijinsky's lost ballet, *The Rite of Spring* (*Le Sacre de Printemps*), a modern ballet based on a Russian folk legend in which a young woman dances herself to death for the good of her village. The original ballet disappeared following its disastrous opening performance in Paris in 1913. Audience members could not accept Stravinsky's dissonant, syncopated score, nor Nijinsky's angular, modernist choreography, and rioted the theater. Although chorographers mounted their own interpretations of Stravinsky's score in the intervening decades, choreographer Robert Joffrey sought to recover Nijinsky's original movement.[59]

Joffrey collaborated with dance historian Millicent Hodson (who had made the reconstruction her doctoral project at UC-Berkeley) and Hodson's husband,

[59] Joffrey's recovery of *Rite of Spring's* original movement, set, and costumes electrified the dance world, and was Joffrey's last project before his death from AIDS in 1988. See, e.g., Jack Anderson, "The Joffrey Ballet Restores Nijinsky's 'Rite of Spring,'" *The New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1987.

British art historian Kenneth Archer.[60] Archer is an expert in Nicholas Roerich, the original designer for *Rite of Spring*. The pair canvased the globe for scraps (literally) of evidence. They ultimately managed by recover 80% of the ballet's original costumes by searching archives from India to Sweden to Vanessa Redgrave's closet.[61] Joffrey interviewed Nijinsky's surviving dancers, and facilitated two critical textual discoveries. The team recovered Stravinsky's score with written descriptions of stage action along with his music, as well as choreographer Marie Rambert's production notes.[62] These notes proved critical in synthesizing dancer accounts of Nijinsky's lost choreography. In all, the project represented sixteen years of research and mirrors Sands strategy of using archival research, oral history, and costume reconstruction to recreate ostensibly irretrievable performances.

Like Sands, Hodson and Archer's used costume as a central part of their process, but have made additional claims about performance reconstruction that sheds light on Sands' work, in turn. The couple has gone on to reconstruct other masterworks, and from these experiences nuance the notion of *lostness*, "The reconstructor's task hinges on how the terms 'lost' and 'found' are understood. Both concepts are relative. How much of a ballet has to be misusing for it to be considered lost? And how much has to be recovered for it to qualify as found?"[63] In a genre that lacks ontological *foundness* in the first place, what does "lost" mean? Hodson and

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[60] Millicent Kaye Hodson, "Nijinsky's 'New Dance': Rediscovery of Ritual Design in '*Sacre Du Printemps,*'" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1986).
[61] David Ng, "A 'Rite of Spring' that Nijinsky and Stravinsky Would Recognize," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 26, 2013.
[62] Rambert was a Polish dancer who served as Nijinsky's rehearsal assistant for *Rite of Spring*, and later formed her own company in England. She was an expert in a system of movement notation called Dalcroze eurhythmics, and had notated segments of Nijinsky's choreography in that system.
[63] Kenneth Archer and Millicent Hodson, "Ballets Lost and Found," in *Dance History: An Introduction*, ed. Janet Adshead-Landsdale, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 99.

Archer muse, "If conventional wisdom states that a ballet is lost, we query how lost it actually is." Without recourse to an a priori page-to-stage recovery mechanism, the couple claim, every "lost" ballet, "generates its own method of rediscovery." Evidence has to be taken in whatever form it presents itself. Thus, if 'lost' and 'found' are relative, then there are no anachronisms in dance reconstruction."[64] Hodson and Archer also state that they will not take on a project unless they can reasonably expect to find 50% "hardcore evidence for both dance and design." Joffrey guessed that the team ran at about an 85% level of accuracy for Rite of Spring based on "density of information" in choreography, performance style, design, music, and lighting. Hodson and Archer estimate that they reached 95%, 75%, and 65% levels of accuracy on three reconstructions subsequent to the *Rite of Spring* project—a claim with important implications for both their and Sands' methodology.[65]

In giving numerical values to reconstruction, Hodson and Archer conflate *precision* with *accuracy*. In the hard sciences, precision is, "closeness of agreement between indications or measured quantity values obtained by replicate measurements on the same or similar objects under specified conditions," whereas accuracy is, "closeness of agreement between a measured quantity value and a true quantity value of a measurand."[66] In broader terms, precision reflects repeatability whereas accuracy reflects truth. A reconstruction may be precise but inaccurate, or imprecise but accurate. And reconstruction is a curious business since, although we may check

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[64] Archer and Hodson, "Ballets Lost and Found," 100-101.
[65] Kenneth Archer and Millicent Hodson, "Confronting Oblivion: Keynote Address and Lecture Demonstration on Reconstructing Ballets," in *Preservation Politics: Dance Revived, Reconstructed, Remade*, ed. Stephanie Jordan, (London: Dance Books Ltd, 2000), 2.
[66] BiPM, I. E. C., ILAC IFCC, IUPAC ISO, and OIML IUPAP, "International Vocabulary of Metrology–Basic and General Concepts and Associated Terms, 2008," *JCGM* 200 (2008): 21-22.

precision through reflection on method, there is no way to determine accuracy. Like astronomy, history points its lens at observable but untestable subjects.

The Joffrey experiment suggests limitations in Hodson and Archer's approach, Sands' work, and historic reenactment generally. The Joffrey's reconstruction may correspond with Nijinsky's original production (although the temporal, cultural, and political contexts are different), or it may not. The Joffrey's success, defined as degree of mimicry, is unknowable, yet the piece electrified audiences. Thus, how do we measure success in performance reconstructions? In his review of *Styles in Acting*, Brooks Atkinson lauds Sands for reconstructive choices. Atkinson writes that Sands appeared, "armed with a fan and handkerchief" for Millamant's in Congreve's "fantastically mannered," play. She used "expansive gestures and lavish graces" to "suit the bravura tragedy trappings" of Almahide in Dryden's "The Conquest of Granada." She sang the "coquette with a broom" as Madame Vestris, and gave robust physicality to "sniveling melodrama."[67] Yet, how would Atkinson know if Sands' choices were accurate?

A San Francisco reviewer of Sand's performance speaks explicitly to the issue of unknowability, "Naturally, one cannot say how good were the impersonations of the heroines of Dryden and Congreve. I don't know any more about them than Miss Sands does. But they were artful bits of acting, none the less."[68] Moreover, since much of comedy stems from recognition, sometimes Sands' caricatures did not land, "Miss Sands I think, underestimates John Dryden as a poet and playwright and she

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[67] J. Brooks Atkinson, "Dorothy Sands, in One-Woman Show, Gives 'Styles in Acting,'" *The New York Times*, Apr. 4, 1932.
[68] Claude LaBelle, "Miss Sands Excells [sic] as Mimic," n.p. (San Francisco), Nov. 7, 1932, in Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 263.

plays Almahide in his 'Conquest of Granada' in a comic spirit that probably would have surprised the audiences of Dryden's day. It is amusing but I doubt if Dryden's play could have acted that way in his, or at any other, time."[69] That particular reviewer did not appreciate Sands' Dryden character because it did not match his expectation. However, this criticism need not imply that Sands' reading of historical bodies was wrong. Perhaps Sands' portrayal did not please the critic because it *was* accurate. The point is that Sands went to great pains to *try* to recreate past styles. Sands created a sophisticated (and labor-intensive) method. Were she to start researching her one-woman shows over from scratch, she would be likely to arrive at the same results. Her method was *consistent*. Sands' reconstructions might also be *accurate,* or they may not—we cannot know.

However, audiences did not come to Sands' shows in order to mediate epistemological tests. In fact, the theatricality of Sands' works do not derive from theater history in an absolute sense (if an "objective" history is possible, or even desirable), but from *Sands*' interpretation of theater history. A history requires an historian, and audiences took joy in seeing and hearing the artistry of Sands' narratives, like the rhapsodes, bards, and minstrels of old. In speaking about dance history, Susan Leigh Foster personifies performance history as a *pas de deux* between Clio and Terpsichore, the Muses of History and Dance.[70] In the same way, Sands' negotiation of Theater and History was an integral part of the power of her productions. Sands took audiences on tours of theatrical history with *her*, and for that

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[69] William F. McDermott, "Dorothy Sands Exhibits Some Acting Styles," Dec. 15. 1932, Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,450, qtd. in Long, "The Art of," 200.
[70] Susan Leigh Foster, *Corporealities: Dancing, Knowledge, Culture, and Power* (London: Routledge, 1996), xi.

reason audiences enjoyed the ride. Since Sands' own presence in her histories is important, the next and final chapter will explore the way that Sands' thought about her own work, and will show how these observations might inform performance theory in the present.

# Chapter Five: Pistil and Stamen

## *The Presence of Absence*

This project has presented Dorothy Sands' biographical narrative, offered close readings of her two one-woman shows, and explored her research and rehearsal strategies. The dissertation now concludes with a search for what biographical historian Leon Edel calls, "the figure under the carpet, the evidence in the reverse of the tapestry, the life-myth of a given mask."[1] Who was Dorothy Sands at her essence, and how might this knowledge inform theater and performance studies beyond a deeper appreciation of Sands' life and work? However, what happens when no figure emerges from under the carpet, or the project never penetrates the pile and weave of the subject's self-narrative? Can an actress become so proficient in playing roles that the curtain never falls? Can a private person disappear in public?

For Dorothy Sands, the answer is seemingly "yes." As Chapter One described, Sands stayed active in theater from her debut at age of fourteen in *Mrs. Jarley's Animated Dolls* at her family's church in 1907, until the age of seventy-nine, when she co-starred the mind-bending two-person show, *Right You Are*, by experimental playwright Luigi Pirandello at the Roundhouse Theatre in New York in 1979. As a result of the length of her career, and her prominence as a comic actress and solo artist, Sands generated a sizable body of critical response. Her extensive

[1] Leon Edel, "The Figure under the Carpet," in *Biography as High Adventure: Life-Writers Speak on their Art*, ed. Stephen B. Oates (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1986), 24.

scrapbook collection at the Billy Rose Theatre Division catalogues her public persona. However, these volumes offer little insight into the person behind her mask. Despite—or maybe because of—the volume of primary source materials, Sands' interior life remains hidden, like an actress who has disappeared into too many roles.

Sands' scrapbooks are not a transparent window into Sands' interior life. Rather, the collection is more like a command performance from beyond the curtain of time. Sands arranged her prolific career in meticulous fashion according to theme and location. Thousands of press clippings, programs, photographs, and other memorabilia testify to an ordered life, neatly arranged, like a prewritten script or travelogue. Filled but not crowded, the cleanly pasted mementos keep the crumbling, acid-laden backing paper from disintegrating between the reader's fingers, like plant roots trying to forestall eroding soil. The physical deterioration of the substrates against the relatively more stable newsprint seems like a poignant visual metaphor, expressing how narrative fights against time's tendency to destroy. Sands' scrapbook collection exemplifies essayist Joan Didion's precept, "We tell ourselves stories in order to live" in that the disintegrating tomes, dispersed and secreted away in the library vaults, still speak with a voice desperate to reach an audience.[2]

The private lives of performers are not necessarily relevant to theater history (although they can be). However, the juxtaposition of the absence of Sands as a private citizen against the thoroughness of her performance of her public personality in her archives is itself reason for curiosity. Dorothy Sands' meticulously crafted scrapbooks represent not only a "presentation of self," to borrow sociologist Erving

[2] Joan Didion, *We Tell Ourselves Stories in Order to Live* (New York: Knopf, 2006). The title comes from the opening line of Didion's essay, "The White Album."

Goffman's term, but a form of self-portraiture fashioned by a virtuoso mimic.[3] Dorothy Sands was capable of chameleon-like transformation onstage, and devoted her entire adult career to the study and performance of characters. Why should we assume that Sands' presentation of herself in her archives is any less fashioned than her meticulously prepared stage, radio, or television roles?

To take a playful yet incisive illustration of the way performers can sometimes vanish within their visibility, the tragi-comic actor Peter Sellers hosted an episode of Jim Henson's *The Muppet Show* in its 1977 season. About midway through the program, Kermit the Frog enters Sellers' dressing room to discover the actor bizarrely dressed in a Viking helmet, corset, wig, and boxing gloves, while impersonating Queen Victoria. Taken aback, Kermit remarks, "Ya know, I just love all your wild characters, Peter. But backstage here, you can just relax and be yourself," to which Sellers replies, "But that, you see, my dear Kermit, would be altogether impossible. I could never be myself. You see, there is no me. I do not exist. There used to be a me, but I had it surgically removed."[4] Sellers then launches into a soliloquy from Shakespeare's *Richard III* while playing tuned chickens. The joke lands because on some level Sellers is not joking. At least for some actors, having assumed a dizzying array of personae during their vocation, knowledge of their own "true" selves becomes remote.

Sellers' *Muppet Show* bit effectively summarizes classic quandaries when approaching actor theory. Traditionally, the "actor's paradox" refers to the assertions of Denis Diderot (the eighteenth-century essayist) who argued that great actors do not

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[3] See Erving Goffman, "Part 1: The Production of Self," in *The Goffman Reader*, eds. Charles Lemert and Ann Branaman (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 1-42.
[4] *The Muppet Show*, "Peter Sellers," season 2, episode 219, December 1977.

and cannot experience true emotions in order to depict characters masterfully.[5] Although more of a trope than a truism, Diderot's paradox provides fair warning when approaching stage professionals' self-narration (which includes scrapbooks). For many stage professionals, stage habits spill into their private lives, and reminisces in particular. Life-writing therefore becomes another kind of performance, replete with its own set of theatrical conventions.

To take a parallel example, in the case of actress autobiographies, theater historian Thomas Postlewait notes that eighteenth-century actresses like Lillah McCarthy, Lillie Langtry, and Johnston Forbes-Robertson recounted childhood experiences as if from the pen of William Woodsworth, whereas Victorian stars Constance Collier and Elsa Lanchester seem almost to copy passages from Charles Dickens. Moreover, autobiographies feature set-pieces, such as opening night jitters and triumphs, stage mishaps and pranks, tales of professional camaraderie and support, tributes to character actors, travel tales, money woes, name-dropping, vague references to acting "methods," and hardships sustained and overcome.[6] The urge to form order through narrative is a basic human drive, and so how much deeper must be the compulsion for professional actresses to conceptualize the drama of their lives in terms of three or five act story arcs with plot points, scene breaks, and cathartic resolution?

As cultural products, autobiographies emerge from social and temporal contexts, and therefore appropriate aesthetic conventions specific to their times.

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[5] Denis Diderot's essay *Paradoxe sur le comédien* appeared posthumously in 1830.
[6] Thomas Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: Essays in the Historiography of Performance*, eds. Thomas Postlewait and Bruce McConachie (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 257.

Postlewait argues that actresses assign themselves roles within their own autobiographical scripts, make entrances and exits, move in and out of the spotlight, and speak to specific sections of their reading audience. A primary task for the theater historian is to identify and explain why "divisions, displacements, and denials of self" occur.[7] For a seasoned professional, the character on the page becomes one more role to be played with training, experience, and artistry. Theater historian Viv Gardner goes farther, and refers to actress self-narration as "performed autobiographies." The selection, sequencing, and arrangement of symbolic life artifacts constitute a performance (in every sense), and a failure to read culturally specific conventions will result in incomplete readings of life-writing as authored texts.

In the same way that the nineteenth-century actresses that Postelwait and Gardner cite approached their self-narratives as parts to play, Dorothy Sands made authorial choices in fashioning her scrapbooks. Her volumes communicate orderliness, with neatly taped press clippings (with salient references underlined), publicity photos, programs, letters, and other memorabilia. Sands assigned each of the sixteen scrapbooks periods in her career, although at times revisiting the same spans in different scrapbooks, as if experimenting with different story arcs. To take additional examples that this study has not specifically discussed, "MWEZ + n.c. 6047" includes Sands' appearances with the Westchester County Playhouse in 1932 and "MWEZ + n.c. 25,448" documents her 1939-41 *Candida* tour with Cornelia Otis Skinner. On the other hand, "MWEZ + n.c. 25,447" contains Neighborhood

[7] Postlewait, "Autobiography and Theatre History," 268.

Playhouse and *Grand Street Follies* materials, but so does "MWEZ + n.c. 25,449."[8] The former shows her journey with the company, whereas the other scrapbook contains additional New York activity, which included but was not limited to the Playhouse. "MWEZ + n.c. 25,220" is one of three scrapbooks filled with clippings from Sands' solo years, and begins with selected highlight from the Playhouse and *Follies* before launching into her solo career, as if to imply that the previous experiences served as necessary preliminaries for the natural evolution of her work as a soloist.

If we should therefore approach Sands' scrapbooks with caution, then where can we look to look behind the life-mask? Absent the revelation of as-yet unavailable sources, such as diaries or private letters, Sands' archives at the Harvard Theatre Collection and the Billy Rose Theater Division remain the best and only resources.[9] The scrapbooks primarily filled with newspaper clippings prove unhelpful in accessing Sands' interior world. However, other items in her archives, when taken together, reveal a metaphor that connect Sands' life mask and inner life.

### *Conceptual Metaphor: ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS*

In working with Sands' archives, an ostensible triviality emerges that nonetheless illuminates Edel's "figure under the carpet" and helps explain Sands' approach to acting and play development. This feature also finds unexpected

[8] The New York Public Library's numbering system is itself another kind of performance, both in its idiosyncratic typography, and also, at the time of this writing, that much of the Library's performing arts catalogue information is not online (including Sands' materials), but accessible only through the old index-card drawers on premise at Lincoln Center.

[9] Sands' letters with her mentor, George Pierce Baker, referenced in the Chapter One discussion of the 47 Workshop, do offer insight into a tender moment in Sands' life as she took her first steps away from home as part of a professional tour.

company with a long lineage in acting theory, and will prove generative through to the conclusions of this chapter: Dorothy Sands adored flowers. In fact, flowers flourish in Sands' archives. In a family snapshot, Dorothy and her younger sister, Mary, kneel on the ground as young adults to inspect the local flora. In the photo, Sands wears a bag on a long strap over her shoulder that she could have been using to hold a camera, or perhaps to collect specimens. The two sisters smile while one of their brothers stands over the proceedings.[10]

Likewise, in a thank-you letter following an opening night performance in New York, from the late 1920s, Sands enumerates her well-wishing bounty to her parents,

> Thank you so much for those glorious Better Times roses. They are so beautiful and I hope with a dose of aspirin will keep for several days.
> An opening is always exciting and fun—even if you know as I did that it couldn't be anything but disastrous.
>
> Goldie sent me a large box of beautiful roses, and I had lovely ones from Lydia and Anton.
>
> Ray sent me a gorgeous box of pink peonies, purple iris and white and yellow daisies.
>
> Doris and Edit an adorable bouquet of little pink roses and baby's breath.
>
> Don Keyes some red tulips.

[10] Black and white photograph, n.d., Mary Sands Thompson Papers, 1917-1979, SC 59, Radcliffe College Archives, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

Mary bro't me in lilacs and weigela—how do you spell that?[11]

Giving flowers for an opening night performance is a thoughtful but common gesture, and Sands writes of other topics in the same letter. However, Sands' family appears to given her a lot of flowers, her family knew that she would like them, and Sands luxuriates over their details beyond a thank-you letter's requirements. The letter also contributes to a pattern. For example, in a program bio Sands wrote for a production around 1949, she includes a whimsical closing, "Next to the theatre her [Sands'] great love is gardening and she grows a mean petunia and loves to tell you about it."[12] Even today, Sands' nieces and nephews, and grandnieces and nephews recall their favorite aunt's collection of four-leaf clovers.[13] Of all the details surrounding visits to a favorite and glamorous aunt to have remembered decades later, the clover collection and/or Sands' pride in it must have made an impression.

Again, appreciating flowers is not an unusual pastime, although additional examples in Sands' archives contribute to their significance. Sands' papers at the Harvard Theatre Collection include some of her books, including a copy of Ludwig Schröter's guide to Alpine flora, a standard field book published in Zurich since the late 1890s.[14] Sands made a European trip from June through October 1920, which included sightseeing Scottish castles and coursework in dramatics in England.[15]

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[11] Dorothy Sands to her parents, after May 25, 1942, Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library, MWEZ + n.c. 25,444. Weigela is a type of flowering Asian shrub, and Sands was right, "weigela" is the correct spelling.
[12] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 25,445.
[13] Personal email communication with Frank Walter Sands, Sept. 18, 2015.
[14] Ludwig Schroeter, *Coloured Vade-Mecum to the Apline Flora*, 20th and 21st ed. (Zurich: Albert Rausted, n.d. ca. 1920s), in Dorothy Sands Papers, ca. 1932-77, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[15] "C.E. Union Notes," *Cambridge Chronicle*, May 29, 1920; "C.E. Union Notes," *Cambridge Chronicle*, July 10, 1920; "North Cambridge," *Cambridge Chronicle*, Oct. 2, 1920.

Probably, her Schröter dates from these travels, and so Sands' use of the text predates her play developmental volumes discussed in Chapter Four. The guidebook itself contains print divided into French and English in corresponding columns. Schröter starts each flower on a fresh page, with numbered varietals down the column, with facing illustrations. Sands' copy still contains pressed Swiss Alps flowers that she placed in the book next to their illustration, and checked off the specific varietals among Schröter's descriptions. Sands found about two-dozen types of flowers.

Sands' Schröter is important to this discussion, because the guidebook bears specific resemblance to Sands' impersonation notebook discussed in Chapter Four, which she used to develop dozens of parodies of Broadway and Hollywood celebrities.[16] In both format and method, the impersonation notebook resembles the flower guide. Like the Schröter guide, she began each study with a photograph of the object of study, and also like Schröter, she made observations according to categories (e.g., voice, gesture, posture, hair, costume, facial expressions), and subcategory. Both texts are working books that permit the addition of instances as the owner pursues her explorations. Both attempt to describe the characteristics of individual specimens within a specific ecology, focusing on description of morphology, with a fresh page for each varietal with facing illustrations. Sands seems fascinated with the characteristics of differing types as found in their natural environment—whether these creatures are dramatic presences like Long Stalked Thistles and White Saxifrage, or exquisite blooms like Katharine Hepburn and Helen Hayes.

[16] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, New York Public Library, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, MWEZ + n.c. 25,566.

As if to make the link between collecting flowers and collection celebrities explicit, Sands put flowers into her impersonation notebook. Three small flowers appear among several loose note pages on the visual and vocal characteristics of Elsa Maxwell ("sneer on face all time," "nod head," etc.), a popular gossip columnist and radio hostess in the early 1940s. The specific significance, if any, for the flowers' presence in Maxwell's pages remains a mystery. However, there they are (and they are the only flowers that appear in the impersonation notebook), hovering next to an image and description of Maxwell in the same way that Sands placed flowers in her Swiss field guide. The similarities between the flower guide and impersonation notebook could indicate a methodical approach to Sands' theatrical activities generally, and so this chapter will elevate the link between flowers and actresses from to the level of a metaphor, "actresses are flowers," and explore the consequences of this equivalence.

"Metaphor" here refers to linguist George Lakoff and philosopher Mark Johnson's definition of a structural mapping from one cognitive domain to another. In their classic *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphors function as conceptual architecture that undergirds language.[17] As Lakoff and Johnson explain, "Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining out everyday realities."[18] For Lakoff and Johnson, most utterances constellate around a finite number of metaphorical complexes. For example,

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[17] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). For a model study that applies Lakoff and Johnson's work to theater studies, see Bruce McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment, 1947-1962* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003).
[18] Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 3.

statements like "His criticisms were *right on target*," or "You disagree? Okay *shoot*!" [italics in original] all point to an underlying metaphor, ARGUMENT IS WAR.[19] Whether spatial, sensorial, or abstract, conceptual metaphors emerge from lived experience and shape our thoughts, though they stay hidden in their pervasiveness. For example, seemingly straightforward phrases like "he picked off his points one by one," "her view ultimately prevailed," or "they pressed forward with their case," still emerge from ARGUMENT IS WAR.

Sands' impersonation notebook seems to have taken the Schröter guide as inspiration for format, but the metaphor ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS extends to her other materials. For example, the "Notable Women" section of the "Notes on Famous Women" included a section of flowers growing across the fields of history (like a geological history of a region).[20] Sands' constant arranging and rearranging groupings of types of women for show ideas in the same volume becomes a taxonomic exercise. As a botanist (to extend the metaphor), Sands sought to arrange actresses according to categories. As an artist, she tried to arrange flowers in vases as beautifully as possible. Lakoff and Johnson's system helps us understand the understructure of Sands' creative process. The metaphor ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS creates a complex of meaning based on mapping attributes of flowers onto actress identity.

Furthermore, as a conceptual metaphor, ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS results in what Lakoff and Johnson call "entailments," or consequences that follow from the primary metaphorical relationship. If actresses are flowers, then they are

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[19] Lakoff and Johnson, 4. Lakoff and Johnson capitalize conceptual metaphors in order to differentiate them from the more familiar poetic or literary metaphors.
[20] Dorothy Sands scrapbook, Billy Rose Theatre Division, MWEZ + n.c. 26,060.

blooms that flower for brief periods; they occur as types with defining qualities; they require specific environmental conditions in which to flourish; and so forth. As the New Testament notes, "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away (*Peter*, 1:24)." Flowers are beautiful, but also ephemeral. Flowers grow in the wild, but can also be cultivated, drawn, painted, or embroidered. Sands cultivated, drew, painted, and embroidered (upon) her caricatures, and presented them as gifts to her audiences.[21]

ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS also entails a specific role for Sands. If actresses are flowers, then who is Sands? She could be a gardener, tending her Victorian English formal garden, trimming the hedge roses, training wisteria, and bringing cut blooms into the parlor. Alternatively, she is a nineteenth-century naturalist, a conscientious student of the various veins and varieties that appear in exotic theatrical locales. She is something akin to a ship's "botanist" or "floriculturist" who conducts research expeditions into the uncharted landscapes of the present and past, cataloging rare instances. She assiduously notes morphologies in notebooks. She documents the qualities and physiology of her discoveries, and then presents her findings in theatrical contexts (not different in concept from nineteenth-century museum performances). Sands is a student of the genus *mima* (Latin for "actress"). As a *mimic* herself, she frames her findings as live performance rather than an address to a learned society, but based on fieldwork all the same.

[21] Different conceptual metaphors carry other entailments. For example, Chapter One mentioned Edward Gordon Craig's conception of actors as *Über-marionettes*, or versatile super-puppets. However, if ACTORS ARE PUPPETS, then there must be puppeteers who control them, who are usually hidden; puppets do not think for themselves; puppets are built by master craftsmen; puppets can be broken, fixed, or replaced; and puppets go back in their boxes between performances.

The floriculturist persona seems to match additional materials in Sands' archives and contribute to the impression of a naturalist taking methodical field notes. For example, one of her college books, a copy of Shakespeare's *Othello, The Moor of Venice*, demonstrates the capacity for sustained focus that drove her process in later years.[22] Sands studied the play for "English 2" at Harvard University, a Shakespeare class taught by celebrated English scholar George Lyman Kittredge. Sands filled the playtext with notes. The act of taking notes for a college course is (one hopes) not in of itself striking, but the manner in which she approached the text evokes closer attention. Sheets of semi-transparent writing paper appear between every pair of pages, on which Sands wrote explanations for archaic or significant terms, identifying entries by corresponding line numbers. Sands used red and black underlining on the printed text itself, along with explanatory notes and marks to indicate the beginnings and endings of speeches.

The system is straightforward enough. For instance, when Emelia says to Iago, "No, I will speak as liberal as the north" (*Othello* 5.2.219), Sands makes the gloss, "as freely as the north wind blows." These decodings of Elizabethan verse do not seem to reveal underlying themes and, although more than capable, are primarily pragmatic. However, even without a formal handwriting analysis, the fact that Sands glossed archaic words on every page of Shakespeare's five-act play, using both sides of each sheet of writing paper, without any noticeable break in penmanship, would seem to indicate a capacity for focus.

[22] *Shakespeare's Tragedy of Othello*, William J. Rolfe, ed. (New York: American Book Co., 1907), Dorothy Sands Papers, ca. 1932-77, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

In contrast (and by astonishing archival coincidence), Harvard University Libraries recently posted a special interest web page based on a symposium, "Take Note," subtitled, "Note-Taking Habits at Harvard: A Selected History," which contains images of another *Othello* text from the same class. Apparently, a student named James Buell Munn (class of 1912—Sands graduated in 1915) gave his copy to an Arthur Cushman McGiffert (class of 1913), who in turn entrusted it to Lionel Jersey de Harvard (a descendant of Harvard University founder John Harvard, and also of class of 1913). The three all annotated their sequentially shared copy on similarly affixed onion-skin pages, but whose combined efforts do not corresponded to Sands' thoroughness, with contrasting note-taking styles and much less neatness.[23] Extenuating circumstances aside, such as idiosyncratic working styles or shared versus sole ownership of a textbook, Sands' copy of *Othello* displays the care of a scientists' lab book.

The image of Sands as a naturalist also helps explains otherwise puzzling artifacts in Sands' archives. On expeditions, a collector collects specimens as well as information. For example, Dorothy Sands' archive at the Harvard Theatre Collection contains a doll of Dorothy Sands as Mae West as *Diamond 'Lil*, perhaps given to Sands by West herself, discussed in the first chapter. The collection also contains a brooch belonging to the great Italian actress Eleonora Duse (1858-1924). According to a letter from Sands' fellow Baker alum, Neighborhood Playhouse manager, and friend Agnes Morgan, the piece passed from Duse to a contemporary British actress-

[23] Harvard University Archives, "Take Note: Note Taking Habits at Harvard: A Selected History," http://library.harvard.edu/university-archives/archives-news-2 (accessed October 16, 2015). The call number for the Munn/McGiffert/Harvard book itself at the Harvard Theatre Collection is HUC 8909.324.2.

manager named Gertrude Kingston, to "Helen,"[24] to Agnes Morgan, who gave it to Sands.[25] The Harvard collection also houses, oddly, a lock of Ethel Merman's hair, who sent it to Sands by request.[26] These artifacts, as well as others that have not survived, connect Sands to a genealogy of strong female performers.[27] For this reason alone, they would have been prized possessions. However, reading these objects against the impersonation book might suggest that they were not talismanic or part of a reliquary, but were special to Sands in the way that a naturalist would treasure a rare fossil, Galapagos tortoise shell, or recovered meteorite. Perhaps they were precious finds, objects to place on a desk or shelf in an urban office as keepsakes from sojourns in the field. Since she was a "botanist," they perform as mementos, personified objects, or signifiers she "collected" in lieu of the body. Sands sought out, described, and presented her research on blossoms of theatrical history, which turns out to be a paradigm not without provenance.

### *A Family Tree (A Metaphor across Time)*

Western thought provides ample examples of Sands' equation of people and flowers. At times, the equivalence becomes as banal as Robert Burns' line, "O my love's like a red, red rose / That's newly sprung in June."[28] More often, the

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[24] Possibly Helen Arthur (1879-1927), manager for the Neighborhood Playhouse from 1915-27, and manager of several solo artists, such as Ruth Draper.
[25] *Dorothy Sands Papers, ca. 1932-77*, Houghton Library, Harvard Theatre Collection.
[26] Ibid.
[27] In a 1971 letter from Dorothy Sands to her sisters, Lydia and Mary, she asks her siblings to choose mementos from her possessions for six of her friends. By then, Sands would have moved into her retirement community in Croton-on-Hudson, New York, Dorothy Sands Papers, ca. 1932-77, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.
[28] From Robert Burns' 1794 song, "A Red, Red Rose," with alternative titles, based on traditional Scots ballads.

interdependency between botany and observations of human character types indicates a deep and variegated lineage. Sands' floral metaphor emerges from fertile soil in writing about acting. Antecedents to ACTRESSES (or PEOPLE) ARE FLOWERS exist in the distant past, within the period immediately prior to and during Sands' solo career, and into present critical theory.

In ancient Greece, Aristotle's successor, Theophrastus, established plant botany with his ten-volume *Enquiry into Plants*.[29] Theophrastus also wrote a book called *The Characters*, which provides studies of thirty human personalities types (and in addition, Theophrastus also wrote works about theater).[30] In *The Characters*, Theophrastus lays out a typology for people based on qualities, such as "arrogance," "backbiting," and "surliness." In other words, Theophrastus attempts to apply the same approach to classification of human personality types as he does for biological organisms. Theophrastus is not able to find an empirical link to ecology and personality, though not for lack of effort, "I have often marveled, when I have given the matter my attention, and it may be I shall never cease to marvel, why it has come about that the whole of Greece lies in the same clime and all Greeks have a like upbringing, we have not the same constitution of character."[31] However, Theophrastus felt that human personalities should follow a typology parallel to plant ecology. The fact that the progenitor of plant botany found the application of his paradigm for classifying plants to classifying people intuitive (even in the face of

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[29] Ca. 350-287 BCE. The study also served as one of the basic texts in natural history during the Renaissance.
[30] Two-thousand years later, George Eliot wrote a conceit of *The Characters* as *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, see, e.g., George Eliot and Nancy Henry, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994 [1879]).
[31] *The Characters of Theophrastus*, ed. and trans. J.M. Edmonds (London: William Heinmann Ltd & New York: G.P Putnam's Sons, 1929), 37.

contradicting empirical evidence) signals that he shared Sands' use of metaphor, under the more expansive rubric PEOPLE ARE FLOWERS.

To take a similar, well-known example of equating flowers and people, Geoffrey Chaucer opens the General Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* with:

> Whan that aprill with his shoures soote [sweet showers]
>
> The droghte [draught] of march hath perced to the roote,
>
> And bathed every veyne in swich [such] licour
>
> Of which virtue engendred is the flour [flower] (1-4).

Chaucer's use of the PEOPLE ARE FLOWERS metaphor is subtler than Theophrastus', but still present—again, Lakoff and Johnson articulate conceptual metaphors as underlying complexes, rather than poetic figures. Chaucer creates a narrative space in which winter's release meant the coming of rain, whose intoxicating life-energy engenders "sondry folk" who dream of distant shores and thus long to "goon on pilgramages." As with varietals of English roses, spring showers cause the sudden reemergence of English sojourners. The remainder of the prologue details the types of people who emerge at a wayside inn set as a point of debarkation, based on medieval archetypes.

Antecedents to Sands' flower metaphor show that she had tapped into a long-standing intuition. Theophrastus' writing intersected in biology, theatre, and personality types, and Chaucer created a narrative poem around springtime's nourishing waters. A third example presages Sands' specific focus on *actresses* as flowers. Nineteenth-century poet Maurice Maeterlinck anthropomorphized flowers as actresses in his classic nature essay, "The Intelligence of Flowers." Now

overlooked, Maeterlinck influenced theories of the stage in his own time. Using natural philosophy as a conceit, Maeterlinck's essay describes flowers like actresses, "So as to separate facts from theories, let us speak of the flower as if it had foreseen and conceived of its achievement in a human way. We shall see later what it must still be credited with and what ought to be taken away from it. For the moment there it is alone onstage, like a magnificent princess endowed with reason and will."[32] Technically speaking, Maeterlinck was proposing the metaphor FLOWERS ARE ACTRESSES rather than the other way around, but was nevertheless conceptualizing a mapping across the two categories.

Like many men in the history of science, Maeterlinck projected his own erotics onto nature, in this case fixating on the genitalia of feminized plants with not quite the elegance of Georgia O'Keefe's iris paintings. For example, he wrote that a flower hovers, "immobile on its stem, sheltering the reproductive organs of the plant in a dazzling tabernacle."[33] Maeterlinck's unapologetic use of the heterosexual male gaze in a particularly floral sense evokes Ben Johnson's fetishization of (female) virginal arousal in his unmistakably entitled poem, "The Triumph": "Have you seen the while lily grow, / Before rude hands have touch'd it? / Have you mark'd but the fall of the snow / Before the soil hath smutch'd it?"[34] Still, for Maeterlinck, flowers shared with actresses a power of presence and an ability to command the stage for the benefit of a breathless audience.

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[32] Maurice Maeterlinck, *The Intelligence of Flowers*, trans. Alexander Teixeira de Mattos (New York: Dodd Mean and Company, 1907), 68.
[33] Maeterlinck, *The Intelligence of Flowers*, 68.
[34] Ben Johnson, " 188. The Triumph," lines 21-24, *The Oxford Book of English Verse: 1250–1900*, ed. Arthur Quiller-Couch (Oxford: The Claredon Press, 1912), 217-18.

In addition to past examples, Sands might have encountered contemporaneous uses of ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS. In her teaching materials, Sands includes a book of essays on her syllabi by *New York Times* theater critic Stark Young, *The Flower in Drama: A Book of Papers on the Theater*.[35] Originally published in 1923, the book predates both Sands' solo shows, and her work with the *Grand Street Follies*. As an epigraph to his collection, Young quotes Japanese theater master, Zeami (1363-1444), "If one aims only at the beautiful, the flower is sure to appear" (Zeami's treatise on Noh theater was titled *The Transmission of the Flower through a Mastery of the Forms*, or *Style and Flower*).[36] In the first essay of the book, "Acting," Young surveys qualities associated with national styles of theater, an approach analogous to Theophrastus' attempt to compare personality types with geography.[37] Also, although Young does not mention flowers specifically, he claims both that "acting comes back to the body in the same sense exactly that all life…come[s] back to the body, to physical senses, to the earth," and also the personification, "acting itself is the body of the art of the theatre."[38] Anticipating (and possibly influencing) Sands, Young implies that theatrical styles differ by region, and that at its most basic level, the actor's body functions as the *sina qua non* ("that without which nothing") of theater. Also synchronous with Sands, Dylan Thomas wrote in 1933 (the same year Sands' premiered *Our Stage and Stars*) the line, "The force that through the green fuse drives the flower / Drives my green

[35] Stark Young, *The Flower in Drama & Glamour: Theatre Essays and Criticism*, (New York: C. Scribner's sons, 1955 [1923]). The title of Young's collection changed in the 1955 printing.
[36] Young, *The Flower in Drama & Glamour*, xi.
[37] Young, *The Flower in Drama & Glamour*, 21-28.
[38] Young, *The Flower in Drama & Glamour*, 28-29.

age."[39] Thomas is saying that the organic drive that sends a flower upwards on its stem also propels him through and past his youth. As a part of the natural world, Thomas sees the brevity his life force within the cycle of seasons. On both the stage and in life, Young and Thomas seem to say, flowers disappear almost as fast as they emerge.

Within critical theory today, work that relates to the conceptual metaphor ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS (and the more general structure PEOPLE ARE FLOWERS) enjoys appeal. For example, eco-critical readings of Shakespeare flourish, and performance studies scholar Una Chaudhuri takes an interest in animals and post-human performance understood in terms of contextualizing landscapes.[40] Also, the recent interest in matters "post" or "trans"-human in Performance Studies dovetails with interest in interrogating traditional dualisms between humans and nature, and "man" and plants. In *Plants as Persons*, philosopher of science Matthew Hall argues that plants merit consideration as beings, and if not sentient and agential in the same way as humans, nevertheless possess qualities that should expand our notions personhood. Hall urges us to consider the social constructedness of human/plant binaries, "Zoocentrism does not emerge from physiology, but is largely a cultural-philosophical attitude."[41] Humans are animals, and not so far removed from plants either, Hall implies.[42]

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[39] Dylan Thomas, "The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower," *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, ed. Daniel Jones (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 2003), 90. Thomas wrote the poem in 1933 and published it in 1934.
[40] See, e.g., Una Chaudhuri and Elinor Fuchs, eds. *Land/Scape/Theater* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2002).
[41] Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011), 6.
[42] Plants and humans share about 99% of the same DNA sequences. To restate a popular observation, humans share about a 60% genetic similarity to bananas. To some degree, these claims, although true, are misleading (e.g., most genetic code is either redundant or unimportant, all organisms share certain

The closest analogue to Sands' "floricultural" approach within critical theory might be Deleuze and Guattari's theory of knowledge based on botanical rhizomes.[43] Rhizomes are a kind of ever-growing underground stem that spreads out horizontally, which defies the intuitive GROWTH IS UP metaphor. Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* embraces post-modernism/post-structuralisms abhorrence of linear narrative, and rather exists as a philosophical system without formal beginnings or endings. Rather, the authors intend for their work to resemble a rhizomatic system, which readers can access at any point. They also offer their approach as a prototype for postmodern thought,

> As a model for culture, the rhizome resists the organizational structure of the root-tree system which charts causality along chronological lines and looks for the original source of 'things' and looks towards the pinnacle or conclusion of those 'things.' A rhizome, on the other hand, is characterized by 'ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles.'[44]

All knowledge blends together in a tangle (a model that resembles neural networks in the brain, or accurately presaged the Internet). Similarly, Sands made each scene in her solo works as a stand-alone performance, and she could (and did) mix and match parodies, impersonations, and lectures for particular engagements.

Dorothy Sands differs from Deleuze and Guatarri in that she embraces the idea of master narratives. Sands was also a product of her times, and her explorations

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genes, etc.). However, these numbers support Hall's contention that the division between humans and nature is largely a societal construct.

[43] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Mille Plateaux), trans. Brian Massumi (London and New York: Continuum, 1972-1980, trans. 2004).

[44] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 7.

of her present and past-tense theatrical landscapes emerge from late-Victorian notions of "natural history" as a mode of systematic observation and collection of specimens from far-flung biospheres. The idea of filling in a catalogue of items was a distinctive Victorian habit, whether the collection consisted of African violets, *Japonoise* decorative arts, notebook pages replete with actress impersonation notes, or one-woman shows of actresses and female characters across time. Sands the floriculturist sought out rare blushes. In such a mode, performance becomes a process of charting the extraordinary within habitats of the searchable world. Through persistent exploration, cataloging, and description, the performer-naturalist can re-present nature to audiences who pay 10 cents a ticket to enter the museum and marvel at the creative bounty of nature.

***The Hand that Picks the Flower***

Sands' conceptual metaphor ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS helps us understand her archival materials that document the development of her one-woman shows. The metaphor also informs our understanding of solo performance, and specifically, the solo performer. To start, the utility that ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS has in explaining Sands' productions suggests the usefulness of searching out controlling ideas in other solo artists' works. For example, The metaphor, SOLO PERFORMERS ARE BIOGRAPHERS encompasses a swath of achievements, such as Julie Harris in *The Belle of Amherst* (1976), about the poet Emily Dickenson; Tova Feldshuh in *Golda's Balcony* (2003), about Israeli prime minister and matriarch Golda Meir, or Laurence Fishburne in *Thurgood* (2008), about the first African

American Supreme Court justice Thurgood Marshall. Similarly, a different class of solo performances fall under the metaphor SOLO PERFORMERS ARE AUTOBIOGRAPHERS, in which solo performers narrate their own lives or events from their own experiences, probably takes up the single largest category of solo performance work, and includes Spalding Gray's semi-improvisational, *Swimming to Cambodia* (1987); *West Side Story* star Rita Moreno's *Life without Makeup*; or Shakespearean legend, Sir Ian McKellan's *Acting Shakespeare*. Many (maybe most) solo biographical shows take autobiography as a conceit, although some shows dramatize another person's autobiographical writing. For example, Vanessa Redgrave performs *The Year of Magical Thinking* (2007), based on essayist Joan Didion's autobiographical account of her (Didion's) experience surviving her late husband. Hal Holbrook's three-decade long touring show, *Mark Twain Tonight* (1954), draws from Mark Twain's own material.[45]

The structure PERFORMERS ARE ETHOGRAPHERS seems to be a growing in popularity for both solo and ensemble productions, with all of the possibilities and problematics that come with an anthropological approach (such as the relationship between ethnographer-artists and local communities). In her solo shows, Anna Deavere Smith captures first-person accounts that she then dramatizes. For *Fires in the Mirror* (1991), Deavere Smith collected interviews that she performs regarding violent tensions between African-American and Jewish communities in Crown Heights, New York. For *Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*, which this dissertation has already mentioned, Deavere Smith performs first-person accounts and responses

[45] Lakoff and Johnson would probably identify PERFORMERS ARE BIOGRAPHERS and PERFORMERS ARE AUTOBIOGRAPHERS as conceptual metaphor as a subset of the larger PEOPLE ARE BOOKS.

to the 1992 Rodney King riots. Ensemble work often follows the same approach. For *The Laramie Project* (2000), director Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project descended upon the small town of Laramie, Wyoming in order to collect oral histories surrounding the brutal murder of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard.[46] If Sands' work exemplifies the metaphor ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS, perhaps a finite number of additional conceptual metaphors might undergird many (or even all) solo productions.

Dorothy Sands' work also points to the importance of how conceptual metaphors interrelate with embodied identity. In her one-woman shows, Sands not only assumed a gardener's mentality to the history of theater, but selected, arranged, and presented her blooms. To draw out a further entailment to ACTRESSES ARE FLOWERS, a flower arrangement implies an arranger. The difference between a botanical field guide and a reference book is that a field guide is *meant to be used*, and used by a specific person. A flower placed in a guidebook (or in a one-woman show) is not just any flower of a type of species, but a flower picked by the owner of the book (or deviser of the show). A field guide is thus a how-to method, as well as a travelogue, and even a form of autobiography. The physical presence of the collector-naturalist is an unseen yet necessary precondition for the presence of specimens. A collection cannot exist without a collector. A hand picks a flower. Dried plants are a record of an embodied experience, a having-been-there in a specific time and place. *In* performance and *as* performance, Sands' physical presence animated her celebrity impersonations.

[46] In plays like *The Laramie Project*, performers deliver monologues in direct address to the audience, rather than adhering to traditional plot structure behind the fourth wall, transforming group work into mosaic of solo shows.

Embodiment is an important lens through which to critique solo performance (and to use in theater studies and performance studies more often). To make use of Adrienne Rich's choice of prepositions, the body is something performing artists think *through*.[47] Ironically, physical presence has not always enjoyed a privileged status in theater studies. Richard Shusterman (who nods to Rich by adapting her phrase in his book title, *Thinking Through the Body*), notes "artworks are made through bodily efforts and skill; but philosophers generally disregard the body's broader aesthetic importance, conceiving it as a mere physical object for artistic representation or a mere instrument for artistic production."[48] Elizabeth Grosz goes farther, and claims that the Western intellectual tradition rests upon "foundations of a profound somatophobia [fear of the body]."[49] Counter-intuitively, the body has not been an intrinsic aspect in the study of theater history.

The problem of the co-presence of the art and the performing artist has historically received more attention in Dance Studies, where the typical absence of spoken narrative brings physicality to the fore. As William Butler Yeats declaimed, "O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[50] An acceptance of embodiment endures in dance and movement studies. In André Lepecki's words, presence and body share a "phenomenological

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[47] The entire quotation is, "I am really asking whether women cannot begin, at last, to *think through the body*, to connect what has been so cruelly disorganized—our great mental capacities, hardly used; our highly developed tactile sense; our genius for close observation; our complicated, pain-enduring, multipleasured physicality," Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1976), 283-4.
[48] Richard Shusterman, *Thinking Through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge UP, 2012).
[49] Elizabeth A. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1994), 1.
[50] William Butler Yeats, "Among School Children," in The Norton Anthology of Poetry, 5th ed., eds. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Sallworthy (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 1200-02. Yeats wrote the poem in 1926, by coincidence when Sands was beginning her ascent as Broadway star, and it first appeared in his collection, *The Tower* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1928).

intertwining," a spiral that impinges not only on performance, but on performativity "as a concept and subject of study."[51] Dance phenomenologists like Sondra Fraleigh and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone begin with the assumed importance of embodied perspective. Often performers themselves, movement scholars and reflective artists bring a much-needed perspective. Performance artist Maria Ambromović argues, "the most powerful tool today in performance is the artist herself."[52] Although not choreographic per se, Sands' performances resemble dance or performance art in that they rely on her own body as a canvas, thereby raising questions of embodied identity. As Sands impersonates actresses and characters onstage, how much of Sands remains? How much does she allow the audience see her arranging flowers? How much does she withdraw her hand?

To some degree, convention regulates how much actors reveal their embodied identities in performance—that is to say, how much of their own presence they seem to retain in their bodies while performing. The Japanese actor Yoshi Oida, muse of avant-garde director Peter Brook, describes how his teacher, Okura of Kyogen, taught the importance of self-removal during performance. In Japanese, the word for "stage" literally means "the platform/place of dancing." Therefore, "it isn't the performer who is 'dancing', but, through his or her movement, the stage 'dances.'"[53] In Okura's ideal, a performer provides an empty shell in which to fill a character. Using Okura's figurative language, the act of the withdrawal from one's own physical instrument creates space for the stage to dance. In other words, an audience should

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[51] André Lepecki, *Of the Presence of the Body: Essays on Dance and Performance Theory* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2004), 2.
[52] Maria Ambromović, in "Unanswered Questions," forward to Colette Conroy, *Theatre and the Body*, (Palgrave, 2010), viii.
[53] Yoshi Oida and Lorna Marshall, *The Invisible Actor* (New York: Routledge, 1997), xviii.

not see an actor but a character. Virtuosity for Okura's is absence, or as performance theorist Peggy Phelan writes, performance "becomes itself through disappearance."[54] In terms of flower imagery, at some point Sands' hand (as well her accompanying body) sought out each flower, selected it, picked it, and placed it in its frame, or between the pages of a book, but then retreated. According to some acting systems, like Okura's, Sands should remove her hand from her arrangements completely—audiences should forget that they are even seeing Dorothy Sands.

Sands herself appears to agree with Okura's approach, at least to an extent. In a speech to the Cosmopolitan Club in New York in 1955, Sands argued that, "Every actor—the comedian in particular—must have a dual personality, a third eye and ear that constantly watches his performance so that when a laugh comes he can register in his memory precisely what he was doing at that particular moment in order to reproduce it in every performance thereafter."[55] Comedy is additionally difficult because the comedienne strives to *be* funny, but not *act* funny. That is to say, the comedienne stays "inside" of the comedic dynamic, "Comedy is a paradox. You must never try to be funny, but you must always remember that you are playing comedy, be aware, and make use of all the technical devices that achieve it."[56] At the same time, parody requires the intrusion of the impersonator, which is the comedic wink. Chapter Four cited Sands quotations in which she describes adding her own layers to caricatures, and critics who enjoyed seeing Sands' authorship. An exact copy of someone may be technically impressive, but not funny. Parody therefore

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[54] Peggy Phelan, *Umarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 176.
[55] Dorothy Sands, speech for the "Cosmopolitan Club Member's Luncheon," Feb. 8, 1955, MWEZ + n.c. 25,444.
[56] Dorothy Sands, speech for the "Cosmopolitan Club Member's Luncheon," Feb. 8, 1955, MWEZ + n.c. 25,444.

opposes verisimilitude. However, when the comedienne makes too overt an appearance, she comes across as "mugging" or trying too hard, which is not usually funny.

Perhaps differences across genre nuance Okura's claim as well. Although absolute claims are not helpful, specific sorts of plays would seem to encourage divergent approaches to embodied identity. Actors tend not to intrude into tragic characters (aesthetic distance would spoil the effect), and likewise for comic characters (comic characters are funny because the audience sees gags coming while knowing that the characters do not). Embellished styles, like farce and melodrama, perhaps encourage more self-aware styles of acting, and political theater like Marxist-motivated director Bertolt Brecht's "Epic Theater," or Augusto Boal's "Theater of the Oppressed," which stresses interaction between performers and audiences/communities, would seem to call for revealed presences.

Maybe Sands' artistry involved skillful negotiation between the presence and absence of her own identity onstage to meet the needs of each moment in performance. Given this mediation, perhaps stage magic emerged out of her choices in timing and degree to which she disappeared and reappeared, repeatedly. As a solo performer, her extrusions and intrusions magnify, because hers is the only body on stage. Too much mimesis, and her studies might prove dull without her own commentary. Too little representation risked projecting didacticism instead of theatricality.

As if the implications of solo work on embodiment were not complicated enough, Sands' choice to fashion solo shows that engaged in time travel confounded

critics' attempts to account for her presence. As one reviewer capitulated, "Miss Sands' numbers, both in each single instance and in the general scheme, are more than impersonations. Neither is the title an adequate description of the whole."[57] The reviewer indicates that terminology becomes problematic. Does Sands perform impersonation, caricature, mimicry, or something else? Sands played contemporary actresses playing actresses of the past playing roles. She played multiple actresses playing the same role in sequence. She played film stars playing stage roles. And she managed to interject her own commentary and criticism without breaking character. These reflections call to mind Rebecca Schneider's description of "repetitions, doublings, and the call and response of cross- and inter-authorships" that occur in the "syncopated time of reenactment."[58] Sands not only advanced and retreated in and out of characters, but also in and out of the present tense, creating additional resonances, ghostings, and hauntings.

Despite the ontological complexities, Sands never lost her audiences. The one constant was Sands' body itself, which points to her own celebrity. Sands portrayed the celebrated, but in her own time, enjoyed celebration. For theater historian and theorist Joseph Roach, celebrity charisma involves a palpable sense of "public intimacy."[59] Related to attraction but not necessarily beauty, charisma is intensely corporeal, manifesting through accessories, clothes, hair, skin, flesh, and bone. Roach feels that celebrities are so embodied that they actually have two bodies—"the body natural" and "the body cinematic," which is "the immortal body of their

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[57] Stirling Bowen, "Dorothy Sands," *Wall Street Journal*, Apr. 21, 1932.
[58] Rebecca Schneider, *Performing Remains: Art and War in Times of Theatrical Reenactment* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 2.
[59] Joseph Roach, *It* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2007), 3.

image."[60] Sands in full force must have been a singular spectacle, and the awe and feat and mastery of her solo performance helps account for the popularity of her touring. She probably would not have been able to set her piece on another performer, for instance. Even if (and when) Sands retreated into her characters past the point of reviewers' abilities to describe, the fact of Sands' body, and the traces of her craft in her physical presence, remained.

When Sands resurrected a body from the past, audiences perceived more than a replica. If Sands' works were museum pieces only, she would not have played to sold-out houses and consistent critical acclaim. Audiences came to inhale the fragrance of celebrity roses, and also to marvel at the skill of the naturalist's traipse through near and distant fields. Sands made extended sojourns through historical research, and shared some prize finds with audiences. Sands presented not just flowers of the past, but her own artfully wrought arrangements and bouquets. Her controlling metaphor therefore fulfills the burden of the biographer as charged by Edel and brings the present study full circle. This is who Sands was: a lover of flowers, an ever-curious collector, and a tireless observer. She was like a docent in a natural history exhibition, the high-brow counterpart to nineteenth-century dime museums and freak shows. As the post-World War II world moved along, Sands' identification with the Victorian acting stylization meant that the theater world passed her by, which is maybe why she became a lost voice. Now rediscovered, Sands' example is once again in bloom. Through a study of her methods, we can understand solo performance more deeply, and chart our own ways through the endless fields and valleys of theater history, awash in its bouquets.

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[60] Roach, *It*, 36.

# Appendices

*Images*

*Figure 1. Dorothy Sands (circa 1927-30). Dorothy Sands scrapbook. New York Public Library. Billy Rose Theatre Division. MWEZ + n.c. 25,449.*

*Figure 2. Dorothy Sands in* Pinwheel *(1927) at the Neighborhood Playhouse. Property of the author.*

*Figure 3. As Arabella in The Neighborhood Playhouse production of* The Lion Tamer *(1927). Dorothy Sands scrapbook. New York Public Library. Billy Rose Theatre Division. MWEZ + n.c. 25,447.*

*Figure 4. At the Neighborhood Playhouse (1929). (L. to R.) Aline Bernstein, Dorothy Sands, Paula Trueman, Adrina Peterkin, Helen Arthur. Dorothy Sands scrapbook. New York Public Library. Billy Rose Theatre Division. MWEZ + n.c. 25,447.*


*Figure 5. "Dorothy Sands, 'The Grand Street Follies.'"* New York Amusements*, May 13, 1929. Property of the author.*

*Figure 6. As Greta Garbo (circa 1933). Property of the author.*

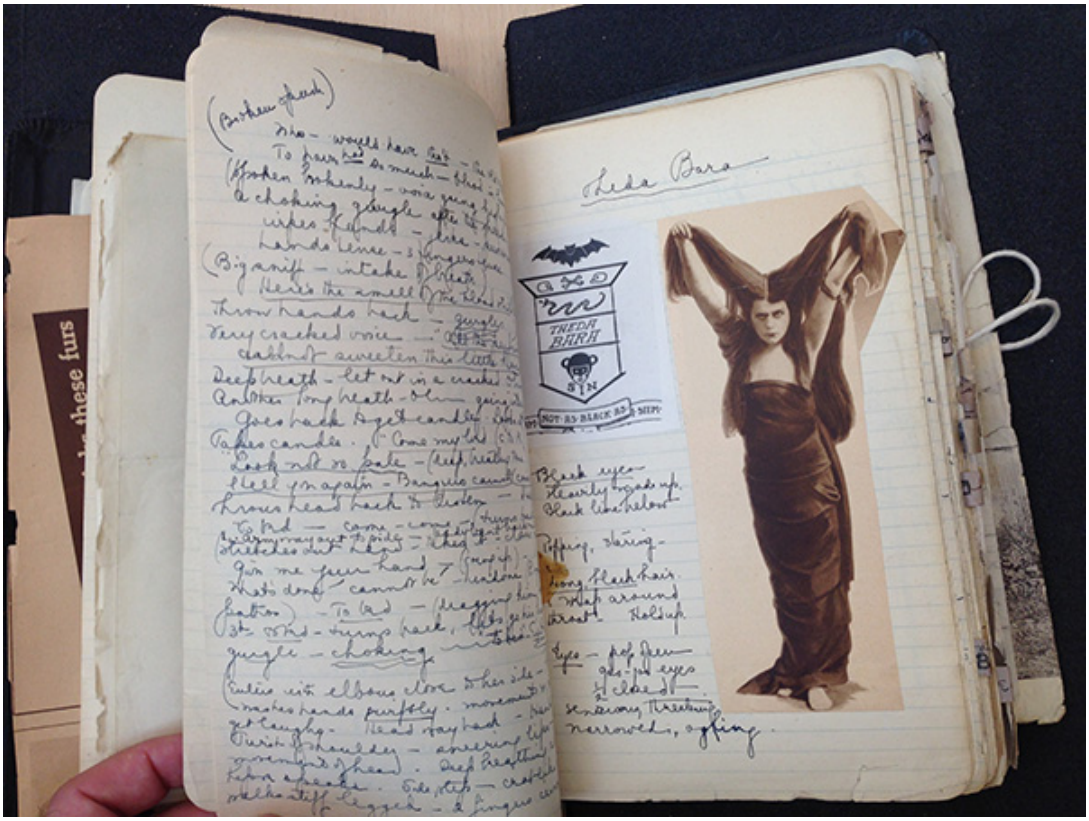
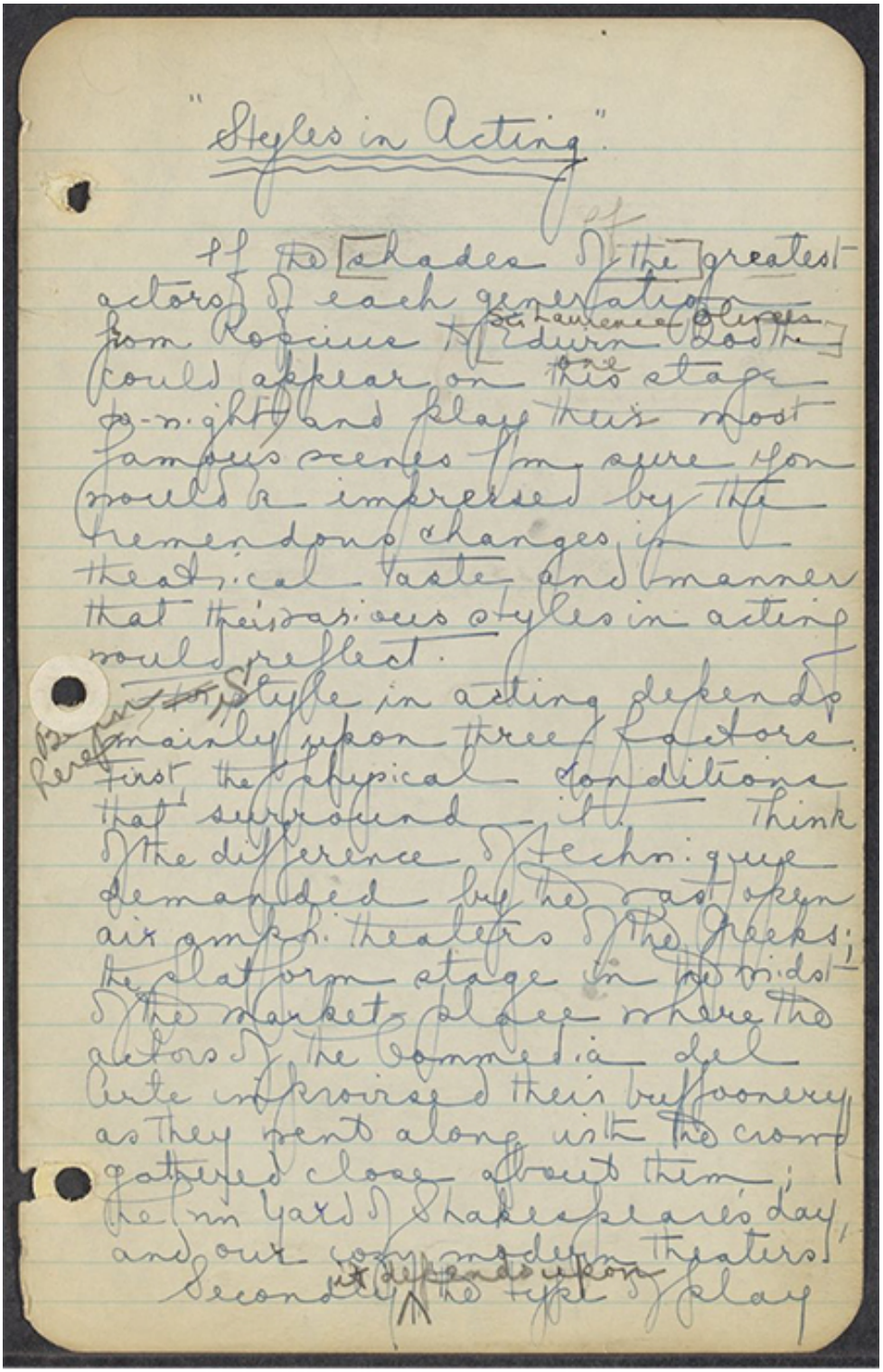



*Figure 7. Notes on Silent-Film Star Theda Bara, in Sands' Impersonation Guide. Dorothy Sands scrapbook. New York Public Library. Billy Rose Theatre Division. MWEZ + n.c 25,566.*


*Figure 8. Flier for* Styles in Acting *(1932). Property of the author.*

*Figure 9. As Millament, in William Congreve's* Way of the World *in* Styles in Acting *(1932). Press Photo. Property of the Author.*



"Styles in Acting"

If the shades of the greatest actors of each generation from Roscius to Sir Laurence Olivier Edwin Booth could appear on this stage to-night and play their most famous scenes I am sure you would be impressed by the tremendous changes in theatrical taste and manner that the various styles in acting would reflect.

Style in acting depends mainly upon three factors. First the physical conditions that surround it. Think of the difference of technique demanded by the open air amph. theaters of the Greeks; the platform stage in the midst of the market place where the actors of the Commedia del Arte improvised their buffoonery as they went along with the crowd gathered close about them; the inn yard of Shakespeare's day, and our comfortable modern theaters. Secondly it depends upon the type of play

*Figure 10. From Dorothy Sands, Styles in Acting (1932). "Notebook 2: 'Our Stage and Stars, 1932.'" Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977. Box 1. Houghton Library. Harvard University. Cambridge, MA.*

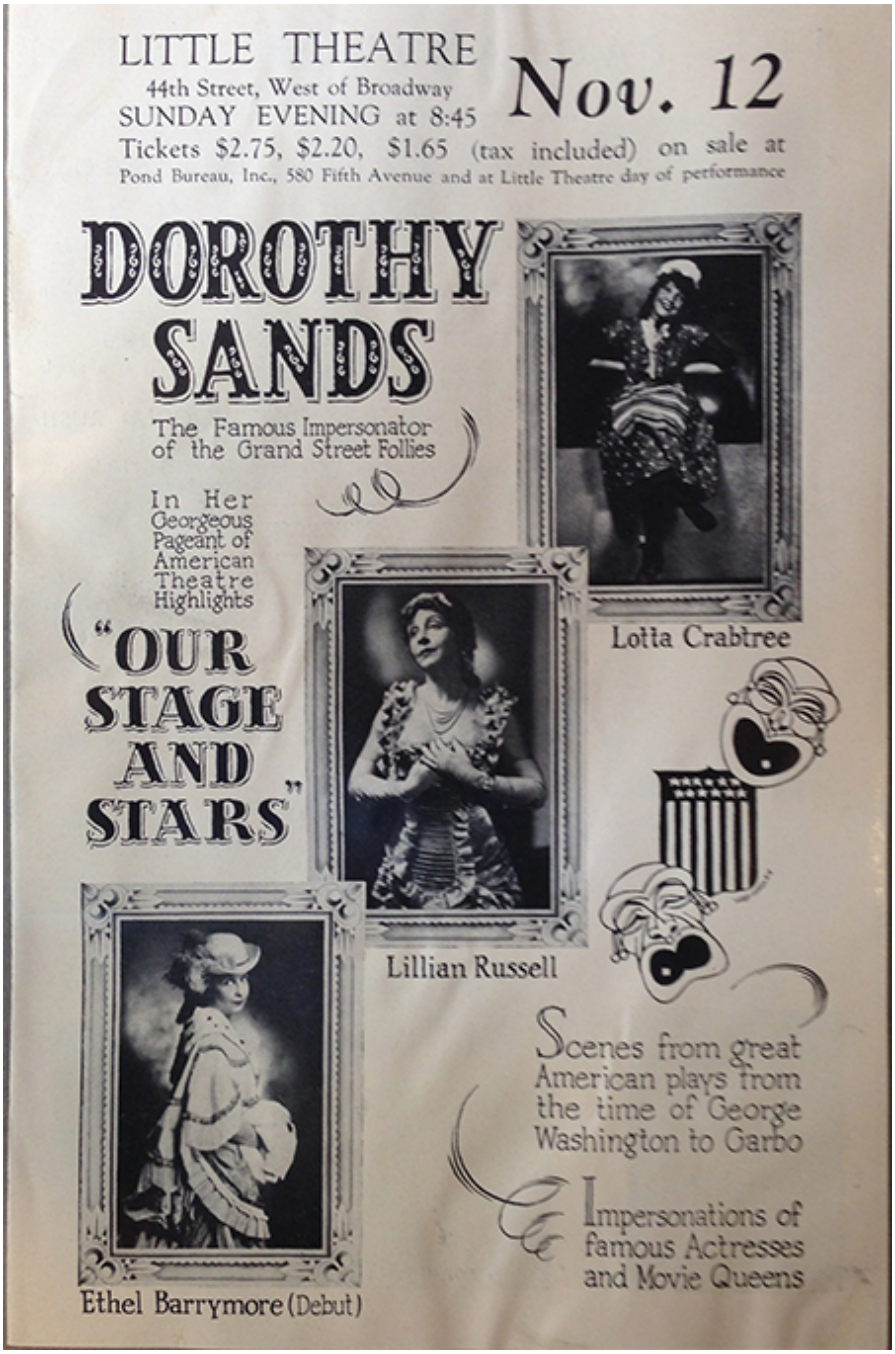



*Figure 21. Program Cover.* Our Stage and Stars *(1933). Dorothy Sands scrapbook. New York Public Library. Billy Rose Theatre Division. MWEZ + n.c. 25,220.*

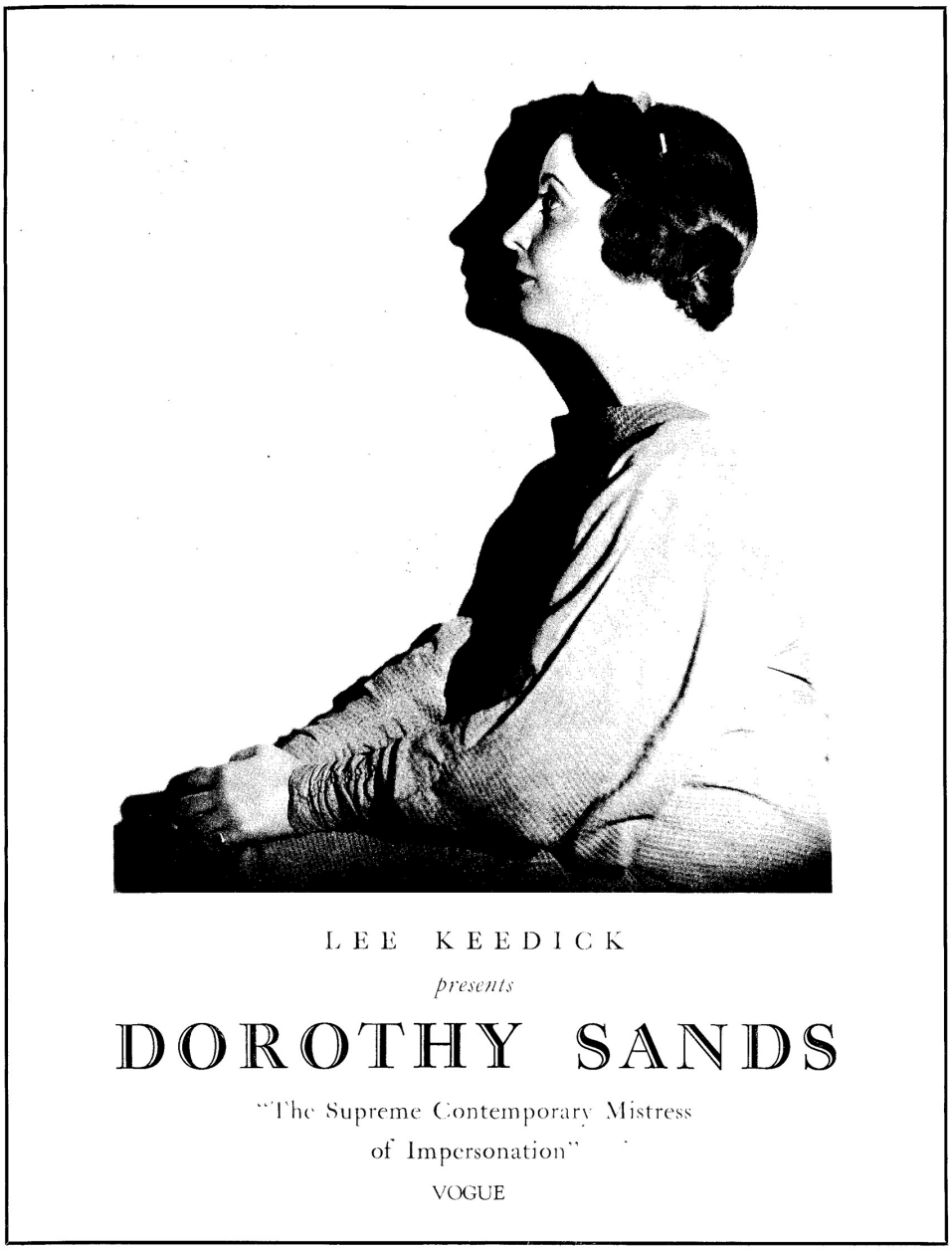



*Figure 12. Redpath Chatauqua Publicity Flier Cover. "'Dorothy Sands: The Supreme Contemporary Mistress of Impersonation,' ca. 1930-40." American Memory. Redpath Chautauqua Collection. The Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

*Figure 13. Dorothy Sands (L.) and Mary Sands Thompson (R.) Collecting Flowers. Mary Sands Thompson Papers, 1917-1979, SC 59. Radcliffe College Archives. Schlesinger Library. Radcliffe Institute. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.*

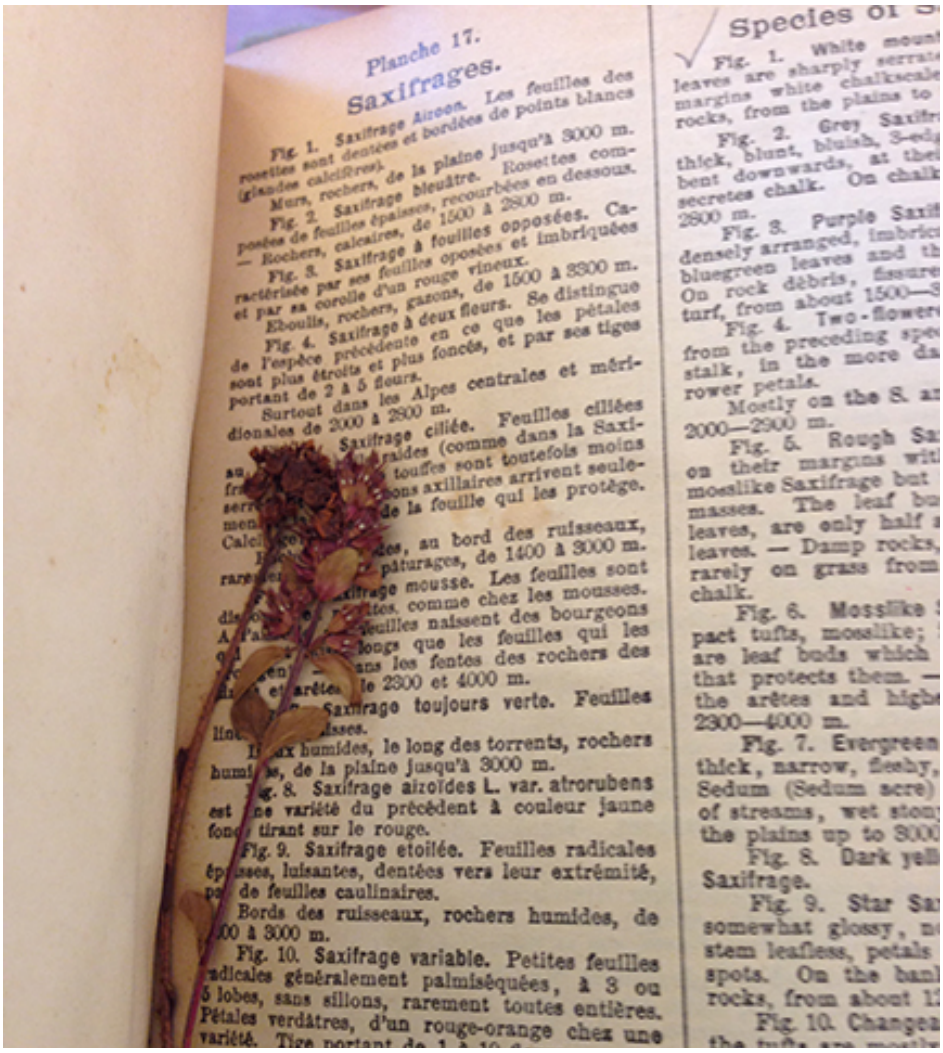


Planche 17.

Saxifrages.

Fig. 1. Saxifrage Aizoon. Les feuilles des rosettes sont dentées et bordées de points blancs (glandes calcifères).
Murs, rochers, de la plaine jusqu'à 3000 m.
Fig. 2. Saxifrage bleuâtre. Rosettes composées de feuilles épaisses, recourbées en dessous. — Rochers, calcaires, de 1500 à 2800 m.
Fig. 3. Saxifrage à feuilles opposées. Caractérisée par ses feuilles opposées et imbriquées et par sa corolle d'un rouge vineux.
Eboulis, rochers, gazons, de 1500 à 3300 m.
Fig. 4. Saxifrage à deux fleurs. Se distingue de l'espèce précédente en ce que les pétales sont plus étroits et plus foncés, et par ses tiges portant de 2 à 5 fleurs.
Surtout dans les Alpes centrales et méridionales de 2000 à 2800 m.
Saxifrage ciliée. Feuilles cilliées
raides (comme dans la Saxi-
touffes sont toutefois moins
bons axillaires arrivent seule-
de la feuille qui les protège.
des, au bord des ruisseaux,
pâturages, de 1400 à 3000 m.
Saxifrage mousse. Les feuilles sont
tes, comme chez les mousses.
feuilles naissent des bourgeons
longs que les feuilles qui les
ans les fentes des rochers des
le 2300 et 4000 m.
Saxifrage toujours verte. Feuilles
lisses.
ux humides, le long des torrents, rochers
s, de la plaine jusqu'à 3000 m.
g. 8. Saxifrage aizoïdes L. var. atrorubens
ne variété du précédent à couleur jaune
tirant sur le rouge.
Fig. 9. Saxifrage etoilée. Feuilles radicales
sses, luisantes, dentées vers leur extrémité,
de feuilles caulinaires.
Bords des ruisseaux, rochers humides, de
00 à 3000 m.
Fig. 10. Saxifrage variable. Petites feuilles
dicales généralement palmiséquées, à 3 ou
5 lobes, sans sillons, rarement toutes entières.
Pétales verdâtres, d'un rouge-orange chez une
variété.

Species of S

Fig. 1. White mount
leaves are sharply serrat
margins white chalkscale
rocks, from the plains to
Fig. 2. Grey Saxifr
thick, blunt, bluish, 3-ed
bent downwards, at the
secretes chalk. On chalk
2800 m.
Fig. 3. Purple Saxif
densely arranged, imbric
bluegreen leaves and th
On rock débris, fissure
turf, from about 1500—3
Fig. 4. Two-flower
from the preceding spe
stalk, in the more da
rower petals.
Mostly on the S. a
2000—2900 m.
Fig. 5. Rough Sa
on their margins wit
mosslike Saxifrage but
masses. The leaf bu
leaves, are only half
leaves. — Damp rocks,
rarely on grass from
chalk.
Fig. 6. Mosslike
pact tufts, mosslike;
are leaf buds which
that protects them. —
the arêtes and high
2300—4000 m.
Fig. 7. Evergreen
thick, narrow, fleshy,
Sedum (Sedum acre)
of streams, wet stony
the plains up to 3000
Fig. 8. Dark yell
Saxifrage.
Fig. 9. Star Sa
somewhat glossy, n
stem leafless, petals
spots. On the bank
rocks, from about 1
Fig. 10. Changea

*Figure 14. Dried Saxifrage. Inside of Ludwig Schröter,* Coloured Vade-Mecum to the Apline Flora*, 20th and 21st ed. Zurich: Albert Rausted, n.d. ca. 1920s. Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977. Houghton Library. Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.*

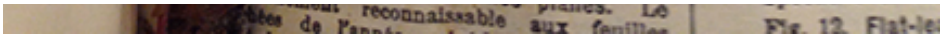


*Figure 15. Dorothy Sands in* The Matchmaker *(1962). New York Public Library Digital Collection. Dorothy Sands. Personalities. Billy Rose Theatre Collection Photograph File. New York Public Library. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47df-3ae5-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99 (accessed March 6, 2017).*

# *Styles in Acting* (1932)[1]

Booth [Theater]—Introduced in April 1932

Just a few years ago this wo'd have been a very elaborate production. As Mr. Gest transformed the Old Century Theater into a cathedral for "The Miracle",[2] and Belsaco connected his theater into a mechanical inferno for "Mima"[3] we would have changed this interior into a series of replicas of old theaters, Lincoln's and Field's house, Old Drury Lane and Covent Garden—all shifting before your very eyes. I think it would have been done with mirrors. Most effectively and amazing!—And then the crash came—and our backers—et cetera.

However in the spirit of the times I trust we may achieve the same results by a slight compromise and a little cooperation. I shall ask you to use your imaginations–involving no expense on your part–if some slight effort—while I furnish the descriptions with talk—which is always cheap.

Style in acting depends mainly upon three factors. First, the physical conditions that surround it. Think of the difference in technique demanded by the vast open amphitheaters of the Greeks; the platform stage in the midst of the market-pace where the actors of the Commedia del [sic] Arte improvised their buffoonery,[4] as they went along with the crowd gathered close about them; the Inn Yard of Shakespeare's day,[5] and our cozy modern theaters.

Secondly, it depends upon the type of play in which it appears, great tragedies, high comedies, broad farces.

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[1] Dorothy Sands, *Styles in Acting* (1932), in "Notebook 2: 'Our Stage and Stars, 1932,'" Dorothy Sands papers, circa 1932-1977, Box 1 Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

[2] Morris Gest (*née* Moishe Gershowitz 1875-1942), immigrated to America from Vilna, Lithuania, and become a prominent early twentieth-century theatrical producer. The Century Theater was located on 62nd Street and Central Park West in New York, boasted fine architecture and poor sound, and stood from 1909-31. *The Miracle* (*Das Mirakel*) by Karl Vollmöller and directed by the great German director Max Reinhardt, opened as a pantomime spectacle in 1911 in Germany. Sands' audiences would have been familiar with the piece either from its multiple film versions in the 1910s, its 1924 stage tour to Detroit, Milwaukee, and Dallas, or, in this case, from Gest's Century Theater production in New York, also in 1924. Old Drury Lane and Covent Garden typify London West End theater.

[3] David Belasco (1853-1924), theatrical impresario and proponent of modern stage lighting, realism, and naturalism. He wrote, produced, and directed *Mima* at the Belasco Theatre (111 W. 44th St.) in the 1928-29 season.

[4] *Commedia dell'arte* was a highly physical theater form and specialty of wandering players in Italy and France starting in the fifteenth century. Actors improvised from set scenarios and stock characters, represented by distinctive masks and costume, like the clown *Harlequin*, his beloved *Pulcinella*, or the wealthy *Pantaloon*.

[5] Elizabethan theaters, like Shakespeare's open-air *Globe*, developed out of the use of inn courtyards as venues for theatricals.

And lastly, it depends upon the quality of the audience, for "the drama's laws the drama's patrons give".[6]

I am going to try to indicate to you how greatly the styles of acting have changed in the last 300 years, and to suggest, very briefly, some of the causes and conditions that have bro't those changes about.

I shall do short scenes or speeches from typical plays of the periods, trying to recapture the styles in which they were acted and describing the types of costumes that were worn.

I hold not brief for any particular period, but merely want to show how the style of acting always reflects the point of view, the manners and tastes of its particular time.

I think it may amuse you to observe how thru these centuries acting has shrunk. It is no longer all wool and a yard wide. The gestures have shriveled from full arms to elbows to wrists, until now even the hands have disappeared into pockets.

Likewise, vocally, the old actor expanded his diaphragm, his chest and his mouth, to give full play to all his vocal pyrotechnics; while the contemporary thespian prefers not to open his mouth.

I begin with the end of the 17th century because at that time our modern theater really began.

From 1642 to 1660, while Cromwell[7] was in power, the English theaters were closed—and when Charles II returned from France in 1660 he brought back with him a gay and licentious court, all the trappings of extravagance and luxury, and an insatiable passion for the theater.[8] One of his first acts was to present the royal patent for the establishment of two theaters—theaters in the modern sense of the word.[9] A building with a roof and not merely a platform, but a stage with a proscenium that framed it on which scenery was used for the first time. Most startling of all these innovations imported from the continent, actresses made their first appearance on the English stage. Up to that time all the women's roles had been played by boys.

I think if we could visualize for a moment those Restoration theaters and their audience that we might appreciate the conditions that created a very special style of acting.

The stage projected out into the auditorium in a large apron which was flanked on each side by doors which the actors used for exits and entrances, and above which were boxes in which the king himself might sit with his favorite of the moment.

Behind the frame of the proscenium arch flats of scenery served for "disclosure scenes". The front curtain was seldom used at that time and the scenes were changed in full view of the audience.

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[6] Samuel Johnson's citation of David Garrick at Drury-Lane in 1747, "The stage but echoes back the public voice. / The drama's laws the drama's patrons give, / For we that live to please, must please to live."

[7] Oliver Cromwell (1599-1685), executed King Charles I and ruled England as "Lord Protector" from 1653-58, aka "The Reign of Terror."

[8] Hence, the "Restoration" of the Stuart monarchy (1660-1785).

[9] The two "patent" or "legitimate" theaters became *The Duke's Company*, under William Davenant (1661) and *The King's Company* (1663), under Thomas Killigrew.

The hoi palloi[10] sat on wooden benches in the pit. In the upper gallery were the coachmen and foremen and an occasional stray country cousin; while in the boxes that outlined the auditorium were the courtiers and their satellites, the fops and the beaux and would-be wits, dividing their attentions between their companions, the ladies of the court and those of lower rank but no less questionable reputations casting provocative glances from behind their vizard masks[11] in the pit. All these performances in the house were quite as visible and distracting as those upon the stage, for candles suspended from barrel hooks in the ceiling could not be snuffed out and relit between each acts so the auditorium was flooded with light during the entire performance.

The middle classes had nothing to do with this theater. The Puritan citizens shunned it as the abode of the devil, and no respectable women attended it. As in most of the comedies of the period simple, honest citizens were made fair game of by debauched sparks and husbands were always received by their wives, it is easy to understand why men would hesitate to have their womenfolk have such ideas put in their heads even if they could have escaped the ogling eyes and injudicious leers of the gentlemen of the court.

The competition that these gallant offered to the actors must have been extremely trying, for the play never deterred them from ambling about even up on to the stage, carrying on animated conversations with each other and the ladies in the pit or often arriving quite boisterously drunk. Between the acts there might stand out on the stage apron, conversing with more or less wit, picking their teeth and combing their periwigs.[12]

A general admission fee was paid at the door. The extra charge for Pit and Boxes and other seats was collected after the performance had well begun. As often these elegant gentlemen made it a practice of changing their seats in order to dodge the ushers and avoid playing this fee, it must have added to the general confusion and lack of attention to the play—and made the actor's problem a very difficult one.

There were two particular types of plays with which the Restoration dramatist entertained their public. The first was the Comedy of Manners. It was the perfect mirror of its audience and reflected the gay, immoral, aristocratic life of the age. It was an intellectual audience that enjoyed and appreciated elegance and precision in literary style. They worshipped at the altar of the well-turned phrase and brilliant repartee. While they were completely lacking in depth, untouched by their contemporary science, philosophy and religion their veneer was polished to a dazzling brilliance. Men and women dressed in the best brocades and silks and velvets, wore elaborately coiffured wigs and silken hose. The ladies delicately flirted fans and handkerchiefs while the gentlemen finished a clever epigram or a subtle innuendo with a graceful gesture and a pinch of snuff.

In William Congreve's "The Way of the World"[13] we have the most perfect example of this highly polished art. It never moves you, it never touches your heart, but it is stylish at its most stylish. The plot—as in all these Restoration comedies—is

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[10] The masses, or commoners.
[11] A mask or disguise.
[12] Wig. "Periwig" appears in usage around 1675.
[13] First performed in 1700 at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in London.

inconsequential; the conversation all important. Mirabell, the hero, is the typical beau of the period. Millament, the heroine, a fine lady. In the scene which I shall do for you Millament outlines to Mirabell her requirements for a husband.

Will you transport yourselves to this Restoration theater and imagine Mirabell making a very elegant entrance to propose to the lady.

He wears a long blonde curled periwig and is dressed in a blight green velvet coat, mauve sating vest and knee breeches. He carries a large lace-trimmed handkerchief and jeweled snuff-box.

Millament sits in a dazzlingly beautiful gown of voluminous billows of white satin brocade, a tight-fitting bodice with low décolleté and pinched-in waist. Sparkling jewels and feathers ornament her high-pompadoured white wig.[14] She archly flirts a dainty fan and exquisite lace handkerchief as she says:

"The Way of the World"
William Congreve 1700

Millament: (seated on gilt chair)
Ah Mirabell—no!—I'll fly and be followed to the last moment. Tho' I am upon the very verge of matrimony, I expect you should solicit me as much if I were wavering at the gate of a monastery with one foot over the threshold. I'll be solicited to the very last, nay and afterwards.—Oh, I hate a lover that can dare to think he draws a moment's air independent of the bounty of his mistress.

There is not so impudent a thing in nature, as the saucy look of an assured man, confident of success. The pedantic arrogance of a very husband has not so pragmatical an air. Ah! I shall never marry unless I have first made sure of my will and pleasure…

My dear liberty, shall I leave thee? My faithful solitude, my darling contemplation, must I bid you then adieu? Ah—adieu my morning tho'ts, agreeable makings, indolent slumbers, all ye *douceurs*, ye *sommeil du matin*, adieu?[15]

I can't do't, 'tis more than impossible, (*crosses*)—positively, Mirabell, I'll lie abed in a morning as long as I please…And d'ye hear, I'll not be called names after we're married; positively, Mirabell, I won't be called names…Ay, as wife, spouse, my dear, joy, jewel, love, sweetheart, and the rest of that nauseous cant in which men and their wives are so fulsomely familiar—I shall never heart hat. (*sits again*) Good Mirabel, don't let us be familiar or fond, nor kiss before folks, like my Lady Fadler and Sir Francis,

[14] Anachronistic on Sands' part. "Pompadour" refers to hair or wig after the style of Madame de Pompadour (1721-64), King Louis XV's mistress. A Pompadour involves a high sweep over the head, and can appear in men, women, and even children's styles.
[15] "*Douceur*" literally means "sweetness," although can also mean a bribe. "*Sommeil du matin*" refers to "morning sleep."

nor go to Hyde Park together the first Sunday in a new chariot,[16] to provoke eyes and whispers, and then never to be seen there together again; as if we were proud of one another the first week, and ashamed of one another ever after. Let us never visit together, or go to a play together; but let us be very strange and wellbred: let us be as strange as if we had been married a very great white, and as well bred as if we were not married at all.

…The other conditions I have to offer are mere trifles—as liberty to pay and receive visits to and from whom I please; to write and receive letters without interrogatories or wry faces on your part; to wear what I please, and choose my conversation with regard only to my own table; to have no obligation upon me to converse with wits that I don't like because they are your acquaintance; or to be intimate with fools because they may be your relations. (*Fan*) I come to dinner when I please; when I'm out of humor without giving a reason. To have my closet inviolate; to be sole empress of my tea table, which you must never presume to approach without first asking leave. And lastly, wherever I am, you shall always knock at the door before you come in. (*Rises*) These articles subscribed if I continue to endure you a little longer I may, by degrees, dwindle into a wife". (*Low curtsey*)

The other popular type of Restoration play was the [*Classic?] Tragedy*.

Back in the days of Elizabeth the romantic tragedies had had nobility and reality, for they reflected the actual spirit of those times. But the aenemic [sic], snuff-sniffing fops and fashion-worshipping ladies of Charles' court were too debilitated to even sense the meaning of the word heroic. These tragedies of theirs were as far removed from real life as possible. They were usually laid in some ancient distant or mythical country with idealized persons experiences the most exaggerated emotions and speaking in verse as no humans ever spoke. Heroes were always hopelessly torn between love and honor. The heroines had no spirit, warmth, life or passions, but were always cool, contained and desperately pure.

The most important and successful of these plays was "The Conquest of Granada" by John Dryden.[17] It has all the requirements of the heroic tragedy formula, is full of bombast, rant and egotism.

The scene is laid in Granada; the characters are kings and queens of Spain and Granada, warriors and ladies with the most fantastic names. Mahomet Boabdelin, the last king of Granada. Abdalla his brother, Abdelmelech, chief of the Ahencarrages and Julema, the chief of the Zgrys etc etc. the hero is Almanzor, and the heroine, Almahide, Queen of Granada.

The plot is beyond a crossword puzzle expert to describe. "The action doesn't begin, develop or conclude, but consists of a series of incidents, like beads on a string, which might be continued onto infinity, the only limit being the patience of the

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[16] Hyde Park is one of the largest parks in London and location for the Great Exhibition of 1851, which featured Joseph Paxton's iconic Crystal Palace. In the early 1700s, the park attracted fashionable society.

[17] John Dryden (1631-1700), became synonymous with the English Restoration in literature. The King's Company premiered *Conquest of Granada* in 1670. The historic fall of Granada (1492) marked the culmination of the Spanish reconquest (*Reconquista*) from the Moors and 800 years of Islamic influence in Spain.

audience"—which must have been very great, for this little opus is in two parts and has ten acts. (Mr. Eugene O'Neill still had one to go![18])

The Christian Spaniards are fighting the Moors, and the Moorish factions, the Abencerrages and the Zegrys[19] are warring against each other. The main theme is concerned with the exploits of Almanzor, who carries victory wherever he goes, and shifts from to side to side as one party after another offends him and for a mighty warrior he has the tenderest sensibilities. He owes allegiance to no one. A typical moment is when he is bro't in a captive to King Boabdelin who orders his soldiers, "Away and execute him instantly". Whereupon, Almazor, alone in the midst of his enemies replies, "Stand off, I have not leisure yet to die"! after ten acts of remarks like that, and swaggering and strutting under the crescent "for Almanzor is—as his mother's ghost informs him, and a strawberry mark on his left arm confirms, the son of the Duke of Arcos, one of the noblest grandees of Spain" he is of course finally rewarded with the hand of the widow Almahide whose consort, Boabdelin, obliges by dying in the ninth act.

In this scene that I shall do Almanzor comes to Almahide (before her husband's demise), to try to seduce her, "They have loved ever since their eyes first met"), but her virtue—well you'll see.

The costumes for these plays were pseudo-historic, more or less individual affairs, apt to be something borrowed from or presented by the ladies of the court. Always elaborate headdresses were worn, the plumes an emblem of tragedy, and a green beige carpet always prepared the audience of a tragic theme.

Will you mentally spread the carpet and visualize me in bouffant draperies of purple silk and wearing a high white wig crowned with ostrich plumes, entering with majestically measured styles, and accompanying each line with a full armed gesture.

"The Conquest of Granada"
John Dryden 1672

[*In the handwritten script, Sands notates arm gestures for each line with double arrows]

<u>Almahide</u>:
"You love me not, Almanzor:
    if you did
You would not ask what
    honor must forbid.
Rise, rise, and do not empty
    hopes pursue
Yet think that I deny myself,
    not you

[18] Possibly a reference to O'Neill's unrealized goal to write eleven plays that would have chronicled an American family since 1800.
[19] Semi-legendary aristocratic families in fifteenth-century Granada. Dryden uses them as exotic analogues to the Montagues and Capulets in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Thou strong seducer opportunity!
of womankind half are
undone by thee
Tho' I resolve I will noble misled,
I wish I had not heard what
For have said!
I cannot be so wicked to
Comply!
And, yet am most unhappy to
deny!
Away! (*cross R*)
If I could yield—but think not that I will,
You and myself I in revenge
would kill:
For I should hate us both when
it were done
And would not t' the shame
of life be won.

Deny your own desires,
for it will be
Too little now to be denied by
me.
Will he, who does all great
all noble seem,
Be lost and forfeit to his own
Esteem?
Will he, who may with heroes
Take a place,
Belie that fame and to himself
be base?
Think how august and godlike
you did look,
When my defense unbribed,
You undertook;
But when an act so brave you
Disavow,
How little and how mercenary
now!—
Ah—(*cross L*)
You've moved my heart too much,
I can deny
No more: buy know Almanzor, I
can die.
Thus far my virtue yields: if I

have shown
More love than what I ought,
let this alone
Into my bosom this dagger
now thrust—
Ah you do repent and deny
your lust.
Tis generous to have conquered
your desire!
You mount above your wish,
and lose it higher.
There's a pride in virtue, and
a kindly heat;
Not feverish, like your love,
but full as great.
Farewell: and pray our love
hereafter be
But image-like, to heighten
piety."

The genteel comedy manner survived thru the plays of Sheridan and went out with satin knee breeches and brocaded paniers,[20] while the heroic style continued thru the decades and culminated in the great Sarah Siddons,[21] the tragic muse of the English theater, who quickened it into life with the ire of her genius. Today, of course, it survives only in Grand opera.

And now I whisk you thru the rest of the 18th and into the 19th century, a period of decay and disintegration in the English theater. With a few notable exceptions, the work of the contemporary dramatists was unimportant, uninteresting and undistinguished.

There was a tremendous revival of Shakespeare, but with additions and corrections to suit the tastes of the times. Scenes were rewritten and songs were injected to enliven the performance.

A playbill for a benefit performance of "The Merchant of Venice" for the Charles Macklin[22] announces—

"Shylock Lorenzo, Mr. Macklin, with songs Mr. Johnstone Jessica, with a song, Miss Murdock, then further down it states "End of Act IV, a dance called the Irish lilt—by Mr. Mrs. Patchford. You see here is the old "Arles Irish Rose" formula.

Processions and pageant were added, then John was given a coronation ceremony, Romeo and Juliet had a funeral procession and at the end of Act I Juliet might dance a minuet.

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[20] Women's skirts that use a system of hoops to extend the hips.

[21] Sarah Siddons (1755-1831), Welsh actress and outstanding tragedienne of the 1700s. Siddons was also part of the great Kemble family of actors.

[22] Charles Macklin (1699-1797), long-lived Irish actor, notable for his performances at the Drury Lane Theatre. He pioneered a "natural" (as opposed to declamatory) acting style.

Stupendous spectacles were most popular and animal performers were introduced whenever possible.

There were two reasons that accounted for these changes in theatrical entertainment. First, the size of the theaters. Both Covent Garden and Drury Lane had been rebuilt and doubled in size. Drury Lane held over 3600 people. They were huge hippodromes in which only the most exaggerated emotions and extravagant gestures.

And secondly the fact that the court and the theater were no longer on speaking terms. The masses now made the theater their own, and as the populace advanced the aristocratic and intellectuals withdrew. The people in the pit had made themselves the arbiters and self-appointed guardians of the English theater. They demanded in vociferous terms—vigorous action. They wanted their money's worth of violent emotions and horseplay to make them guffaw with raucous laughter. They wanted striking costumes and sensational scenic effects and above all in acting they wanted the good old style.

The actor's response to this was to play with utter rant and bombast. Tragedy was elevated so high, and comedy was degraded so low that one marvels at the force of personality and genius that must have been possessed by the great names that shine thru the murkiness of this background—Garrick, Kemble, Siddons, Keane, McCready.[23] No doubt their actions would seem frightfully stilted and artificial to us today, but they surely would have held us by the force of their personal power.

One of the names that glitters most brightly in this theatrical dinginess is Eliza Vestris,[24] who in the early half of the 19th century bro't to the theater not only the charm of her fascinating personality, an ability to act, and dance, and sing, but an extraordinary gift for organization and leadership. She was the first important woman manager and directress. She produced light opera and burlesques with a care for realistic detail in costume and scenery that was a complete innovation; and in the simplicity of her style of acting she was decades ahead of her time.

Her personal popularity was tremendous. She jammed her theaters. Fops' Alley[25] rang with her praises. Shops filled their windows with her pictures and sold plaster casts of "la jambe Vestris".[26]

She was particularly famous for "breeches parts", carrying on the tradition of principal boys that has flourished in the English theater ever since the days of Nell Gwynne.[27] For years she was their most popular ballad-singing comedienne.

Her popularity outside the theater kept the gossips' tongues wagging as evidence by a story told of three actresses in her own company. They were discussing the rumor that Vestris was about to remarry. "They say," the first

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[23] All celebrated English performers: David Garrick (1717-79); prob. Charles Kemble (1775-1854); Sarah Siddons (1755-1831); Edmund Kean (1787-1833); William Macready (1793-1873).

[24] A.k.a. "Madame Vestris" (1797-1856), successful English actress, opera singer, producer, and manager.

[25] A section in the pit in Restoration theaters in which male dandies congregated in order to see and be seen. Cheers from Fops' Alley would have counted as unusually high praise.

[26] Literally, "The Vestris Leg." Victorian audiences considered Madame Vestris' the idea female figure, and plaster casts of her leg—a predecessor to über-camp leg lamps today—sold well.

[27] Nell Gwynne (1650-87), popular comic actress and mistress of Charles II. Gwyn ("pretty, witty Nell") became a folk figure during the Restoration because of her rags-to-riches narrative.

observed, "that before accepting her future husband Vestris made a full confession of all her lovers", and added, "what touching confidence". Whereupon the second remarked, "What needless trouble"! and the third, "What a wonderful memory!"

One of the songs which she made famous was called "Buy a Broom".[28] Dressed in Bavarian costume with full, short skirt, a little bonnet tied over her dark curls, and carrying a pack of brooms on her back she enchanted all of London singing this simple little ballad.

"Buy a Broom"

Ballad sung by Vestris.

*Stanza I—Refrain sung to ladies.*

*Stanza II—Refrain sung to gentleman. Pantomime of turning offer down. "Sweep all vexatious intruders away"*

*Stanza III—offer brooms—sold—pantomime making date at stage door—Exult and exit.*

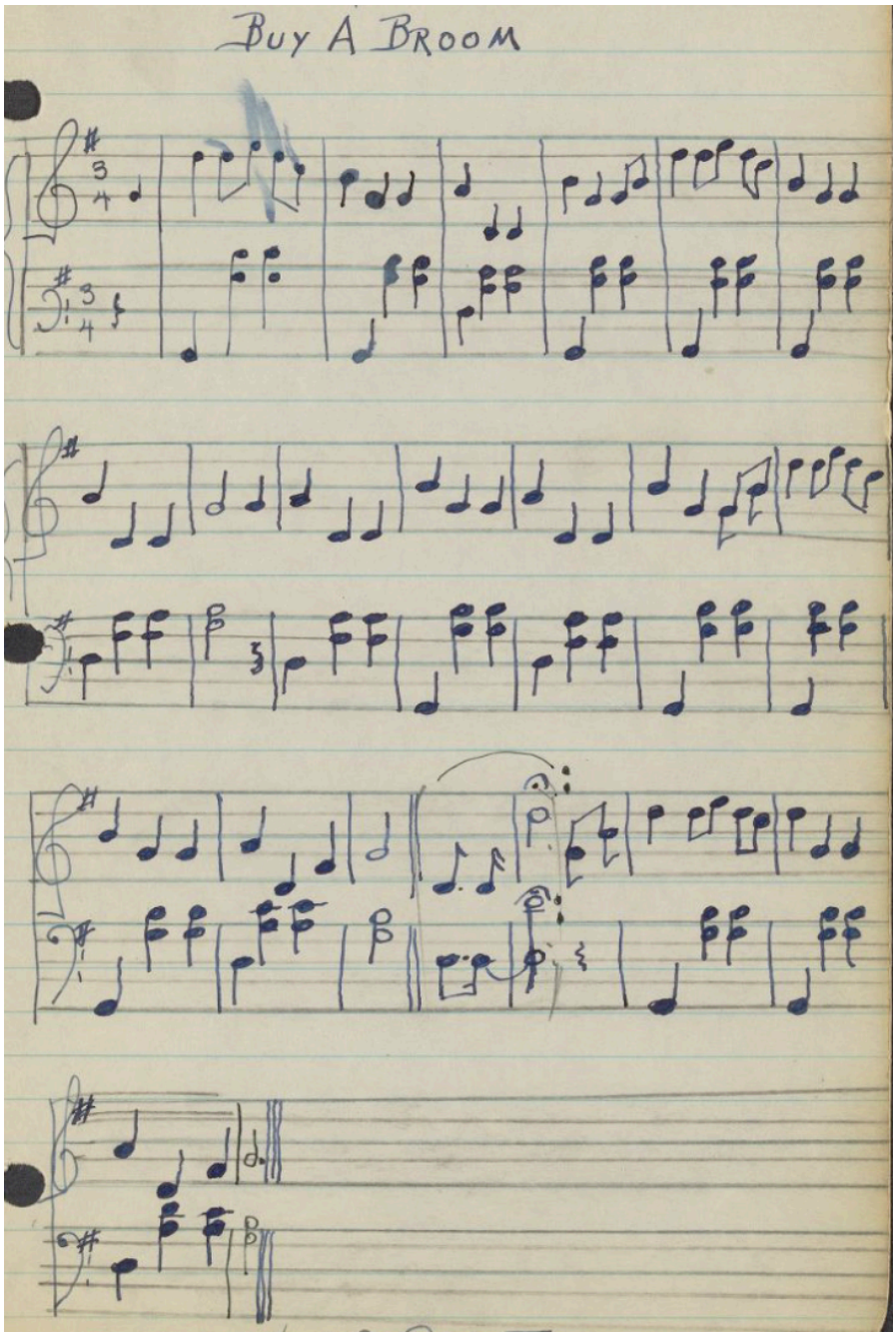
*1. From Deutschland[29] I came with my light wares*
*all laden, To dear, happy England, in summers*
*gay bloom, Now listen, air lady, and*
*young pretty maiden, Oh! buy of the*
*wandering Bavarian a broom.*
*Buy a broom! buy a broom! Oh! buy*
*of the wand'ring Bavarian broom!*

*2. To brush away insects that sometimes*
*annoy you, You'll find it quite*
*handy, to use night and day;*
*And what better exercise, pray, can*
*employ you, Than to sweep all*
*vexatious intruders away.*
*Buy a broom! buy a broom! Than [?]*
*to sweep all vexatious intruders away.*

*3. Ere winter, comes on, for sweet home*
*soon departing*
*My toils for your favor again I'll resume*
*And while gratitudes tear in my*
*eyelid is starting*

[28] Vestris made the song a hit in 1826, with words by Alexander Lee, set to a traditional German tune. Vestris later enjoyed even greater success with the song by performing it as a duet with comic actor John Liston.
[29] Germany.

*Bless the time that in England I*
*cried buy a broom*
*Buy a broom! buy a broom! bless the*
*time that in England I cred, Buy a broom!*



End of Part I.

Part II

New we come to the Victorian era when once again the theater's blood begins to stir and quicken, for "our dear queen" herself not only graced the theater with her royal presence but showed marked favors to actresses and actors. She presented gifts to Keane and McCready and invited Charles Kean, the son of the great Edmund, to manage her theatricals at Windsor Castle. And when old Mrs. Warner[30] retired from the stage, Queen Victoria gave her the daily use of the royal carriage.

So once gain the world of fashion survived back into the theater where now they could sit comfortably in plush chairs instead of wooden benches; where the candles in the chandeliers no longer flickered in their eyes during the entire performance, but where they sat in darkness, and so could focus their attention upon a boxed in gas lit stage decorated with most elaborate scenery, and on which most startling mechanical effects were produced. A stage where the actors no longer came way forward onto the apron to play their important scenes and to speak their asides to the audience, but stayed within the frame of the proscenium.

Smaller auditoriums replaced the vastnesses [sic] of the previous decades, and Mr. Robertson[31] and Mr. Boucicault[32] began to unite what compared to the productions of their predecessors were realistic plays. They were about persons who were supposed to dress and act and talk like English people of their own time. They were cast in the mold of melodrama, full of romance and sentimentality—but again the theater is reflecting the age in which it lives.

When our Victorian ladies and gentlemen ordered their carriages for the theater, they left stuffy parlors crammed with haircloth furniture, with the what-not in the corner covered with innumerable knick-knacks. The mantel decorated with ornate vases and figurines, above it the picture of the dear one who had gone before wreathed in wax flowers, and on the opposite wall an engraving of a tombstone, over which a weeping willow drooped its mournful branches. When this was the audiences' taste in decoration we can readily imagine the kind of play and the style of acting which would most appeal to them.

In an essay on Henry Irving, Clement Scott, one of the most important of the Victorian critics,[33] writes, "I am fortunate enough to possess Boucicault's prompt-

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[30] "Mrs. Warner" (Mary Huddart) (1804-54), noted actress and became one of the first women managers of Sadler Wells Theatre from 1844-46. Having gone through multiple incarnations, Sandler Wells is today one of the premiere dance venues globally.

[31] T.W. Robertson (1829-71), English playwright who premiered naturalistic plays in the 1860s.

[32] Dion Boucicault (1820-90), Irish actor and melodrama dramatist. Boucicault accrued popular and financial success both in England and America. Sands makes an important qualifier in contrasting Boucicault's work with previous dramatic styles. By today's standards, his plays would not seem realistic, though nineteenth-century audiences perceived them as naturalistic.

[33] Clement Scott (1841-1904), wrote for the *Daily Telegraph*, and the format and style of his theater criticism serves as a template up to the present.

copy of "Hunted Down",[34] where I see, jotted down along the margins all of Henry Irving's admirable business.[35]

"I shall never forget his last exit, handsome-looking devil as he was when he scowled at the sad, pale-faced wife and hissed, "So—you have played the game against me. You shall pay dearly for your triumph".

Clara (his wife) an artist's model, prepares to follow her husband, but her friends entreat her to leave him saying,

"The brute will kill you". But with an air of beautiful resignation Clara replies, "No, I thank you kindly. He is my husband. I must follow him. He could not get on without me—and he loves me sometimes. I had rather die so than live away from him".

And the eminent critic's comment is, "What a life's poem is contained in hose words," He loves me sometimes"!

As an example of the style of acting in these sentimental melodramas I have chosen a scene from "The Silver King" by Henry Arthur Jones,[36] first played in 1882. It was one of the great successes of its days, and for many years afterwards. There are plots and subplots and counterplots but the general idea is this

Wilfred Denver has been wrongfully accused of murder and has had to disappear, leaving his wife, Nellie, and their two dear little children to sink into the most miserable poverty, aided only by the faithful old servant, Jaikes.

Meantime Denver has gone to America and discovered silver in Nevada,[37] becoming the great "Silver King". He sends back money to Jaikes to buy back the old homestead for Nellie, but she is kept ignorant of the source of her income. Finally Denver returns to England and arrives at the old homestead just at the moment that Nellie is being dispossessed by the villain. Denver thrusts a bag of silver into the hands of his little daughter and sends her into her mother, who, with that beautiful and simple faith, so characteristic of these heroines, asks the child no questions but seizes the bag of money and exclaims, "An angel from Heaven has sent it. Now you go!" And the villain, baffled, picks up the money and slinks out.

Of course the real murderer is discovered, Denver, Nellie and the children reunited, and the final curtain falls as they kneel in prayer on the hearth of the dear old home where Denver wooed and won her in the happy, happy days of long ago.

The little scene I shall do for you is where Nellie comes back to the old homestead that Jaikes has so generously and so mysteriously purchased for her. All her old friends and neighbors have come out to greet her and partake of the dinner she has had prepared in the great hall.

Will you look across the gas jets in the footlights at the painted replica of the exterior of the Grange, Gardenhurst, the wood wings on each side—the old neighbors gossiping about as Nellie Denver dressed in a close-fitting blue velvet jacket, a blue

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[34] A society drama, premiered at St. James' Theatre in London in 1865.

[35] Henry Irving (1838-1905), famous actor-manager. His lead role in *Hunted Down* was his first important appearance in London.

[36] Henry Arthur Jones (1851-1929), English dramatist. *The Silver King* was Jones' first commercial success.

[37] In 1858, the so-called "Comstock Lode" discovery created a boom in silver mining in Nevada, which continues to this day.

and red changeable silk draped skirt with a large bustle; a tiny blue velvet toque trimmed with red ropes tipped over her brow—minces out to meet them.

"The Silver King"
Henry Arthur Jones 1882

Nellie Denver:

Welcome, dear friends. You have come all of you—that is right! How do you do? How are you, Tabby? Well, Gaffer Cottle—and Mrs. Ganamage [?]! Ah, do not thank me! I have known what it is to be poor myself. Since I have left you I have heard my children cry for bread.

Indeed, if it were not for the kindness of my old friend Jaikes here—(*breaks down—recovers herself*) Ah—no more! Go in and have your dinner all of you. You'll find it ready in the great hall. It is Jaikes that provides it for you, not I. First, thank the giver of all food, and then thank our dear old Jaikes.

(*waves them in—then walk about sighing*)

Yes, Jaikes, I am happy! (*Deep sigh*) Yes, far happier than I ever hoped to be. (*Sighs*) Oh, Jaikes, can't you see what it is? I'm back in my old home without the man who made it dear to me—without my Bill! Oh, I love him still. Yes I love him as much to-day as the day I married him in the little church yonder. It was under this tree that I promised to be his wife. Oh, Jaikes, I remember it as if it were yesterday. Everything here, every tree, every brick in the old house, every nook and corner brings back to me his dear handsome face, until I can sometimes hardly stop myself from running all thru the grounds and fields and calling out, "Will, Will, come back to me, if only for a moment."

Now, you know what it is I miss in my old home, my husband's love—and you can't bring that back to me Jaikes, no, no—not that, not that." (*Exit sobbing*)

In 1889 "The Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen was produced in London and our modern realistic theater was born.[38] The realism of Ibsen suffused the whole theatrical atmosphere and colored the entire drama of Europe. Ibsen proved that "realism of externals placed no limit on the expression of the most profound emotions of the human soul." Highflown vocalizing, elaborate posturings had no relation to these quiet searchings of the heart. Only acting that was restrained and natural would express the simplicity and truth of this new drama—and so the realistic school of acting developed to meet this need.

[38] Norweigan playwright Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) acquired the nickname "the father of realism." In *A Doll's House*, the protagonist, Nora, walks out on her husband and children at the end of the play, creating, "a door slam heard around the world."

A very vital exponent of this new school of playwrights was one George Bernard Shaw.[39] To demonstrate this modern realistic style of acting I shall do the last scene of his play "Candida" first produced in 1898. It is the scene between Candida, Morrell and Marchbanks.

You remember the situation. Candida, wise, understanding, maternal, has befriended Eugene Marchbanks, the sensitive, misunderstood young poet who loves and admires her and despises all that Morrell, her conventional clergyman husband, stands for. He believes Morrell is completely unworthy of Candida and insists that she belong to him. In the midst of their argument Candida enters. She is dressed in a dark red dress made with a full bell skirt, the fitted waist has large leg-of-mutton sleeves. Her brown hair is twisted into a figure 8 on top of her head.

Morrell tells Candida that she must chose between them and she replies—

"Candida" 1898
George Bernard Shaw

"Oh, I am to choose, am I? I suppose it's quite settled that I belong to one or the other. And pray, my lords and masters what have you to offer for my choice. It seems I'm up for auction. What do you bid, James?"

Morrell says:

"I have nothing to offer by my strength for your defense, my honesty of purpose for your surety, my ability and industry for your livelihood and my authority of position for your dignity. That is all that is becomes a man to offer a woman.

Candida: And you Eugene? What do you offer?

Eugene: My weakness! My desolation! My heart's need!

Candida: That's a good bid, Eugene. Now I know how to make my choice. - - - I give myself to the weaker of the two. Let us sit and talk comfortably over it like three friends. (*To Morrell*) Sit down here, James dear. (*To Marchbanks*) Bring up that chair, Eugene.

You remember what you told me about yourself, Eugene. How nobody has cared for you since your old nurse died. Now those clever, fashionable sisters and successful brothers of your were your mother's and father's pets: how miserable you were at Eton; how your father is trying to starve you into returning to Oxford; how you've always had to live without comfort, or welcome, or refuge, always lonely and nearly always disliked and misunderstood. Poor boy!

Now I want you to look at this other boy here, buy boy—spoiled from his cradle. We go once a fortnight to see his parents for she'd come with us,

[39] George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), Irish playwright whose oeuvre helped establish modern canon, including *Candida* (1894); *Man and Superman* (1903); *Major Barbara* (1907); *Saint Joan* (1924), *Pygmalion* (1941); and others.

Eugene, & see the pictures of the hero of that household. James a baby! The most wonderful of all babies. James holding his first school prize won a the ripe age of eight! James as the Captain of his team! James—his frock coat! James under all sorts of glorious circumstances!

You know how strong he is! (Oh I hope he didn't hurt you)—how clever he is—how happy! Ask James's mother & three sisters what it cost to save James the trouble of doing anything but—be strong and clever and happy. Ask me what it costs to be James's mother and three sisters and wife & mother of his children all in one. Ask Prossy & Maria how troublesome the house is even when we have no visitors to help us slice the onions. Ask the tradesmen who want to worry James and spoil his beautiful sermons who it is that put them off. Where there is money to give he gives it & when there is money to refuse I refuse it. I build a castle of comfort & indulgence of love for him and stand sentinel always to keep little vulgar cares out. I make him master here tho' he doesn't know it, & could not tell you a moment ago how it came to be so. And when he tho't I might go away with you his only anxiety was what sh'd become of me! And to tempt me to stay he offered me his strength for my defence [sic], his industry for my livelihood, his position for my dignity, his—(*relenting*) ah, I'm mixing up your beautiful sentiments and spoiling them, am I not, darling?

Oh no—don't go like that. One last word now, Eugene. How old are you? Eighteen? Will you for my sake make a little poem out of the 2 sentences I'm going to say to you. And will you repeat it to yourself whenever you think of me? When I am 30, he will be 45. And when I am 60, he will be 75. Good-bye!

(*she turns, holds out her arms to Morrell*) Ah! James!

To bring you into the 20th century I shall do a scene from our own great realist, Eugene O'Neill, form his play Anna Christie".[40] As in previous periods this contemporary style of acting is created by the physical conditions of the playhouse. Our small, intimate theater where the voice need hardly be raised, our highlight developed lighting system that reveals the slightest change of expression, plays that are camera studies of life or more or less accurate descriptions of the life, sordid or gay that they depict, to an audience that living in a scientific age expects to face facts and demands truth & reality.

"Anna Christie" is the story of the old Swedish sea captain who loathed and loved the sea. When his wife died in Minnesota he left his small daughter there to a be bro't up by his wife's relatives in order to keep her away from "that ole devil sea:. Finally he sends for her, & we see her come with the saloon by the docks to meet him—& recognize at once the marks of the prostitute. Her father takes her on board his ship & there she falls in love with Matt Burke, an Irish sailor who wants to marry her. She wants to marry him but she feels she can't without telling him about herself

[40] Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), American playwright and early proponent of realism. Sands was classmates with O'Neill in George Baker's "47 Workshop" at Harvard University from 1914-15. *Anna Christie* premiered in 1921 and won the Pulitzer Prize in 1922.

& she can't bring herself to do that—until one day he comes into her father's cabin to find Chris and Matt quarreling about to which of them she belongs.

Miss Pauline Lord[41] created the original "Anna Christie". Her method was so modern & realistic, she has so completely identified herself with the part that I shall try to play this scene between Matt & Chris & Anna in the manner of Miss Lord.

In a short skirt & shapeless Anna stands behind a table at which the 2 men are seated. She looks first at her father, Chris, and then at Matt.

*Anna Christie*
Eugene O'Neill 1920

Anna (*laughs wildly*)

You two! You're just like the rest of 'em. Gawd you'd think I was a piece of furniture! I'll show you!

Listen to me, I'm going to tell you something & then I'm going to beat it. (*To Burke with a harsh laugh*) I'm going to tell you a funny story, so pay attention.

Yes Matt, I've been meaning to turn it loose on him every time he'd get my goat with his bull about keeping me safe in hand. I wasn't going to tell you, but you've forced me into it!

What's the dib? It's all wrong, anyway. You might just as well get cured this way as any other. (*with hard mocking*). Only don't forget what you just said a minute ago about it not mattering to you what other reason I got, as long as I wasn't married to no one else.

(*she stands at table rear looking from one to the other with her hard mocking smile the begins, fighting to control her emotion & speak calmly*) First this is I want to tell you 2 guys something. You's going on's if one of you had got to own me. Well nobody owns me excepting myself. I'll do what I please & no man is can tell me what to do. I'm my own boss. So put that in your pipe & smoke it. You & your orders!

(*violently*) Well, living with you is enuf to drive anyone off their nut. Your bunk about the farm being so fine. Didn't I write you year after year how rotten it was & what a dirty slave them cousins made of me? What'd you care? Nothing! Not even enuf to come out to see me. That crazy bull about wanting to keep me away from the sea, don't go down with me. You just didn't want to be bothered with me. You're just like all the rest of them. (*resentfully*) But one thing I never wrote you. It was one of them cousins that you think is such nice people. Paul—the youngest son—that started me wrong. (*Loudly*) It wasn't none of my fault. I hated him worse'n hell & he knew it. But he was fit & strong like you, Matt.

That was why I run away from the farm. That was what made me get a job as a nurse girl in St. Paul. (*Hard, mocking laugh*) And you think that was nice job in a birl, don't you? (*sarcastically*) With all them nice inland

[41] Miss Pauline Lord (189-1950), American actress. Lord was a prodigy, performing for theatrical producer David Belasco at age thirteen, but *Anna Christie* proved her greatest success.

ellers just looking for a chance to marry me, I s'pose. Marry me! What a chance! They wasn't looking for marrying! (*as Burke lets out a groan of fury*) Don't look at me like that Matt. Desperately, I'm owning up the very thing fair & square. I was cage in I tell you—just like in jail—taking care of the people's kids, listening to 'em howling & crying day & night when I wanted to be out & I was lonesome—lonesome as Hell. (*with a sudden weariness in her voice*) So I give up finally. What was the use?

(*Stops & looks at both men. Both silent. Condemnation she feels pools her into harsh, strident defense*)

You don't say nothin' either of you—but I know what you're thinking. You're like all the rest.

(*To Chris*) and whose to blame for it, me or you? If you'd even acted like a man, if you'd ever been a regular father & had me with you maybe things w'd be different.

(*He puts his hand to both ears. She infuriated—stridently—with hysterical rage)*

Yes, you will listen! You—keeping me safe inland—I wasn't no nurse those last 2 years—I lied when I wrote you—I was in a house—that's what—yes, that kind of a house—the kind sailors like you & Matt goes to in port—and your nice inland men & all men—so damn 'em I hate 'em—I hate 'em!

(*To Burke with mocking bitterness*) I s'pose you remember your promise, Matt? No other reason was to count as along as I wasn't married already. So I s'pose you want me to get dressed & go ashore, don't you? (*Laughs*—) Yes, you do! (Trying to look up hard, bitter tone but gradually ends up pitiful pleading weeps—)

I s'pose if I tried to tell you that I wasn't that no more—you'd believe me, wouldn't you? Yes, you would! And if I told you that just getting on this barge & being on the sea had changed me, & made me feel different about things & if all I'd been thru wasn't me, & didn't count, was just like it had never happened—you'd laugh wouldn't you? And you'd die laughing sure if I said that meeting you that funny way that night in the fog, & afterwards seeing that you was straight goods stuck on me, had got me thinking for the first time & I sized you up as a different kind of a man, sea man, as different from the ones on land as water is from mud—& that's why I got stuck on you too. I wanted to marry you & fool you, but I can't. Don't you see how I've changed? I can't marry you with you believing a lie—I was shamed to tell you the truth—till the both of you forced my hand & seen you was the same as all rest.

And now give me a bawling out like I can see you're going to. (*Burke silent. He pleads passionately*) Oh Matt. Will you believe me if I tell you that loving you has made me clean. It's the straight goods, honest! (*He doesn't reply*)—(*Bitterly*) Like hell you will! You're just like all the rest!"

Finally, just to remind you how many individual styles of acting exist in any one period and to show what different acting methods will do to a single scene, I am

going to play part of the sleepwalking scene of Lady Macbeth[42] as I think three types of actresses might play it.

First I shall do it as Haidee Wright,[43] that grand old English actress, one of the last exponents of the old school method whose style had the breadth and power of the classic tradition.

Then as Ethel Barrymore[44] who was the Queen of our theatrical Royal family and the outstanding exponent of the star system.

And lastly, a phenomenon that mostly disappeared with the burlesque queens of the cigarette pictures, but an actress who took the movie public by storm some years ago. Her first stage sensation, written by herself, was "Diamond 'Lil," her last opus entitled "The Constant Sinner," "a saga of a saleswoman of sex." I refer, of course, to Miss Mae West.[45]

I shall ask you to imagine Miss Wright dressed in simple classic robes.

Miss Barrymore would have doubtless costumed the part in exquisite chiffon draperies with perhaps the Siddons' headdress and carrying her ever-present handkerchief to wave at her adoring audience on her final exit.

I'm sure Miss West would wear a black lace nightgown for which she would be immediately arrested.

> Lady Macbeth—(*puringing? Her hands*) Out, damned spot! Out, I say! (*stops her sleeves*?) One! Two! Why then this time to do it! (crosses L) Hell is murky! (symbol L) Fie, my Lord fie, a soldier and afeard! What need we fear who knows it when none can call our power to account? (Turning & crossing to c) yet who would have tho't the old man would have so much blood in him? (Hands to face-) The smell of the blood still! All the perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten this little hand. (open—walking—step to R). How now my lord, put on your nightgown & look not so pale. I tell you again Banquo's buried. He cannot come out on's grave. (Listening to sounds at game). To bed! To bed! There's knocking at the gate. Come; come, come, come. Give me your hand! (Takes hand) What's done cannot be undone! (Drawing him out L) To bed! To bed! To bed!

The end

<u>Barrymore</u>

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[42] *Macbeth* (5.1.35-68)—condensed.

[43] Haidee Wright (1867-1943), London character actress. Wright came from a theatrical family and served as the target for one of Sands' celebrated impersonations with the Grand Street Follies.

[44] Ethel Barrymore (1879-1959), member of the Barrymore theatrical family and enjoyed the moniker, "First Lady of the American Theater." Like Sands, Barrymore's career spanned six decades.

[45] Mae West (1893-1980), American actress and icon, and Sands' signature impersonation. *Daimond Lil* (1928) was West's first major Broadway success. *The Constant Sinner* (1931) was West's final Broadway production before moving to Hollywood, and the accolade, "a saga of a salewoman of sex," comes from West's novel *The Constant Sinner* (1949).

With handkerchief—"Out, damned spot—out, I say—(Looks up with eyes—head down) one, two—why then 'tis time to do't—(crossing with Barrymore stare) "Hell is murky: (Hand to chin—coy look up (*smile*)—Fie, my lord, he, a soldier and afeerd—Whatneedwefearwhoknowsitwhennonecancallourpowertoaccount? (*cross R*) Yet who would have tho't the old man would have so blood in him. (*Handkerchief up to nose, turns head away L*) All the perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten this little hand (*to audience—counting house*)

(*Turns R breathing deeply as if in sleep—then stops & turns, profile to audience. Lowers head raises eyes*) Come, my lord, put up your nightgown and look not so pale, I tell you again Banquo's buried, he cannot come out ons grave.

(*Slightly indicates hearing a sound at door*) "To bed, to bed, there's knocking at the gate. (*Looking at audience—reaching hand out to Macbeth*) Come, come, come, come, give me your hand. (*Still to audience*) What's done can not be undone! (*Slight look at M- then waving hdkf* [handkerchief] *to audience as she exists, balcony to 1st row*) To bed, to bed, to bed!

The End

Costumes

I *Millament*
- lavendar Silk
- white wig
- fan
- hankerchief

II Almadide
- gold & white scarf
- belt
- feather headdress

III Nellie Denver
- Blue velvet coat & drape
- Blue hat
- White gloves
- Handkerchief
- Hairpiece

IV Candida
- Yellow negligee
- Hairpiece
- Comb

V Eve Dress
- Belt and gardenias

Green handkerchief

Styles in Acting
Costumes

I

Pink evening dress
Pink slippers
Brilliant clips
pearls

II
Millament

Lavender overdress
White wig
Lace hankerchief
Fan

III

Egyptian scarf
Feathered headdress

Almahide

IV
Vestris

Green dress
Ballet slippers
Yellow cap
Brooms

V
Nellie Denver
Blue velvet coat
Blue hat
White gloves switch
handkerchief

VI
Candida

Yellow negligee
switch

VII
Anna Christie

Sweater
Beret
Handkerchief

VIII

Pink dress
Clips
Pearls
Handkerchief (Barrymore)

# *Our Stage and Stars* (1933)[1]

## The Post-Revolutionary Theater

Late in the afternoon of April 16, 1787, Mr. and Mrs. Van Rensaler's[2] coach and four came clattering over the cobbles and with other coaches and sedan chairs drew up before a red wooden building sitting some sixty feet back from the street.

It was the John Street Theater[3] in New York City where just two years from now the manager in full dress of black sating and his hair elaborately powdered white, holding two wax candles in silver candlesticks would conduct President Washington (the first President of the United States) into his box shortly after his first inauguration.[4]

The Van Rensalers entered thru the wooden shed that extended from the sidewalk to the door, climbed the stairway to the first tier of boxes—the theater had two—and took the places that their servants had been holding for them since the doors opened at five o'clock.

It was now nearly six—time for the play to begin. Mrs. Van Rensaler rested the toes of her satin slippers on the charcoal foot-warmer while her husband doffed his cocked hat and adjusted his white wig, then she lifted her lorgnettes and bowed to Mrs. De Lancey[5] in the opposite box, while she missed no detail of the elaborate coiffure, a high white tower decorated with feathers and flowers, her blue brocaded gown and costly sparkling gems set off against the rich purple of her husband's gold-embroidered waistcoat.

All the boxes were gay with the brilliant colors of the gentlemen's satin and velvet coats; ladies in billowing flounces and ruffles of silk and shimmering brocades, all glittering with jewels.

In the gallery the peanut venders were already selling their wares and supplying their customers with apples, oranges and candy which later might be somewhat ungraciously bestowed upon the actors if the playing was not to the gallery boys' taste.

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[1] Dorothy Sands, *Our Stage and Stars* (1933), in "Notebook 1: 'Original Copies of my two one-woman shows: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932 and 'Our Stage and Stars or American Theatre Highlights' 1938," *Dorothy Sands papers, circa* 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

[2] Apparently an invented couple.

[3] First permanent theater in New York, operated from 1767-98, and considered the birthplace of theater in America.

[4] *The Contrast* (1787) premiered at the John Street Theatre after Washington's inauguration and members of the First Congress came to the performance, however the President's presence here is likely an embellishment.

[5] Also possibly fictitious? Stephen De Lancey (1738-1809) was a prominent New York lawyer and politician, so Sands may be referring to his wife, or another member of family.

Now the harpsichord and fiddles in the orchestra have begun to splay. Stage hands with long tapers are lighting the candles in the foot-lights. The candles in the barrel-hoops hung form the ceiling are already clouding the atmosphere with smoke.

The overture has ended. There is a hush, broken only by the rustle of silk, the snap of a snuff-box—and the green baize[6] curtain rises on the first American comedy!

The program announces that it is "a moral lecture in five parts" called "The Contrast" by Royall Tyler,[7] a Revolutionary war veteran who later became Chief Justice of Vermont.

It is a play of American manners closely modeled on "The School for Scandal".[8] It is the first play to glorify the American character and the audience warms to this adulation of its virtues and beings to think the theater must be a worthy institution after all when it so consistently proves that to be an American is to be right.

The Contrast is between the corrupt and frivolous world of fashion which aped British manners and became tainted by foreign travel (the first Isolationist propaganda) and the sturdier, more vigorous types of American manhood; and in it appears the first stage Yankee,[9] progenitor of a long line of honest Rubes down to "Lightnin"[10]—and even "Our Town".[11]

In the glimpse of the play which I shall give you I portray Charlotte, a frivolous coquette, full of English affectations. As the curtain rises she is talking to her debutante friend, Laetitia,[12] and later her brother.

At the end of this scene I shall leave the stage for a moment—and in that pause you are supposed to have seen the rest of the drama. In it Henry Manly, a Revolutionary war veteran and on hundred percent American wins the sweet and simple Maria away from the despicable fop Billy Dimple, with whom Charlotte has been carrying on a flirtation and deceiving her true friend, Maria.

I return immediately for the final scene of the play in which Charlotte having seen the error of her ways begs forgiveness from Maria and congratulates her brother Henry.

And now—the overture—

Henry and the sweet and simple heroine Maria enter.

And now light the candles, and tune the fiddles for the overture before "The Contrast" in the John Street Theater in April 1787.

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[6] Coarse, usually green material used for billiard or card tables, and apparently also Revolutionary-era stage curtains.

[7] Royal Tyler (1757-1826), author of the first American comedy.

[8] Tyler's *The Contrast* did in fact copied Richard Sheridan's comedy *The School for Scandal* (1777), and Tyler's work was derivative of Sheridan's generally.

[9] The "Stage Yankee" became a fixed type: rough-speaking, uncultured, unaffected, simple-minded and virtuous.

[10] *Lightnin'* (1918), three-act comedy by Winchell Smith and Frank Bacon, and eventually adapted for film in 1925 and 1930. Sands' audiences would have been more familiar with the 1930 film, starring all-American type, Will Rogers.

[11] *Our Town* (1938), play by Thornton Wilder about events in a fictional small-town from 1901-13, told from the perspective of its inhabitants. This reference is therefore a later addition than Sands' 1932 premiere.

[12] Tyler spells his character "Letitia."

The Post-Revolutionary Theater
"The Contrast"
Royall Tyler

Charlotte and Laetitia discovered. Charlotte laughs merrily.

Why Laetitia, my dear little prude, who should we dress to please but a creature who does not know Buffon from Soufflés—man, my dear Laetitia, man, for whom we dress, walk, dance, talk, lisp, languish and smile. Why, I'll undertake with one flirt of this hook to bring more beaux to my feet in one week than the grave Maria and her sentimental circle until their hairs are grey.

By the way, did you hear that Mr. Dimple and Maria are soon to be married? M-hum! But it is whispered that if Maria gives her hand to Mr. Dimple it will be without her heart—tho' the giving of the heart is one of the last of all laughable considerations.

But you know at the time the marriage was arranged I really believe that Maria tho't she loved him. But upon the death of his father you know Billy went to England to see the world and rub off a little of the patron rust. During his absence Maria, like a good girl, to keep herself constant to her own true love, avoided company and betook herself for her amusement to her books and her dear Billy's letters.

But alas! How many ways has the mischievous demon of inconstancy of stealing into a woman's heart! Her love was destroyed by the very means she took to support it. She read "Sir Charles Grandison" and "Clarissa Harlow" and "The Sentimental Journey",[13] and between whiles, as I said, Billy's letters. But as her taste improved, her love declined. The contrast was so striking betwixt the good sense of her books and the flimsiness of her love letters, that she discovered she had unthinkingly engaged her hand without her heart.

When Mr. Dimple returned she watched his conduct and conversation and found that by traveling the ruddy youth who washed his face at the cistern every morning, and swore and looked eternal love and constancy, was now metamorphosed into a flippant, pallid beau, who deserves the morning to his toilet, reads a few pages of Chesterfield's letters, and then minces out, to put the infamous principles into practice upon every woman he meets.

And now the supposedly sensible Maria would give up Dumpling manor, and the all-accomplished Dimple for a husband for the absurd, ridiculous reason forsooth that she despise and abhors him. Just as if a lady would not be privileged to spend a man's fortune, ride in his carriage, be called after his name, and call him her "own dear love" when she wants money, without loving and respecting the great he-creature.

[13] Popular (and verbose) novels of the day: *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753), by Samuel Richardson; *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady* (1748), also by Samuel Richardson—and the longest English language novel; and *The Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), by Laurence Sterne.

No, no no. If Maria breaks with Mr. Dimple, depend upon it, she has some other man in her eye. A woman rarely discards one lover until she is sure of another.

(*Aside to audience*)

Laetitia little think what a clue I have to Dimple's conduct. He renders himself disgusting to Maria in order that she may leave him at liberty to address me. I must change the subject.

By the by, Laetitia, have you heard that my brother Henry is in the city? A beau? Oh no, he makes no pretention to the character. When I met him to-day he was still wearing his regimentals, and dear Henry has such a lofty way of saying things I protest I almost tremble at the tho't of introducing him to the polite circles of the city.

Oh but that reminds me. Here is a note he gave me to peruse at my leisure. It is doubtless so grave and sentimental it will give us both the vapours. (*Reads note*)

Alas, I am discovered. Henry has learned of Billy Dimple's duplicity and acquainted Maria with it. Whereupon she has given her heart and hand to Henry in gratitude.

Here come the newly plighted pair cooing like a pair of turtle doves.

(*as she greets them—*)

Ah my dear Maria, how shall I look up to you for forgiveness? I who have deceived you, and in the practice of the meanest arts, have violated the most sacred rights of friendship?

If repentance can entitle me to forgiveness, I have already much merit, for I despise the littleness of my past conduct. (*Rises*) I now see that the finest assemblage of features, the greatest taste in dress, or the most brilliant wit, cannot eventually secure a coquette from contempt and ridicule. And you, my dear brother, I have learned that probity, virtue, honor, tho' they should not have received the polish of Europe, will secure to an honest American the good graces of his fair country, woman, and, I hope, the applause of the audience.

(Curtsey)!

Curtains

## The Frontier Theater

I am supposing that I am a member of one of the first theatrical touring companies in these United States in the early 1800's which set out to bring the drama to the frontier towns and villages springing up like mushrooms in the Mississippi Valley.

Well-established actors accustomed to the ease and elegance of city life in New York, Philadelphia and Boston refused to venture into the far west of Ohio and Kentucky, protesting that they "had no desire to be devoured by savages".[14] As the

[14] Sands is quoting Noah Miller Ludlow (1795-1886), an American actor in a touring troupe called Samuel Drake's theatrical company. See, Noah Miller Ludlow, *Dramatic Life as I Found It: A Record of Personal Epxerience; with an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Drama in the West and South, with Anecdotes and Biographical Sketches of the Principal Actors and Actresses Who Have at Times Appeared Upon the Stage in the Mississippi Valley* (1880), 172.

woods thru which we must travel on foot or horseback are inhabited by Indians and prowling wolves, I must confess the majority of our company are more noteworthy for their enthusiasm and powers of endurance than their histrionic abilities. Two of them are "cabinet makers who had never performed on any stage", another is "a stage-struck tailor who had been a sailor and lost a leg",[15] while later we were joined by "a printer who had smelt the footlights and gone stage mad".[16]

We play in whatever shelter the town offers, a hall, garret of a tavern, a room in a log cabin with two bed-spreads sewed together for a curtain and tallow candles struck in potatoes for footlights.

Our repertoire includes practically all of Polonius's list,[17] with a five-act tragedy topped off by a farce and often solo performances between the acts.

Our company has travelled now for several days thru the forest, the women riding in the wagon with the trunks and scenery, the men walking. When we reached the river we swapped our horse and wagon for a flat boat and have drifted down-stream all day until we saw signs of habitation. So we've tied up for the night, and found a room in the town over a confectioner's store where we can present for to-night's bill a five-act tragedy by M.G. Lewes, entitled "Adelgitha" or "The Fruits of a Single Error".[18]

If the play seems absurdly bombastic and the acting extravagant and crude to your sophisticated, technocratic eyes, remember that our audience of one hundred-fifty years ago left their log-cabins and rode into town on horseback or by wagon, every man carrying a gun to protect the women and children from hostile Indians or hungry wolves. That they sat on wooden benches, or sometimes on a barn floor dressed in their leather jackets and coonskin caps, the women in simple homespun dresses. Pioneers living life in the raw they accepted the crudities of our production, and the flowery language and extravagant situations transported them from the grim realities of their fight for existence to a world of glamorous romance.

The stage directions of "Adelgitha" call for "a grove", a Gothic chamber", "the Palace gardens", and the "Port of Otranto[19] with an extensive view of the Adriatic gulph". To accomplish this, we possess a single back-drop decorated with a very soiled and much-creased waterfall.

The scene is laid in Otranto in 1080; but as no one in the cast or the audience has the vaguest notion as to the location of Otranto or cherishes any preconceived ideas about styles in 1080 we shall choose from our meager wardrobe whatever suits our fancy.

The cast of characters for this play far exceeds the number of our company, but we are used to meeting such emergencies by doubling, trebling, snatching off beards and throwing on cloaks.

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[15] Ludlow, 172.
[16] Ludlow, 182.
[17] "…tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, Plautus too light," from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (2.2.1477-1482).
[18] *Adlelgitha; or, The Fruit of a Single Error. A Tragedy in Five Acts* (1806), not a usually anthologized play, by M.G. Lewes (1775-1818).
[19] A city and commune on back tip of the heel of the "boot" of the Italian peninsula, once famous for breeding horses.

When we played "Pizarro"[20] at Vincennes[21] Sol Smith,[22] then a novice in the company, played the entire Spanish army, officiated as High Priest of the Sun, was a sentinel, beat the alarm drum, and did "at least two-thirds of the shouting'" but "his exertions were as nothing compared to the Drakes, particularly Sam,[23] who frequently played two or three parts in one play, and after being killed in the last scene was obliged to fall far enough off stage to play slow music as the curtain descended".

So, to-night I shall do a Protean act[24] and play three parts, Michael, the villain Guiscard, the hero, and Adelgitha, the heroine.

Michael, despotic ruler of Byzantium, has fled revolution in his country and sought help from Robert Guiscard in Otranto.

Guiscard whom his wife describes as

"That man—who misplaced in this bad world
Seems meant to show
Mankind what man sh'd be".

Just as a friendly gesture Guiscard has gone to Byzantium to win back Michael's kingdom for him.

Adelgitha, Guiscard's loving and devoted wife, was in her youth seduced by a false knight. That was her "single" error" and of the fruits thereof you shall hear more anon.

I have condensed the five acts into three scenes.

In the first Michael, who has attempted to make love to Adelgitha in her husband's absence and been indignantly spurned by the lady takes his revenge by revealing his knowledge of her single error and threatening to expose her.

In the second scene Adelgitha pleads with her husband Guiscard and he replies to her.

In the final scene Adelgitha takes her revenge on Michael and confesses all to her husband.

Michael wears the tall silk hat and black mustache, the badge of all the tribe of villains.

Guiscard, the hero, wears the silver helmet, while Adelgitha is robed in the royal purple of the Tragedy Queen.

The Frontier Theater
"Adelgitha, of the Fruits of a Single Error"
M.G. Lewes (1800)

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[20] Francisco Pizarro González (1471-1541), Spanish conquistador who conquered the Inca Empire. The script is unclear to which play by that name Sands refers.
[21] City in southwestern Indiana.
[22] Sol Smith, (1848-1902), American comic actor from Missouri and former boy Civil War drummer.
[23] Samuel Drake (1768-1854), English actor who emigrated first to New York in 1810, and then to Kentucky in 1816.
[24] Presumably, this is where the *Washington Post* writer picked up the word "protean" in praise of Sands' work as, "the most astonishing 'protean act' our contemporary theater has seen" in, "Dorothy Sands Brings a Solo Bill to Capital: Protean Artiste Will Act Many Parts Tonight at National," *Washington Post*, Sunday ed., Feb. 24, 1935.

Enter Michael in long black cape, tall hat—black mustache. (*A fiendish chuckle*) Ha! Ha! Ha! Adelgitha—Oh princely dame, unbend that gloomy brow and scorn me not!
Some years are past since at the chase
In Astria's wood I lost my way. When lo! A groan! He hastened to the place.
A night lay stabbed by robbers.
"Come" he cried:
"Strangers approach and while for breath to tell it
Hear the confession of a guilty man,
And vouch for his remorse!
Oh, then he told
A tale so sad!... A maid of noble birth
By solemn vows seduced…abandoned…left
To shame and anguish
He charged us to find her,
Restore her letters, paint
His grief and bid her pray
For the sinful soul of—George Clermont!
The Tale affects you, Princess!
Name her? 'I was needless
For the damnsel's letters
So fond, so sad, so full of
Passion! Speaking
In every line her love
And shame so plainly
This picture too—
(*Forces her to look at picture*
*proceeds in a tone of ironical softness*)
It seems you know these
Features? They are yours!
(*In terrible force as he grasps her arm*)
Now scorn me if thou dar'st!
Ha! Ha! Ha!
(*Throws cape over shoulder*)
Exit

[Hat, cap, mustache off—
revealing—
<u>Adelgitha</u>

<u>Adelgetiha</u> (*woe is me!)*
Lo where my husband Robert Guiscard comes—and surely in search of me. If Michael should unfold to him the single error in my past—I see those eyes, which seek me now,
Contemptuous shun me!
If for a dagger and a heart I spear

That hour's my last!
I couldn't live unloved by Guiscard!
He's here—I'll tell him all—
I'll dare it—
Tis the crisis of my gate.
(*To Guiscard*)
Thou hast a generous heart,
  my Guiscard.
Among my damsels
Is one, whose faults of you
  I blush to name.
When on her cheek sixteen
  had scarcely shed
The bright reflection of its
  roseate wings
A wounded youth beneath
  her father's roof
Found kind protection.
Long she nursed him—
Pitied and soothed.
He was a villain.
Prayers, sighs, tears (*groans*)
and oaths, nothing was
  spared with her.
She listened and believed!
  Her heart was weak,
She fell: his heart was
  false, he fled!
Remorse n'er left her more –
And oh, such anguish—
Such floods of tears—
But then came one
  whom nature fashioned
With curious care, and
  when her work was finished,
Cried, "Lo, my masterpiece",
This wondrous man—
Born to be loved and love!
  This man o'er whom
you hold such power
  tis you, my own, my
  noble Guiscard—

(*Turn and put on cape and helmet*)

Guiscard:—

Adelgitha!
  Speak not the name of
such a one with mine!
  Far let her fly
From all the world, but most
  of all from me.
For should I find her with me
  Sword (*rush back to get it*)
  (*Repeat*)—with my sword
  I'd drain
Her veins of that hot blood,
  which stained my own.
Let her in cloistered gloom,
  in prayer and penance,
waste her sad days.
By all abhorred & (*looks for prompter*)
  renounced, despised, (*Huh?*) forgotten.
Till crushed by shame and
  frantic with despair
Her own rash hand—
Just Heavens!  My love, my life!
Nay, but tou'at woundrous
  pale.
And no one's near.
Rest on this bank—'tis well—
I'll fly for help.
I'll straight return.

[Throw off cape & helmet—

Adelgitha (*on the ground*)

Lo—here that accursed villain, Michael comes—and in his hand my letters given to him by that false knight.
Look on me, Michael.  Those fatal latters yield them to my prayers.
Have thou compassion!
Thou refusest!
(*In a terrible voice, while she seizes a dagger which lies near her & start from the ground*).
Then perish tyrant!
  (*She stabs him*)
Murderess?  Right!  Right!
  Its now my fittest name!
Lower I cannot fall, till
  Death shall - - - (*rising*)
  Death?—

Oh dreadful tho't!  more
  dreadful still what follows.
But not alone I'll suffer—
(*Solemn & majestic*)
  George of Clermont,
Hear thou my voice, and
  Tremble in my grave!
I term thee him, who forged that
fatal link—
First of the chain that binds
  me to perdition!
Hark!  steps approach.
Guiscard, my husband—
Flown my crime, & I desire
  no, pardon.
The table thou heardst from
  Me to-day, was mine.
'Twas George of Clermont,
  long ere thou saws't me!
Robbed me of peace and
  honour.  Fatal chance
Betrayed to Michael's ear
  this dangerous secret
His heart was hard: my
  brain was wrought to frenzy:
He knew and threatened me:
  I feared, and slew him
Smelled by a crime the list
  of those to which one early
  error forced me.
Tis in man's choice, never
  To sin at all:
But sinning once, to stop
  exceeds all power
Prince!  Guiscard!  Flow those
  Tears for me?  Heard I aright?
  Thou canst forgive me?
  And love me still?
I'm happy Guiscard,
  Guiscard.  And now
  Reward these thus!
  (*she stabs herself*)
    Thus only
    Could I replay thy wondrous
      Teeth and spare thee
   The shame of loving, where

Esteem was lost.
(*as she sways*) No. no the steel was
faithful (*on knees*)
'Tis my heart's blood which - - -
(*Red handkerchief from bosom*)
Oh, that pang!
Bless thee, farewell!
Oh, I am guilty, guilty,—
Hereafter - -our spirits —
In a letter, happier world….
Heaven!–Heaven!——this past!
(*The death rattle*)
She dies.

## The Theater of the Gold Rush
## Lotta

Trembling with excitement John Crabtree pulled down the shutters of his shop for the last time.[25] The next day he would exchange the humdrum existence of a book-seller for adventure, freedom and fortune. He was joining one of the numerous caravans leaving New York to journey across the prairees and farther up the gold that lay glistening in the hills of California.

It was a year later in 1853 that he sent for his wife[26] and his six year old daughter. Lotta, to join him in the high Sierras.[27] They arrived at Grass Valley to learn that John Crabtree had discovered no gold mine—but his wife had bro't one with her.

Strangely enuf to this dab mining town had also come Lola Montez,[28] mistress of a king, actress, adventuress, woman of mystery and legend. She was fascinated by the Crabtree's little daughter, a tiny slip of a girl with a mass of red curls and sparkling black eyes—and while Mrs. Crabtree set up a boarding-house to keep her family together. Lola Montez amused herself by teaching Lotta to dance and sing.

Finally, when none of her husband's ventures materialized Mrs. Crabtree decided to capitalize the talents of her gifted child.

One day she left a few loaves of fresh head, a pot of beans and a note for Crabtree who, as usual, was off prospecting and set out with Taylor's travelling play troupe.[29]

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[25] John Ashworth Crabtree (1820-94), Lotta Crabtree's father, was a bookseller and struck north for the Gold Rush in 1851.
[26] Mary Ann Crabtree (1820-1904).
[27] The Sierra Nevada mountain range, seat of the Gold Rush, lies primarily in California, but also extends into Nevada. The Crabtrees settled first in boom town Grass Valley, and then one called Rabbit Creek.
[28] Marie Dolores Eliza Rosanna Gilbert, Countess of Landsfeld (1821-61), Irish dancer, actress, and reformer, mistress to King Ludwig I of Bavaria until the Revolutions of 1848.
[29] Matt Taylor owned a tavern, which provided Crabtree with her first paid performance opportunity. Crabtree did tour thereafter, though primarily singing, dancing, and playing banjo.

When the roads permitted they travelled by wagon changing to mules for the higher trails. Mrs. Crabtree would ride holding her infant son in her arms with Lotta strapped to the mule behind, at night creeping along the dark trails in absolute silence in order not to attract the attention of the mysterious and threatening characters that filled those mountains.

They played in barrooms which were often also the village store so that their scenery was red and blue flannel shirts, canned goods and mining implements; their stage a few boards across barrels on billiard table tied together. A few candles guttering in bottles served as footlights.

Children were a rare sight in those god-forsaken mining camps—a few shacks tucked in among the hill—and when tiny Lotta would be lifted up onto one of these improvised stages and in her little green jacket and trousers gaily dance an Irish jig, and then come out in a simple white cambric dress with puff sleeves and a blue sash and sing a sentimental ballad these rough miners and desperadoes would laugh and weep and cheer, and empty their pockets of great gold nuggets flinging them onto the stage at their feet. And then mother Crabtree would gather up these shining tributes into her apron, and carefully sweep the gold dust into a basket—and so laid the foundation of a fortune which she so shrewdly invested that when Lotta died in 1924 her will disposed of millions of dollars.[30]

From the mining camps they went to San Francisco where Lotta sang and danced in the gambling resorts along the waterfront, but always so carefully protected by this austere, dominating woman who taught and managed and worshipped her—that she seemed completely unaware of the life of which she was part and always retained the childlike innocence which was such an essential part of her charm.

Then came Variety—and finally Mrs. Crabtree's ambition was realized and Lotta as a star of the legitimate stage—trouped the length and breadth of the country.

She became the embodiment of a glittering era. Lotta—"The California favorite" they called her, 'The Unapproachable", "The Dramatic Diamond".[31] She was not only a successful actress, she was a household world, an idol, a nationwide craze.[32]

Most of her plays were written around her exuberant personality, for that far more than her acting skill was the secret of her success.

In every one of her plays whether laid in a London drawing-room, a Cockney kitchen or an Algerian battlefield Lotta always produced her banjo, sang and danced.

Perhaps her greatest success was in "Little Nell and the Marchioness" which John Brougham[33] dramatized for her Dicken's "Old Curiosity Shop"[34] in which she played both Little Nell and the Marchioness.

It is her favorite part of the comic, wistful, little Cockney slavey that I hope to bring you an echo of this enchanting little creature whose rippling laughter and

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[30] Her charitable estate contained $4 million at her death in 1924, the equivalent to approximately $55 million in 2016 dollars.
[31] These references would have been current post-1859.
[32] By the 1870s and 1880s, Crabtree was the must lucrative actress in America, earning $5000/week.
[33] John Brougham (1814-1880), Irish-American actor and playwright.
[34] Dickens published *The Old Curiosity Shop* as a weekly serial from 1840-41, and in book form in 1841.

Loydenish[35] antics offered so much cheer and merriment to the audiences of the 60's and 70's.

You remember in "The Old Curiosity Shop" that Dick Swiveller worked as a clerk for the Shyster lawyer Mr. Brass and his domineering sister, Sally; and that one day he caught their little slavey watching him thru the keyhole of the office door. He bro't her out and discovered that they kept the poor little slavey locked in the damp cellar, that she was had starved & didn't even know her name. So he elegantly dubbed her "The Marchioness" and treated her to the first square meals she'd ever known. After that she used to come out when Mr. Brass and his sister Sally were away and play cribbage with him.

Then when Dick was taken ill she ran away from the Brasses to take care of him.

I am going to play for you as Lotta—the scene in Dick Swiveller's room. She is lying in bed just coming to consciousness after three week's desperate illness and delirium. The little Cockney is playing cribbage while she watches him—and suddenly she sees him open her eyes.

The Frontier Theater
"Little Nell and the Marchioness"
Charles Dickens

Scene: Dick Swiveller's room.

Dick is lying in bed, just returning to consciousness after three weeks' desperate illness. The Marchioness sits on a table playing cribbage by herself. She swings her legs. Shuffles, cuts the cards, deals, counts, pegs—sniff—coughs a little—"Two for 'is 'eels (*as she pegs*) 15—2, 15—4 (*at a sound from the bed, she looks up*—) Oh, Mr. Liverer, you've come to. (*She begins to laugh and cry at once*) Oh I'm so glad I don't know what to do. You've been so ill, dead all but. And most of the time, you've been out of your head—haven't you been talking nonsense?

It's been three weeks, three long, slow weeks. I never tho't you'd get better. Thank heaven you have.

How'd I get here? (*giggles*) Bless you, I've run away (*kicks*) Where do I live? I live here. (chuckling) You know, before I run away I used to sleep in Mr. Brass's and Miss Sally's kitchen—where we played cards you know.

Miss Sally used to keep the key of the kitchen door in her pocket, and she always come down at night to take away the candle and rake out the fire. Then she left me to go to bed in the dark, locked the door on the outside, put the key in her pocket, and kept me locked up till she come down again in the morning, very early, I tell you to wake me up and let me out.

I was terrible afraid if there was a fire they'd forget me so whenever I'd see an old rusty key anywhere I'd pick it up and tried if it would fit the door. And at last I found in the dust cellar a key that fit in.

They kept me very short, oh you can't think how short they kept me—so I used to come out at night after they'd gone to bed, and feel about in the dark for bits of biscuit, or sandwiches that you'd left from you lunch in the office, or bits of orange

[35] Rare term perhaps meaning "cartoonish" or "slapstick."

peel to put into cold water and make believe it was wine. Did you ever taste orange peel and cold water? If you make believe very much it's quite nice—but if you don't, you know it seems, it would bear a bit more seasoning certainly.

Well, you see when you was gone there was no more crusts or sandwiches or orange peel and I hadn't any friend at all.

But one morning when I was looking the thru the key-hole—as you see me thru you know—(*laughs mischievously*) I heard someone say that she lived here and was that lady whose house you were lodged at, and that you was took very bad and wouldn't nobody come and take care of you.

Mr. Brass he said, "It's no business of mine", he said, and Miss Sally she says, "He's a funny chap but it's no business of mine, and what more he ain't to be trusted". Mr. Brass is of the same opinion. Don't ever tell on me or I'll be beat to death.

Aw, thank ye, you've always been so kind to me.

So the lady what said she lived here went away and smalled the door to when she went out I can tell you.

So I ran away that night and come here. I told 'em you was me brother (*laughs*) and they believed me, and I've been here ever since.

Awno, I haven't wore myself out—not a bit of it. Don't you mind about me. (*wiggling foot screwing apron*) I like settin up, and I've often a sleep bless you, in one of them chairs.

Oh—no—you musn't think of getting' up yet. The doctor said you was to keep quite still. Anyway, you can't get up. You haven't any clothes. I've been obliged to sell 'em every one, to get the things the doctor ordered for you.

Now don't take on about that. Lie still and I'll sing a little song for you and help you forget it.

Lie quite still now—

(*Lotta picks up her banjo, sits on the table and sings "Oh you little darling" . and then gaily dances a jig—*

*When the curtain closes she waggles her toe outside it and takes another curtain call crawling out from under the table*)

## The Variety Theater
## Tony Pastor's—1800

I take you back to a performance in 1880 at Tony Pastor's[36] famous Variety Theater on 14th Street, New York City, next door to old Tammany Hall.[37]

The general feature of the show will differ very little in type from the vaudeville we saw before it expired in its fatal context with the movies.

Of course, there'll be no newsreel, no "master of ceremonies", and the gas lighting will be less colorful and garish than our brilliant 1000 watt spots: but after

[36] Tony Pastor (1832-1908), impresario, variety performer, and founding force for American vaudeville.

[37] The architectural and political machine of the Democratic Party in New York. The building sold in 1927, and the headquarters moved to East 17th Street and Union Square East in 1929 until 1943.

the Overture, we'll see a family of acrobats perform. Then a song and dance team in complicated clogs and jigs, a ventriloquist and a troupe of performing dogs.

But the high spot on the bill be as always when the rotund figure of Tony Pastor himself swaggers on to the stage in his swallow-tail coat and brightly polished top-boots; we he gives the neatly waxes ends of this black mustache a little twist with his thumb and forefinger, and then punctuates the climax of his topical song by popping out his opera hat.

But on this particular evening there is a counter attention.

At a friend's house one evening Tony Pastor heard a very pretty young girls sing. Struck by her beauty and her sweet voice he offered her $50 a week to come sing at his theater. To-night this young lady makes her debut and beings a brilliant career as queen of the musical comedy world for the next two decades.

She is billed as an English ballad singer and will sing the sentimental ballads which were the Torch Songs of the eighties.

This is the girl whose beautiful face and elegantly-gowned hour-glass figure will become the toast of the gay nineties.[38] Her name is "Lillian Russell".[39]

Ballads of the Eighties.

"See that my grave's kept green"[40]
"The Picture that was Turned towards the Wall".[41]
"Take Back Your Gold".[42]

"The Romantic Seventies"
Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines
(Ethel Barrymore's[43] debut)

There are three reasons why I have chosen a scene from "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines".

The first because Clyde Fitch[44] wrote it, a brilliant young author whose plays about American life from 1890 to his untimely death in 1909 were almost the first American plays to possess real distinction.

At the time that "Captain Jinks" opened in February 1901 four of Fitch's plays were running on Broadway. Julia Marlowe[45] was starring in "Barbara Frietchie".

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[38] The "Gay Nineties"—or "Naughty Nineties" in England—refers to the economic boom and free-wheeling spirit of the 1890s.
[39] Lillian Russell (1860-1922), Russell (born Helen Louise Leonard) was a preeminent American actress and singer.
[40] By Gus Williams, 1876.
[41] By Charles Graham, published 1891.
[42] By Louis W. Pritzkow (lyrics) and Monroe Rosenfeld (music), published 1897.
[43] Ethel Barrymore (1897-1959), American actress and member of the famed Barrymore acting clan, earned the moniker, "First Lady of the American Theater."
[44] Clyde Fitch (1865-1909), American playwright and most popular Broadway writer from the 1890s until his death.
[45] Julia Marlowe (1865-1950), English-born American Shakespearean actress.

Amelia Bingham[46] was playing in the "Climbers" and Clara Bloodgood[47] in "Lover's Lane".

Secondly, I chose it because it is a picture of America in the early seventies, the Civil War ended, the Grant-Greeley context in full swing,[48] and Lydia Thompson and her British Blondes[49] the delight of the box office and the target of reformers.

And thirdly, I do it as a tribute to a great acting tradition in the American theater, a family that has furnished our stage with a whole galaxy of stars. Beginning with Mrs. John Drew[50] who in the 1870s manages the Arch Street Theater in Philadelphia[51] and handed on her brilliant acting gifts to her son John and her daughter Georgie[52] who married Maurice Barrymore[53]—and then came Lionel, Ethel and John.[54]

It was as Madame Trentoni in "Captain Jinks of the Horse Marines" that Ethel Barrymore made her debut as a star in 1901.

The play opened in Philadelphia where her grandmother, Mrs. Drew, had had her famous stock company for so many years.

When for the opening night Ethel stopped breathless at the end of the hysterical dance in the second act, a voice called down from the gallery, "We loved your grandmother, Ethel, and we love you".[55]

The opening scene of "Captain Jinks" is laid on the Landing Dock of the Cunard Line[56] in New York City in the early 70s. The side of the vessel is seen on the left with the passenger's gangplank coming down to the center of the stage.

Across the river at the back is Hoboken with the Stevens house[57] on the hill.

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[46] Amelia Bingham (1869-1927), Ohio-native American actress. She would have been at the top of her popularity around the end of the nineteenth-century.

[47] Clara Bloodgood (1870-1907), American actress and society figure.

[48] Sands is referring to the 1872 presidential election. Former general Ulysses S. Grant easily won a second term, but a faction of the Republican Party split to support Horace Greeley as the "Liberal Republican" nominee. The Democrats supported Greeley as well, and canceled their own convention. To add to the confusion, Greeley died between the close of voting and before the completion of the electoral college process.

[49] Lydia Thompson (1838-1908), British performer and manager. Her burlesque troupe of "British Blondes" took America by storm in 1868-69, and established the market for future revues in the United States like the Ziegfeld Follies down to Busby Berkeley's women-spectacle film sequences.

[50] Louisa Lane Drew ("Mrs. John Drew") (1820-97), English-born American actress and theater manager, and matriarch of the Barrymore clan. John Drew was her third husband.

[51] The building has gone through multiple incarnations since its founding as the "Arch Street Opera House" (1870-79). By an odd twist of fate, Jewish impresario Morris Finkel took over the Arch Street Theatre in 1898 and made it the largest Yiddish theater in Philadelphia. The building is currently called the "Trocadero" and has won fame as a venue for rock and punk bands.

[52] Georgiana Emma Drew (1856-93), American actress and comedian.

[53] A.k.a Herbert Arthur Chamberlayne Blythe (1849-1905), British-born actor and Barrymore patriarch.

[54] Lionel Barrymore (1878-1954), won an academy award for his performance in *A Free Soul* (1931); Ethel Barrymore (1879-1959) appears earlier in this show; John Barrymore (1882-1942) at first attempted to avoid theater, but his interpretation as Hamlet in 1922 became definitive.

[55] An often-told story, e.g. Montrose J. Moses, "Quiet Corner: The Life Story of America's Most Famous Playwright," *McClure's* 53, vol. 4 (April 1921), 27.

[56] An English luxury cruise line, founded in 1838, now owned by the Carnival Corporation & plc.

All the passengers have left the boat except the much-heralded opera singer, Madame Trentoni, and reporters from all the newspapers are standing on the dock waiting to interview her when she appears—which will be presently.

The Romantic Seventies[58]
"Captain Jinks of the Horse Brigades"—Clyde Fitch 1901

(*Aurelia stops at the top of the gangplank for a moment, looking around her and smiling, and then runs gaily down*)

Hip, Hip, Hurray! Here we are at last on American soil—planks—never mind, soil—E Pluribus Unum![59]

(*as she stands by the foot of the gangplank all the reporters raise their hats*)

Good morning, gentlemen. (*Reporters bow*) You are all the reporters, aren't you? They told me you'd be here. (*she shakes hand around with each of them*) I'm so glad I'm dying to be interviewed. The Herald-Tribune, Times, Sun, Express and the Clipper. Oh my, are all reporters handsome?

(*walks across the stage*)

You like my walk with the Grecian bend? Oh, but we call it the Brighton dip. Yes, it's very fashionable with us in England.

I'm going to the Brevoort House on 5th Ave. at 8th Street. I'm told that is the best and not so far up-town as the Fifth Ave. Hotel on the Broadway, and much nearer to the New Academy of Music where I'm to sing.

Oh, I adore America! It's superb (*Looking around at the dock—speaking in a stereotyped manner*) It's so enormous, so great a country! I'm amazed at its size. (*coming to more natural manner, she laughs*) of course, I haven't seen very much of it yet!

What town is that across the river over there? is that Boston? Hoboken? Oh, a suburb, I presume. I hope to see a great deal of your country. I'm mad to go to A. T Stewart's shop,[60] and see Saratoga, which I've heard heaps about. And the very first morning I have free from rehearsal I've promised myself I shall run over to Niagara Falls and back.

(*The Reporters follow her as she talks—goes to gangplank*)

I don't see why they don't bring the rest of my luggage. There are 48 boxes. Did you get that 48 boxes? Yes, I know that's a good many more than Peripa Rosa bro't over. But she depended entirely on her voice.

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[57] There are multiple "Steven's" houses, though the one near Hoboken is currently the Stevens Institute of Technology and former home of inventor Edwin Augustus Stevens (1795-1868).

[58] This phrase is anachronistic as Romanticism—the artistic and literary movement that emphasized emotion and the subjective experience of the artist— which flourished in the first half the nineteenth-century.

[59] "Out of one, many"—the official motto of the United States.

[60] Alexander Turney Stewart (1803-76), Irish businessman who made a fortune in dry goods sales. His Broadway wholesale location had an impressive stone façade, but Mme. Trentoni does not seem aware that the establishment is a high volume discounter and therefore not a destination location.

I made my debut in "La Traviata".[61] Has it been sun here yet? Too risqué? But how absurd, noone ever understands what an Italian opera is about!

Oh dear, I hope I shall be a success! I'm awfully nervous! Oh, please like me! I'm afraid you'll think I'm a very foolish young person, I do so want you to like me.

You know I'm really an American. Yes, my father came from Trenton, New Jersey. That's how I got my name, "Trentoni"—don't you see? My real name is Aurelia Johnson but of course that wouldn't look well on the bills. I haven't been in America since I was three years old, but really it all does look familiar! At least I wish it did.

Yes, my mother sang in the chorus with Titiano, & the night I was born she represented a princess at a ball in the second act—so you see, I really am of noble birth!

Do I know the Royal Family? Er—not intimately—that is to say, personally, but I know them very well by sight. You see they don't go to the opera on account of the Prince Consort's death.

Oh yes, the Uppertendom have been entertainingly kind of my, but I'll tell you a secret. I want the big crowds to love me! I want to outdo Lydia Thompson. I want to win the hearts of the gallery boys!

Yes, I know you didn't expect my ship till to-morrow. We broke the record for the Atlantic. Only think we crossed in 13 days! It takes your breath away!

Oh, here's the customs official! I'm so nervous about the customs. I wish the whole thing were over. We hear such awful tales about them. I haven't a dutiable thing of course. I've only 48 boxes anyway, and they contain only my few personal effects.

Good-morning, sir, are you the customs official? Oh no, thank you, I'd much rather have a man examiner, unless, of course, you're going to be personal. If you're going to look for violins the in flounces of my petticoats and diamonds in my bustles than I'd rather have a lady—a perfect lady!

By the bye, you'll find a box of new-looking curls and a couple of waterfalls, but they've been worn heaps of times, by me, I mean, as well as by the lady who grew'em.

Sir, what are you doing? Please be careful. Don't paw those things like that, that lace will tear—Don't throw those things out I beg you!

If you ruin my clothes I shall sue the city! I warn you of that!

Gentlemen, can't you do something? Can't you stop him?

My dear man, go on, play hide and seek in every box if you like! Climb down all the corners, use my hates for tenpins, empty out my shoes, scatter my lingerie to the winds, jump on every stitch gown), and then call this a free country!

Gentlemen, I leave not my home, but something much more fragile, I leave my wardrobe in your hands! Good-morning!

## Realism in the Early 1900s

[61] Giuseppe Verdi's masterpiece (1832), based on a play called *La Dame aux Camélias* (1852), in turn an adaption by a novel by Alexander Dumas, fils.

"The Easiest Way", Eugene Walter.[62]

Judging from the program of the first New York performance of "The Easiest Way" by Eugene Walter (January 19, 1909) Mr. Belasco cherished some misgivings as to what the public's reactions would be to this new drama.

David Belasco
Presents
Frances Starr[63]
In
"The Easiest Way"

"An American play concerning a particular shape of New York Life"—it reads—and then over Mr. Belasco's signature this moralizing:

"Young girls and young boys go out into the world and meet its dangers and it is he mission of plays like "The Easiest Way" to remind those who treat these dangers lightly and carelessly that one day they will be called upon to pay the penalty. It contains a message that shall be pondered seriously, by every mother that has her daughter's welfare at heart".[64]

In spite of this disarming appeal after a two years' run in New York Mayor Fitzgerald[65] stopped its production in Boston because he said, "It tended to familiarize young girls with the intimate details of low life in a great city and wear away the fine bloom of their innocence". As in various Southern cities it was cited as new evidence of "the downward trend of the drama in recent years".[66]

It was a play which in an age of pleasant successes and happy endings dared to be a tragedy, and a tragedy without a gun-shot, a tragedy of just going on living. In the light of present Broadway successes the theme can hardly be considered very daring. While the past thirty years have considerably broadened the point of view the play still stands as a sincere and moving piece of dramatic writing.

Laura Murdock is an actress who has had a very sordid career, and at the time the play opens she has been living for several years with Willard Brockton, a successful broker who puts up money for the theatrical productions in consideration for favors.

While playing in socks in Denver Laura meets John Madison, a young newspaper man & they fall deeply in love. As Madison has no money they decide Laura will return to New York, break with Brockton, live on what she can earn as an actress until Madison has made enuf to come and marry her.

Laura tries desperately to go straight, but finds that without Brockton's money and influence it's impossible to get work. She is living in a cheap boarding house

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[62] Eugene Walter (1874-1941), American playwright.

[63] Frances Starr (1886-1973), American stage, film, and TV actress. Starr achieved breakout success with Belasco's 1909 production of *The Easiest Way*.

[64] Quoted in multiple sources, e.g., David Belasco, "Request from David Belasco," *The Washington Post*, Sunday ed., Jan. 10, 1909.

[65] John Fitzgerald (1863-1950), the mayor of Boston from 1906-08 and 1910-14, the first Catholic mayor of Boston, and grandfather of John F. Kennedy. He stopped *The Easiest Wa*y in Sands' home town despite its successful two-year run in New York.

[66] Source unknown, but see Chapter Three for a discussion about the politics surrounding both *The Easiest Way* and the film *Birth of a Nation*—and the trope of the sanctity of white women's sexuality.

without money for food or rent when Brockton comes and offers to take her back again—and she takes "The Easiest Way".

The scene from the last act which I shall play is laid in Brockton's luxurious New York apartment one year later when Madison arrives having made his fortune. Laura promises to marry him and leave for the west that afternoon letting him believe she has kept her part of the bargain.

The scene opens just after John Madison has departed to get the marriage license. The maid is beginning to pack—and Will Brockton returns.

Realism in the early 1900s
"The Easiest Way"
Eugene Walter 1909

(*Laura stands at the door looking after John Madison, who has just left her. Goes to window and waves happily. Turns and cross room and calls*)

Annie, Annie come here!

Annie, I'm going away and you go to hurry. I want you to start to pack my trunks—and hurry as fast as you can. Oh, I never was so happy! Don't stand there looking at me, I want you to hurry!

(*Turns to discover Will Brockton standing at door*)

Oh Will, how you startled me!

Yes, I'm going away. I'm going to Nevada with John Madison. We're going to be married this afternoon.

What do you mean "he didn't care?" Of course I told him everything. He—he didn't say anything. We're just going to be married, that's all. I told him you were a very good friend to me.

You've got to go now, Will. Don't you see he'll come back soon & find you here? If he finds that I'm here with you it will ruin my life. I don't think you've got any right to come here now, in this way, and take happiness from me. I've given you everything I've got, and now I want to live right and decent, and he wants me to, and we love each other.

Now Will Brockton, it's come to this. You've got to go, do you hear. <u>Please get</u> out!

Yes, I'm foolish & I've been foolish all my life, but I'm getting a little sense now. (*Kneels in armchair facing Will, her voice is shaking with anger and tears*).

When you came to me, I was happy. I didn't have much, just a little salary & some hard work. You say I'm bad, but who made me so? Who took me out night after night? Who got me in debt & then when I wouldn't do what you wanted me to do who had me discharged from the company so I had no means of living? Who always entreating tired to trap me into this life and I didn't know any better?

I knew it was wrong, yes, but you told me everybody in this business did this sort of thing, and I was just as good as anyone else. Finally you got me and kept me. Then when I went away to Denver, and for the first time found a gleam of happiness, for the first time in my life—yes—I'm crazy (*Rises angrily, sweeps cover off table—Turns on him almost screaming*) You've made me crazy. You followed me to

Denver and then when I got back you bribed me again. You pulled me down, and you did the same old thing until this happened. Now I want you to get out.

You understand. I want you to get out! (*Screaming attempt to push him out*) No you won't stay here. I hate you! I've hated you for months! I hate the sight of your face. I've wanted to go and now I'm going. You've got to go, do you hear? (*Pushes him out*) I want to be happy. I'm going to be married! I'm going to be happy! (*Sits down exhausted. Hears out door slam. Calls*—) Annie, hurry and see if that's Mr. Madison. Starts to greets John who has entered—

John darling—you back again—has anything happened? You look so strange!

(*He tells her what he has heard*) Why—what did your friends say? Oh, my dear, how absurd for you to listen to such ridiculous gossip. (*With Will Brockton*)—of course that's all just an echo of the past—from what had been going on before that wonderful day in Colorado when I met you? Of course, John I've been the devil.

And you got the license and we'll be married this afternoon. I'm so excited! Yes, darling, I'll get ready right away.

Will—you beast, to come back!—No John please! Now that you've done it will you get out of here Will Brockton?

John I want to tell you how I've learned to despise him. I know you don't believe me, but it's true, it's true. I don't love anyone in the world but you. I know you don't think that it can be explained—maybe there can't be any explanation. I couldn't help it. I was so poor and I had to live and he wouldn't let me work, and he's only let me live one way—and I was hungry. Do you know what that means? I was hungry & I didn't have clothes to keep me warm, & I tried, oh John tried so hard to do the other thing, the right thing, but I couldn't.

I don't want to try to make excuses. I want to tell you what's in my heart, but can't. It won't speak, and you don't believe my voice. I love you—I—how can I tell you—but I do, I do—and you won't believe me.

You're killing me—killing me. How can you say there's no hope for me—that I'll just be a wreck & sink down to the bed-rock of depravity—you'd leave me to do that? No—No—you're not going? You're not going? –

And you never tho't that perhaps I'm frail and weak, & that now maybe I need your strength. I want to lean on you, John. Aren't you going to let me? Won't you give another chance? Please—Don't leave me—Don't leave me!

(*He pulls away from & goes out slamming the door*) (*Screaming*) John—John—I—(*sits weeping in a loud & tearful manner*) He's gone! He's gone!

(*Suddenly calls*)

Annie, Annie. I'm not going away, Annie. I'm going to stay right here. Open up my trunks. Take out my clothes. Get me my prettiest dress. Hurry up! (*She goes to the mirror*) Get my new hat, dress up my body and paint my face! It's they've left of me. (*to herself*) They've taken my soul away with them.

Doll me up, Annie. I'm going to Pastor's (?) to make a hit—and hell with the rest! (*She picks up a hand-glass and looks into it—then sinks back against the dressing table—as the glass drops in her hand*)—Oh God—Oh my God!

Realism in the Twentieth Century—Eugene O'Neill's[67] Anna Christie as played by Pauline Lord.[68]

Eugene O'Neill was the first American dramatist whose work achieved the stature of serious literature and received international recognition, so as an example of American realism in the twentieth century I am going to play a scene from his "Anna Christie," first produced in 1920.[69]

I'm sure you have all read or seen the play on the stage, in the movies or heard it over the radio[70] and know the story of the Swedish sea captain who loathed and loved the sea. When his wife died he left his small daughter to be bro't up on a farm by his wife's relatives in order to keep her away from "that old devil sea". When she has grown up he finally sends for her & as she comes into the saloon by the docks to meet him we recognize at once the marks of the prostitute—see p. 31—

"Anna Christie"

[Missing]

Movie Vampires[71]

As many of your stage stars—as well as playgoers have deserted the theater for the moving pictures I shall follow them for a moment and play a vampire scene in the manner of three movies stars.

The scene concerns a young diplomatic official entrusted with important papers which the glamorous lady spy is endeavoring to inveigle from him. The scene is of course played on a chaise longue in the lady's apartment.

First I shall play the scene as Miss Greta Garbo.[72] Then, changing my make-upon the stage, I shall transform myself into the first movie vampire who as Theodosia Goodman of Cincinnati, Ohio, made a hit in her first film. Whereupon the Fox[73] press agent announced that she was an Arab, spelled it backward and named her "Theda Bara".[74] Advertised as "the woman with the wickedest face in the

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[67] Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), one of the preeminent American playwrights of the twentieth century, and Nobel Prize winner in Literature. He was also Sands' classmate at Baker's 47 Workshop at Harvard University from 1914-15.

[68] Pauline Lord (1890-1950), West coast-born actress. Lord's lead role in *Anna Christie* proved her biggest success. She received a thirty-minute ovation while on tour at the Strand Theatre in London in 1923.

[69] *Anna Christie* actually premiered on Nov. 2, 1921 at the Vanderbilt Theatre in New York.

[70] In addition to the 1921-23 Broadway run (staging by Arthur Hopkins), Anna Christie appeared in London's West End in 1923. Film adaptations included a silent 1923 version, a 1930 remake—starring Greta Garbo in her first "talkie, and a German language version (later dubbed into French), also starring Garbo.

[71] Not literal vampires, but rather "femme fatales."

[72] Greta Lovisa Gustafsson ("Greta Garbo") (1905-1990), iconic stage and film star and one of Sands' signature impersonations.

[73] Fox Studios—Fox had been in deep debt until 1914, and Bara helped turn Fox's cash flow positive the year after.

[74] Theodosia Burr Goodman ("Theda Bara") (1885-1955), silent film and stage actress. Sands pantomimed Bara's portion of this final scene.

world"[75] she sent the chills down the spines as she writhed and wiggled and panted and poisoned.

Then again changing my make-up before you I shall become that curious combination of past and present, Miss Mae West,[76] who proudly proclaims that she has climbed the ladder of success "wrong by wrong".[77]

Vampires—Now and Then[78]

Center stage—a chaise longue[79] with pillows.

Greta Garbo—standing center (*R. hand to cheek—lifting cheek bone line*)

You are a very strange young man. How can you think I would betray you?

Come close and let me look into your eyes.

(*Lifting arm up—look at him*)

Ah, they shine so bright we do not need to the light. (*with a gesture*) Turn out the lamp by the window.

(*watches him—crosses to him*)

Why do you hesitate? A signal? How can you be so suspicious! You act as if I were a spy.

You do not love me. (t*hrows herself back on the chaise longue. Her arms above her head*) No, you must not touch me if you cannot trust me.

How short a memory you have! You cannot remember Paris in the spring, now that it is autumn. How like a man! (*as he comes close above her*) Ah you do remember. (*Running her hand over his head*) If we could live those days again! (*Pushing him away*) But no, I must not keep you. You have a mission to execute. You must deliver those papers to the Russian embassy. You do not love me enuf to trust me with them.

(*getting up from sofa*) I must leave you. I am so tired. (*Turning back*) All right—then—just one kiss before goodnight.

(*A long kiss learning further and further back—right hand drawing papers from his inside pocket. Puts papers in her own bosom*) And now I tank (?) I go home!

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[75] An oft-repeated epithet with unclear origins. Perhaps the "accolade" evolved from the publicity materials associated with the film *The Devil's Daughter* (1915), which called Bara, "The Wickedest Woman in the World." The connection between Bara's sensuality, beauty, and evil character are hardly subtle.

[76] Mae West (1893-1950), iconic American stage and film actress and Sands' consummate impersonation. Sands even had the same birth and death years as West.

[77] Another frequent quotation with unknown origins. Possibly related to West's role in *She Done Him Wrong* (1933)?

[78] Sands appears to have devised the following scene, although the character types and scenario would have been familiar to movie audiences. Ironically, Spaniard spy Juan Pujol García (1912-88) adopted the codename "Garbo" during World War II. García had many successes, such as participating in the mission to mislead Germany regarding the Normandy landing, and in smuggling Danish physicist Neils Bohr to America to participate in the Manhattan Project. Also, urban legends exist about Greta Garbo's possible clandestine activities during the war.

[79] Literally "long chair," an upholstered chair-shaped sofa long enough to support the legs, though unlike a chair, a chaise longue usually has a long arm only on one side.

(*Swings off*)

Curtain.

Go to dressing-table. Remove Garbo wig & cape. Put on long black wig for

Theda Bara
To Massenet's "Élégie"[80]

T.B. [Theda Bara] slinks on to the stage

Crosses to left pantherlike—writhing. Wiggles body. Goo-goo eyes. Hands outline figure.

Pantomiming with likes [?] "Let me look into your eyes"—Hands up to his face—long look—Draws away panting. Hands on heart.

"Your eyes eyes are so bright—Turn out that lamp"—pointing to the right and indicating "turning out" with a gesture.

Follows him with her eyes, gloating as he does her bidding. Crosses stage, pantherlike, after him. Pulls hair around her throat. Rolls eyes. Turns slowly exposing her bare back. Rotates her shoulders. Swings back. Arms around him. "Give me the paper"—Draws back. Terrific reaction. What! You refuse? Tears hair—Beats chest—writhes—heaves –

"You do not love me". Swings over to couch—leaning over end on elbows. Look up at him—hands clasped under chin.

Stretches arms out to him.

He comes back of couch. She pulls him down to her in a strangling embrace.

Arm thrown back.

Sits up—still pawing him—throws him back on pillow—at the other end. On top of him. Smothers him with kisses –

Draws back—"Now, give me the papers"—You refuse?

Pounce on him—hands at throat. Seizes pillows and smothers him.

Draws back and looks at him—Gloats—Listens to his heart—(*To audience*) "He's dead" (*triumphantly*) Fishes in his pocket and draws out the papers—Holds them up in triumph
"The papers" (To audience)
Put them in her bosom—Rises running her hands thru and holding up the long strands of her coal black hair.

Take off wig, black lines under eyes—

Put on blonde wig, diamond jewelry for

Mae West

Swings across to center with suggestive eyebrow lift—

[80] Op.10 Nº 5. Jules Massenet (1842-1912) composed the *Élégie* in 1866 for piano, though the tune became one of the most popular songs of the end of the nineteenth century and quickly proliferated across arrangements.

What's the matter baby? Don't you trust me? Well, hundreds have.

Let's see what color eyes you got? (*a long look. Hands smooth down over her body—a purr——mnnnnnnnnnnnn—*) Oh boy, with lamps like yours we don't need no light. Douse the glim[81] by the window!

(*crosses towards right*)
What's stopping' you? A signal? Don't be a dope. You know I'd never double-cross you. (*with a look at the chaise longue*)

Come over here on the chaste lounge. (*as she crosses to it*) It won't be long now. (*Sits—*) (*He sits by her*) Don't crowd me!

Well, maybe I ain't got no soul. Diamonds is my career.[82] Other guys give me diamonds and you won't come across with a bunch of lousy papers. Don't you like me a little?

(*Puts arm around his neck. Draws him down to her. Lies back. Sits up, straightening hair*). O.K. kid, you got me!

Jennie, bring this gentleman a drink—(*sotto voce*) (*and you know the kind I mean*)

You know you'r wastin' your talents in the diplomatic service. I could use you in my business. Why don't you come up and see me sometime?[83]

Oh thanks Jennie. (*takes drink & hands it to him*).

Here you are. No thanks. I'm a teetotaler. (*watching him take drink*)

Don't you feel well? Just lie down, make yourself at home.

O.K. Jennie he's passed out cold! That black baby sure can mix 'em.

Well, my dude rancher, I'll just transfer these papers to another chest (*She takes them from his vest and tucks them into her bosom*)

Jennie, peel me a grape!

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[81] "Candle" or "lantern."

[82] A reference to "Diamond Lil," West's smoldering 1928 Broadway hit that Sands parodied to great effect with the Grand Street Follies (see Chapter One).

[83] From West's film, *She Done Him Wrong* (1933). Contrary to its usual quotation, the line was actually, 'Why don't you come up sometime and see me?...Come on up, I'll tell your fortune."

# *Tricks of the Acting Trade* (1940)[1]

Tricks of the Acting Trade
2nd Version

The outstanding stars on Broadway this season have been Ethel Barrymore, Katherine Hepburn, Helen Hayes, Tallulah Bankhead and Gertrude Lawrence. A combination of five more utterly different personalities, backgrounds, and acting methods would be hard to find. I propose to discuss these differences with you from the point of view of an impersonator—and then do an impersonation of each of them.

In order to do an impersonation I have always found it necessary not only to observe what an actress does, but to try to understand why she does it. Any good mimic can imitate vocal tones and copy gestures and mannerisms, but it is my contention that impersonation in the fullest meaning of the term involves capturing something of the actor's personal quality and then making a comment on it.

This process requires acute observation of an actresses' physical attributes, and not only a complete awareness of all her acting effects but an analysis of how she produces them, plus some understanding of her background and personal qualifications.

If any of you who aren't really artists have ever tried to draw or paint I'm sure you must have shared my experience of discovering that altho' you couldn't express in

THE RADCLIFFE COLLEGE CLUB
presents
DOROTHY SANDS
in
"TRICKS OF THE ACTING TRADE"
with impersonations of
ETHEL BARRYMORE
KATHERINE HEPBURN
HELEN HAYES
INTERMISSION
TALLULAH BANKHEAD
GERTRUE LAWRENCE

The proceeds of this entertainment are for the Radcliffe Regional Scholarship Fund.
May 18, 1941

[1] Dorothy Sands, *Tricks of the Acting Trade (1940)*, in "Notebook 1: 'Original Copies of my two one-woman shows: 'Styles in Acting,' 1932 and 'Our Stage and Stars or American Theatre Highlights' 1938," *Dorothy Sands papers, circa* 1932-1977, Box 1, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

line or color what you saw as you scrutinized a scene or object, you suddenly began to observe all sorts of details, variations in shapes and colors and lights and shadows that you had never noticed before, altho' it may have been a very familiar object. So I tho't you might find it an amusing and illuminating experience to visit beside me at my easel and look at these actresses from the point of view of trying to reproduce their voices, mannerisms, gestures and personalities. Then I shall show you the finished portrait in my impression which I hope will embody these observations and express my individual reaction to them.

And, may I say, in passing, that I have never been able to impersonate anyone for whom I haven't a certain respect and admiration. There is no fun in exploring a personality that doesn't intrigue you.

I begin with Ethel Barrymore and she takes precedence because she has more theatrical blue-blood in her veins than any other woman star in America. She was the princess and is now the Queen of a Royal Theater House—and this begins the 40th year of her stardom.

No fairy-tale princess ever had more fairy god-mothers bring more gifts to her cradle than Ethel Barrymore. They bestowed upon her a plethora of talents, music, art and acting. They endowed her with Intelligence and Beauty, a mellifluous haunting Voice, Grace and Distinction, Magnetism and Charm.

From her maternal grandmother, Mrs. John Drew, she might also have inherited a propensity for hard work; for that remarkable lady not only managed the Arch Street Theater in Philadelphia, but she played 42 roles a season. By the time she was 50 she had played 1,000 roles. But with this Drew blood was mixed that of the fascinating, handsome Maurice Barrymore (brilliant, charming, delightful but intemperate and unbalanced.

It was Mrs. Drew who first took her only granddaughter in hand and started her on her acting career by putting her into a production of "The Rivals" at the age of thirteen. She acted in several plays with her uncle, John Drew, and at nineteen became a star in the role of Madame Trentoni in "Captain Jinks" by Clyde Fitch. That was in 1901. From that day to this, thru a long and brilliant career, marked, of course by the vicissitudes that everyone in the theater must expect, she has captivated a large and devoted public to whom she will always be "The First Lady of the Theater".

Mention her name and I warrant you think of two things her beauty and her voice. That voice consists of a somewhat breathy, covered tone with a haunting, singing quality that is most alluring. Altho' occasionally Miss Barrymore blurs and smothers vowels and consonants under it so that one hears only agreeable murmurs signifying nothing.

A handkerchief has almost become part of her anatomy for she always used on to make her comedy points by putting it up to her mouth as she gave a coyish, upward glance. Of late, since she has been playing character parts she has discarded the handkership trick. But she has taken full advantage of the greater liberties her old ladies have offered her by giving her audience deliberate nods as signals for a laugh—which of course, they always take. It is undoubtedly exactly the way her

grandmother, Mrs. Drew, played to her audience, rather than to the other actors in the scene with her. All the old stars used to do that. Booth, Barrett, Modjeska travelled about from town to town playing their great roles with resident stock companies and requesting only that the supporting actors feed them their cues and keep out of their way in the center of the stage—and to some extent Miss Barrymore has carried on this tradition.

A family characteristic, familiar also in her brothers Lionel and John, is a sudden popping of the eyes after closing them for several seconds, a sort of wild stare and a mad, frenzied expression. She used this to good purpose in her portrayal of the fey old character she played this winter.

Last year she played a woman of 101 in "White Oaks". This year she knocked off four years and became a gay girl of 97 in "The Farm of Three Echoes" by Noel Langley. The scene is laid on a South-African farm. The story is about a gruesome family named Garart whose men beat up their women and whose women neatly retaliate by murdering their men. The house is filled with ghosts.

The old grandmother, Oomah, has murdered her husband—whose name, believe it or not, was Oopah, by loading his gun before he cleaned it. She has unpleasant premonitions that either Satan or her murdered husband is coming to get her. Her mind continually wanders between the Boer War in which 8 of her sons were killed, and the airplanes that now fly over the farm on the mail routes.

Miss Barrymore plays the part with practically no make-up except a white wig parted in the middle. And "going on 98" she gets around as spry as a cricket.

Please picture her sitting by the fire-place in the old cabin, dressed in a plain black dress, a little shawl about her shoulders. Her daughter-in-law is in the room with her. She has just murdered her husband, Oomah's youngest son, Isaac, but cutting the girth-strap of his saddle so that he was thrown from his horse and killed. Later in the scene, Ian, the grandson, enters suddenly.

"Farm of Three Echoes"

Oomah sitting by the fireplace, draws her shawl about her. Suddenly turns to daughter.

Well, what would I be doing up in the attic this afternoon? Jan had been up in my coffin. I heard him.

It's watered silk the lining is—Eleven shillings a yard it cost.

I know you laugh at me behind your hands because I sleep in my coffin in the afternoons.

Nine sons I gave Oopah. There should have been eleven with the two born dead the night of the rebellion. Once they took my to see Gam [?] Paul. He rode a white horse and wore a high hat like the Predican's. [?]

Thirty-nine years I've had it and Jan put his feet all over it.

Eight of my sons the war took. And now they fight from the sky. Two at a time they come and eight, they say, in the big ones.

That's not so. The war hasn't been over thirty years.

What's that? Oh, no, it's not the wind. It's Satan come to claim his own. Satan rode out last night gathering in his own. He same to that door. They didn't believe me. But I know –

It's a pity Isaac dying the same way as the foal. How long are you keeping him down in the shed? You think I don't know you want to steal my coffin to bury Isaac in. well, you won't get it! I've had my coffin for thirty-nine years. Oopah gave it to me to make up for the two born dead the night of the rebellion. Nine sons I gave Oopah. Isaac, the youngest, was born under a wagon out on the elder [?] sixty years ago.

Listen, who's there? yes, there is. It's Oopah. He's coming after me. There's a tear in the lining of my coffin and it's a judgment. It was natered [?] silk—My time is coming. I don't want to go. Oopah will be waiting. The Gerart men never made their women happy in this world it's unlikely they'll do it in the next. Oopah shot himself while cleaning his gun. He didn't know I'd loaded it.

Now they come from the sky two at a time and eight in the big ones.

Who opened the door? Yes, they did. It's shut now because they're walking around in the room. It's Oopah. I hear him. He's come up the stairs to keep over the coffin at me. He looked at me with his eyes after I'd killed him. You'd think they'd have closed but they didn't, they just kept looking at me till they put pennies on them. I've opened my eyes in the night and seen him peering at me over the edge of my coffin. Don't tell him I'm here! Yes, he is. I see him. He's in this room. Now he's going to the door. His hand's on the latch!

Don't let him in—it's Satan! (as Jan enters) Jan! is that you. You ought to be ashamed of yourself coming in like that and frightening your mother.

I want my grew lace shawl. I'll go get it.

I'm going up in the attic and lie down in my coffin!

As a contrast we turn to the youngest of the stars, Katherine Hepburn. When I saw Jane Cowl in "Art and Mrs. Bottle" several years ago I was struck by the refreshing quality of the girl who played her daughter. She was very young, and modern and streamlined. She was vivid. She evidently had breeding. She had a directness that was almost brusque and somewhat audacious. She had an arresting personality. She made you stop, look and listen. She was different. All qualities that would indicate that she was good theater material & might well go places. She went them fast than she herself or anyone else c'd [could] have guessed at that time, for after a few minor roles, and one lead in "The Warrior's Husband" she was whisked out to Hollywood. An astute agent made exorbitant demands, and the star-building process with all its publicity stunts and fanfare was on.

Then she had the great good fortune to be cast in one of those destiny-making roles, the daughter in Clemence Dane's "Bill of Divorcement." It was the same part that had given another Katharine—Cornell—her first impetus towards stardom on the stage and it worked with equal potency for Katherine Hepburn on the screen. They tried to turn her into an American Garbo and glamor girl in "Christopher Strong"—but that was not her métier. But in "Morning Glory" and as "Joe" in "Little Women"

she found congenial roles which suited her particular talents in which she could feature her fresh, forthright personality.

She made one unhappy attempt to return to the stage in a part for which she was ill-suited and not equipped, but last year Philip Barry wrote a play around her personality in which she has scored a tremendous success.

As we study Miss Hepburn in "The Philadelphia Story" the first thing we note is the way she uses her body. Her body as a whole has the freedom of movement of an athletic girl who golfs and rides. She takes enormous swooping strides with a low knee bend as she takes off, and often rises on her toes at the end of a stage cross. Her torso is rigid from the waist up.

Her shoulders are tensed and her arms hang stiffly front.

We observe that she does not relate her body to her emotions, but suddenly strikes picturesque attitudes—as if at a camera man's command. When she is greatly moved she clenches her hands in a claw-like fashion and tenses her arms up to her elbows holding them akimbo.

She holds her head proudly high and tosses back her lovely hair. Her nice blue eyes light up or brim over with tears with equal facility. The corner of her generous mouth turn up or down, her lower lip trembles—but the space between the eyes and mouth remains immobile.

Her voice changes pitch occasionally. She speaks in high tones and low ones—but she has no variations of inflections. She speaks absolutely on one monotonous level, always violently attacking the beginning of each sentence and letting her voice rise at the end of it in unvaried rhythm.

Now to all these physical details wit the help of your imagination I must try to add the excitement of her personality and that poignant youthful quality that colors them as I try to play her in this tailor-made role of Tracy Lord Dexter.

I'm going to play excerpts from the second act scene in "Philadelphia Story" where Tracy has a talk with her brother Sandy. It's on the porch the night before she is to be married to George Kittredge. Her first marriage was a failure and ended in divorce. While Sandy and Tracy are talking Mike Connors enters. He is the special writer from the magazine, "Destiny", who has come to Tracy's wedding to get material for his article on social life in Philadelphia.

Tracy has been pretty much upset by her Father's accusations of her failure as a daughter, and her ex-husband's similar criticisms of her as a wife—and resentfully and defiantly, started to drink champagne that her brother Sandy warns her to "Lay off—he thinks she's had enough for her own good.

Will you try to visualize Miss Hepburn in that beautiful vermilion cloak of her white evening gown as she disregards her brother's warning takes another glass of champagne?

"The Philadelphia Story"
Act II.

Did you enjoy the party? I suppose that's a line out of your article on Philadelphia society. "The prettiest sight in this fine pretty world is the Privileged Class enjoying its privileges". (goes & sits)

You're the worst kind of a snob there is, an intellectual snob. You've made up your mind awful young, it seems to me. The time to make up your mind about people is never.

Oh you think I'm quite a girl, do you? Thank you, Professor, I don't think I'm exceptional. I know any number like me. You ought to get around more. You're against the upper classes aren't you? You're so much thought & so little feeling, Professor.

Yes, you am, are you!

Your damned intolerance infuriates me. I should think of all people, a writer would need tolerance. The fact is, you can't be a first-rate writer or a first-rate human being until you learn to have some small regard for—(Suddenly she stops—remembering his question. She turns from him. Runs over right) Aren't the geraniums pretty, Professor? Is it not a handsome day that beings? I feel too delicious! I feel simply elegant!

Well, Professor, may I go out? Oh—telling me I'm magnificent makes me self-conscious again—I—it's funny (Bow head—run right) No—don't touch me—all of a sudden I've got the shakes. I'm afraid it's love—it mustn't be. We're out of our minds—

Quick they're coming—it's, it's not far to the pool. Oh, it's as if my insteps were melting away—what is it? Have I got feet of clay or something? I feel so small all at once. Put me in your pocket, Mike—(they run off)

One of the most difficulty actresses on our stage to impersonate is Helen Hayes because she creates a role by absorbing a character and projecting herself into it. She does not appliqué a characterization on to her own particular mannerisms. She thinks in terms of the person she is supposed to be playing. She gets an impression before she attempts expression with the result that I have never seen her make a move that was out of character or speak a line that wasn't honestly motivated.

Some of you may have read Miss Hayes's mother's story of her daughter's life in the form of letters written to her granddaughter. It is a revealing account of the career of her gifted daughter; the story of a small child with a rare theater instinct being managed by a "stage mother" with an equally good business one. And as in the case of Lotta and Elsie Janis and Sylvia Sidney and in many others it has proved to be a star-making combination.

If you have seen Miss Hayes off the stage you know she is a rather mousey little person, not really pretty, no one you would ever pick out in a crowd and in no way scintillating. And yet this is the actress who has been able to create the most queenly Queens, who physically, totally unlike people's conception of "Mary, Queen of Scots" by the sheer force of her own creative imagination and theater magic that is hers.

I am going to try to play a scene from "What Every Woman Knows" by Sir James Barrie which she acted in the movies as well as on the stage. As she played Maggie Wylie we observe Miss Hayes' characteristic walk, a sort of little prance with the weight thrown forward on the balls of the feet. She uses abrupt, swift little gestures mostly from the elbows. Often her hand goes to her face, a finger to her

mouth. Always her eyes register the thought behind the line. She often raises her eyebrows as she listens and bites her lip when puzzled or distressed.

In this scene Maggie Wylie goes [pages missing]

"What Every Woman Knows" [pages missing]

No 2 actresses could be more unlike than Helen Hayes and Tallulah Bankhead, for while Miss Hayes only transforms herself into an actress on the stage Miss Bankhead acts just as hard off the stage as on. (She continually puts on acts in and out of the theater) and constantly spills out of her dynamic energy (theatricalizing herself in every situation). Some interviewers once asked her if she minded being called "dynamic", and she answered, "not at all." It was positively pleasant after some of the other things she'd been called.

The beginning of her career in the Broadway theater was not particularly auspicious, but she had an opportunity to go to London to play with Gerald du Maurier—and practically overnight became a sensation. Her sultry, emotional, flamboyant personality drove the London gallery gods into rapturous frenzies, and for nearly ten years she had fabulous successes in such plays as "They Knew What They Wanted", "The Green Hat" and "The Cardboard Lover" and "Camille". Then in 1932 she returned to America to eight years of mediocre plays and poorer (movies) pictures.

It is a matter of great theatrical rejoicing that, at least, in "The Little Foxes" by Lillian Hellman she has found a play worthy of her talents in which she is giving a superb performance in a most exacting role.

Next to her vibrant personality, Miss Bankhead's voice is her outstanding attribute. It is a deep-chested, husky, breathy instrument with occasional breaks and cracks—and in this part she employs the whole range of volume from whispers to yells. Her laugh is an incredible explosion of loud guffaws. She has a chronic cough.

Curiously enuf, she hasn't adapted her posture to her Victorian costumes. Her shoulders droop and her back curves and she slumps in the middle in the lines of the old debutante slouch. The corners of her mouth likewise droop. She has a trick of continually closing her eyes very tight and then rolling them up, and she blinks frequently.

As Regina Giddens in "The Little Foxes" she is depicting a hard, heartless, avaricious Southern woman and she plays her to the hilt.

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Lastly, we come to the most versatile of all these luminaries. Gertrude Lawrence is fascinating because she possesses so much of the real essence of the theater & her gifts are so varied. Her career has been most picturesque, her drudgery—most dreary.

Her parents were strolling players touring the British provinces. After travelling all night in a second-class coach they would arrive at some tiny village early in the morning. There they would play on a stage that was literally "The boards", boards laid across saw horses, and at ten in the morning give a matinée for miners or weavers.

Her father, true to the traditions of minstrels, would go on a spree Saturday night and be fired next day. "Little Gertie" would be sent back to London, and, if her mother was on tour somewhere else, would go to the "Cat's Home", endowed home for professional children.

Her father had been a chorister in Westminster Abbey before he took up minstrelsy, and her mother came from an aristocratic Irish family who disinherited her when she married an actor.

When she was six "Little Gertie" was selling programs in [?]cial theaters. She made her debut as a child actor in London in 1908 in a production in which Noel Coward also played. She studied at Italia Conti's Dramatic Academy, and she played, dance, and sang in pantomimes, cabarets, vaudeville, musical comedies and reviews till an American vaudeville actor who had seen her in the provinces she got a three-year contract with—Charles, beginning at #16 a week.

In 1924 she came to New York with Jaik Cuchanan and Beatrice Lillie a Charlot's Revue and from that time on she has played more in America than England.

No one on our stage has such an extensive acting vocabulary. She can dance, she can sing, she can act comedy or tragedy. Her body responds with rhythmic grace to every mood, and her voice registers the entire gamut of emotions with complete facility.

The moment she attacks a part she instinctively characterizes it and brims over with ideas for expressing it. At her very first rehearsal of a play she gives a performance. Her problem is to select the best out of the manifold ideas that pour out of her.

Gertrude Lawrence says of herself that her "versatility was born of the necessity to keep at work, and whatever she has achieved is the result of hard schooling, bitter and varied experience and severe criticism."

As we watch Miss Lawrence in order to do this final impersonation we see her in perpetual motion. There is one continuous stream of graceful movement. She walks, she runs, she dances, she spins about, she leans against a pillar, she extends her length on the floor, she sits on the arm of a chair, she stretches out on a sofa. Her arms and hands are equally active, flung out in wide gestures, fixing her hair, adjusting her clothes, arranging the furniture. Her facial expression likewise runs the gamut to accompany all this physical activity. She sticks out her lower lip, she pouts, she crinkles up her nose and squints her eyes to make comedy points. And her voice soars high and sinks low as she drags out vowels here and lips them there.

And so I finish with an impersonation of Miss Lawrence as Susan Trexler in "Susan and God" by Rachel Crothers.

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1940
Jan. 25. Mrs. Andrew Carnegie's 2nd and 91st St. NYC
Feb. 6. Women's Club, Glen Ridge, N.J.
May 18. Radcliffe Club—Baltimore, MD.

Please return to
Dorothy Sands
57 West 45th Street—Schuyler Apts.
New York City La4-7035

# Dorothy Sands' Roles

## *Filmography*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1966 | *Evening Primrose* (TV Movie) | Store Person |
| 1963 | *Route 66* (TV Series)<br>"Shadows of an Afternoon" | Mrs. Malcomb |
| | *Pygmalion* (TV Movie) | Mrs. Pearce |
| 1962 | *Naked City* (TV Series)<br>"Don't Knock it Till You've Tried It" | Mrs. Lewine |
| 1961 | *The Witness* (TV Series), "Shoeless Joe" | Cast |
| 1959 | *Decoy* (TV Series), "The Scapegoat" | Mrs. Boyer |
| 1951-59 | *Armstrong Circle Theatre* (TV Series)<br>"White Collar Bandit" (1959)<br>"Day Dreams" (1951)<br>"The Moment of Decision" (1951) | Carolyn Ferris |
| 1954-59 | *The United States Steel Hour* (TV Series)<br>"Family Happiness" (1959)<br>"Papa is All" (1954) | Tatanya's Friend |
| 1956 | *The Alcoa Hour* (TV Series)<br>"The Confidence Man" | Mrs. Crummit |
| 1955 | *The Goldbergs*, (TV Series)<br>"Dreams" | Mrs. Van Est |
| 1954-55 | *Studio One in Hollywood* (TV Series)<br>"The Voysey Inheritance" (1955)<br>"U.F.O." (1954) | <br>Mrs. Voysey<br>Mrs. Padott |
| 1954 | *The Road of Life* (TV Series) | Reggie Ellis |
| | *The Elgin Hour* (TV Series)<br>"Floodtide" | Angela Buck |
| | *Ponds Theater* (TV Series)<br>"Guest in the House" | Cast |
| 1953 | *The Man Behind the Badge* (TV Series),<br>"The Houston, Texas Story" | Grace Spencer |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1950-53 | *The Philco-Goodyear Television Playhouse* (TV Series) | |
| | "A Young Lady of Property" (1953) | Miss Martha Davenport |
| | "The Man Who Bought a Town" (1951) | Mrs. Bush |
| | "Incident at Golden's Creek" (1951) | Cast |
| | "The Vine that Grew on Fiftieth Street" (1950) | Cast |
| 1951 | *Kraft Theatre* (TV Series) | Mother |
| | "Ashes in the Wind" | |
| | "Old Doc" | |
| | "Only the Heart" | |
| | "The Best Years" | |
| | *Treasury Men in Action* (TV Series) | Cast |
| | "The Case of the Widow's Last Love" | |
| | *Robert Montgomery Presents* (TV Series) | Cast |
| | "The Young in Heart" | |
| 1950 | *The Trap* (TV Series) | Cast |
| | "Lonely Boy" | |
| 1949 | *Actor's Studio* (TV Series) | Cast |
| | "Country Full of Swedes" | |
| | *Suspense* (TV Series) | Clara |
| | "Suspicion" | |
| 1947 | *United States Steel Presents* (TV Series) | |
| | "Saturday's Children" | Mrs. Barrows |
| | "The Wisdom Tooth" | Grandman |
| 1931 | *Opening Night* (Short) | Mrs. Walter Pendleton |

## *Live Theater—New York*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1972 | *Right You Are (If You Think So)* | Signora Frola | Roundabout Theater |
| 1970 | *Paris is Out!* | Hattie Fields | Brooks Atkinson Theatre |
| 1969 | *Come Summer* | Mrs. Meserve | Lunt-Fontanne Theatre |
| 1966 | *Phedre* | Oenone (replacement) | Greenwich Mews Theatre |
| 1964 | *My Fair Lady* (Revival) | Mrs. Pearce | City Center of Music & Drama |
| 1963 | *Once for the Asking* | Mrs. Goolsby | Booth Theatre |
| | *The Green Bird* (dir Giovanni Poli) | Targaliona | |
| 1959 | *Moonbirds* | Mrs. Bobignot | Cort Theatre |
| 1958 | *The Family Reunion* | Ivy | Phoenix Theatre |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1957 | *Mary Stuart* (Revival) | Hannah Kennedy | Phoenix Theatre |
| | *The First Gentlemen* | Miss Cornelia Knight | Belasco Theatre |
| 1954-55 | *Quadrille* | Octavia, Countess of Bonnington | Coronet Theatre |
| 1953 | *Misalliance* (Revival) | Mrs. Tarleton | Ethel Barrymore Theatre |
| 1950 | *The Cellar and the Well* | Maud Mayo | ANTA Playhouse |
| 1946 | *A Joy Forever* | Tina | Biltmore Theatre |
| 1943-44 | *Tomorrow the World* | Jesse Frame | Ethel Barrymore Theatre |
| 1942 | *All the Comforts of Home* | Josephine Bender | Longacre Theatre |
| | *Papa is All* | Mrs. Yoder | Guild Theatre |
| 1933 | *Our Stage and Stars* | Solo Performance | Little Theatre |
| 1932 | *Styles in Acting* | Solo Performance | Booth Theatre |
| 1931 | *Rock Me, Julie* | Winifred Satterlee Dexter | Royale Theatre |
| 1929-30 | *Many a Slip* | Emily Coster | Little Theatre |
| | *Half Gods* | Helena Grey | Plymouth Theatre |
| 1929 | *The Seagull* (Revival) | Madame Arkadina | Comedy Theatre |
| 1928 | *The Grand Street Follies* | Cast and Lead | Booth Theatre |
| 1927 | *The Stairs* | Clothilde | Bijou Theatre |
| | *The Grand Street Follies* | Cast and Lead | Neighborhood Playhouse, Little Theatre |
| | *Lyric Drama* | Isabella | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *Pinwheel* | The Jane | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| 1926-27 | *The Dybbuk* (Revival) | Frade | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| 1926 | *The Little Clay Cart* (Revival) | Radanika/ Vasantasena's Mother | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *The Lion Tamer* | Arabella | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *The Grand Street Follies* | Cast and Lead | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *The Romantic Young Lady* | Dona Barbarita | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *Mixed Bill* | Cast | Neighborhood Playhouse |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1925-26 | *The Dybbuk* | Frade | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| 1925 | *The Grand Street Follies* | Cast and Lead | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *The Critic* | Confidant, Mrs. Dangle, Lion | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| | *Exiles* | Beatrice Justice | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| 1924-25 | *The Little Clay Cart* | Radanika/Vasantasena's Mother | Neighborhood Playhouse |
| 1924 | *Catskill Dutch* | Nautcha Tenneych | Belmont Theatre |

## *Live Theater—Regional*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1965 | *Gigi* | Mme Alvarez | Paper Mill Playhouse (NJ) |
| | *The Trojan Women* | | Westport Playhouse (CT) |
| 1962 | *The Autumn Garden* | Mrs. Ellie | Charles Street Playhouse (MA) |
| 1963 | *The Moments of Love* | | Westport Playhouse (CT) |
| 1956 | *The Heiress* | | Paper Mill Playhouse (NJ) |
| 1955 | *The Skin of Our Teeth* | Fortune Teller (Stand-in for Helen Hayes) | American Repertory Co. Tour to Europe, S. America |
| | *The Miracle Worker* | The Aunt (Stand-in for Helen Hayes) | American Repertory Co. Tour to Europe, S. America |
| | *The Glass Menagerie* | Mrs. Anrobes (?), Amanda (Stand-in For Helen Hayes) | American Repertory C. Tour to Europe, S. America |
| 1952 | *Bell, Hook, and Candle* | Mrs. Holroyd | Great Northern Theatre (Chicago) |
| 1947 | *Papa is All* | Mrs. Yoder | Bucks County Playhouse (PA) |
| | *Arsenic and Old Lace* | Martha Brewster | Bucks County Playhouse (PA) |
| 1942 | *The Bat* | | The Cape Playhouse (MA) |
| 1939-41 | *Candida* | Prossy | National Tour |
| 1941 | *By Your Leave* | (Lead) | Ogunquit Playhouse (ME) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1941 | *The Vinegar Tree* | Laura Merrick | Lakemont Theater (OH) |
| 1942 | *The Bat* | | Cape Playhouse (MA) |
| 1939 | *Jeannie* | | Paper Mill Playhouse (NJ) |
| 1938 | *Rain from Heaven* | Phobe Eldridge | Lydia Mendelssohn Theater (MI) |
| | *The Alcestis* | Alcestis | Poet's Theater of Harvard (MA) |
| 1923 | *Children of the Moon* | Jane Atherton | National Tour |

## *Pre-Professional (Cambridge, MA) (incomplete)*

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1923 | *Catskill Dutch* | Nelia-Anne | 47 Workshop |
| | *Pirates of Paradise*<br>(By P.F. Reniers) | | 47 Workshop |
| | *Welcome to Our City*<br>(By Thomas Wolfe) | | 47 Workshop |
| 1922 | *Pastora*<br>(By Gertrude Thurber) | Dona Antonia<br>(Pastora Imperio?) | 47 Workshop |
| | *The Hard Heart*<br>(By M.G. Kister) | Mamere Flairy | 47 Workshop |
| 1921 | *Pastora* | Pastora | 47 Workshop |
| | *Miss Mercy* | Miss Mercy | 47 Workshop |
| | *A Punch for Judy* | Judy | 47 Workshop |
| | *The Mountain*<br>(by Thomas Wolfe) | Mrs. Routledge | 47 Workshop |
| | *Makers of Light*<br>(by Frederick Lansing Day) | | 47 Workshop |
| 1920 | *Torches* | Gismonda | 47 Workshop |
| | *The Governor's Wife*<br>By Jacinto Beneventi | Josefina | Harvard Dramatic Club,<br>Copley Theater (Boston),<br>Wellesley College |
| 1913 | *Molly Make-Believe*<br>By Eleanor Howard | | 47 Workshop |
| 1912 | *The Delectable Forest* [May] | | Radcliffe College Campus |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1912 | *Sisters*, [May]<br>By Alice Chase | | Brattle Hall<br>Harvard Unitarian Church |
| 1912 | *The Voice of the People* [Dec]<br>By David Carb | | Harvard Dramatic Club<br>(Brattle Hall) |
| 1907 | *Mrs. Jarley's Animated Dolls* | Mrs. Jarley | North Ave. Congregational Church |

## *Radio*

*Sands had a robust resume of radio plays and commercials –and also television commercials- records of which have not surfaced)

1949 The Cavalcade of America, "*South of Cape Horn*"

1947 *Unites States Steel Presents The Theatre Guild on the Air*

| | |
|---|---|
| "The First Year" | |
| "Saturday's Children" | Mrs. Gorlik |
| "The Wisdom Tooth" | Grandma |

1941 Great Plays, "*Robert E. Lee*" Governness

The Hungry Heart (Arlene Francies,)

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