

THE SHE-GALLANTS. [By George Granville, Lord Lansdowne.] Edition of 1696: Prologue to the She-Gallants, Spoke by Mr Betterton. Epilogue, Spoke by Mrs Bracegirdle. Bellamour – Betterton; Philabel – Hodgson; Frederick – Thurman; Sir Toby Cusifle – Underhill; Sir John Aery – Bowen; Vaunter – Dogget; Courtall – Bailie; Lady Dorimen – Mrs Barry; Angelica – Mrs Bracegirdle; Constantia – Mrs Bootell; Lucinda – Mrs Bowman; Plackett – Mrs Lee. Late December  
LIF

COMMENT. Betterton's Company. The date of the first performance is not known, but the fact that it was advertised in the *Post Boy*, 27-29 Feb. 1695/6 and entered in the *Term Catalogues*, February 1695/6, suggests that it was probably acted not later than January 1695/6. It may have appeared around the turn of the year. One song, "While Phillis does drink," set by John Eccles and sung by Coper; and another, "So well Corinna likes the joy," the composer not named but sung by Young Laroch, a Boy of seven, are in *Deliciae Musicae*, The First Book of the Second Volume, 1696.

Downes, *Roscius Anglicanus*, p. 45: A Comedy, wrote by Mr George Greenvil, when he was very Young; Extraordinary Witty, and well Acted; but offending the Ears of some Ladies who set up for Chastity, it made its Exit. *A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (1702), p. 20: And a good Comedy, tho it had the Misfortune to be ill receiv'd.

## January 1696

LOVE'S LAST SHIFT; or, The Fool in Fashion. [By Colley Cibber.] Edition of 1696: Prologue, By a Friend, Spoken by Mr Verbruggen. Epilogue, Spoken by Miss Cross, who Sung Cupid. Sir Will Wisewoud – Johnson; Loveless – Verbruggen; Sir Novelty Fashion – Cibber; Elder Worthy – Williams; Young Worthy – Horden; Snap – Penkethman; Sly – Bullock; Lawyer – Mills; Amanda – Mrs Rogers; Narcissa – Mrs Verbruggen; Hillaria – Mrs Cibber; Flareit – Mrs Kent; Woman to Amanda – Mrs Lucas. DL

COMMENT. Rich's Company. The date of the première is not known, but Cibber (see below) states that it was acted in January; the Dedication was signed 7 Feb. 1695/6, and the play was advertised in the *London Gazette*, No 3157, 10-13 Feb. 1695/6. Two songs were published separately: "Go home, unhappy wench," set by Francks and sung by Mrs Cross and the Boy (in *Thesaurus Musicus*, The Fifth Book, 1696) and "What an ungratefull devil moves you," set by Daniel Purcell (in *Deliciae Musicae*, The First Book of the Second Volume, 1696). A separately-printed sheet of the second song states that it was sung by "The Boy."

Cibber, *Apology*, I, 212-14: The next Year I produc'd the Comedy of *Love's last Shift*; yet the Difficulty of getting it to the Stage was not easily surmounted; for, at that time, as little was expected from me, as an Author, as had been from my Pretensions to be an Actor. However, Mr Southern, the Author of *Oroonoko*, having had the Patience to hear me read it to him, happened to like it so well that he immediately recommended it to the Patentees, and it was accordingly acted in January 1695 [i.e., 1695/6]. In this Play I gave myself the Part of Sir Novelty, which was thought a good Portrait of the Foppery then in fashion. Here, too, Mr Southern, though he had approv'd my Play, came into the common Diffidence of me as an Actor: For, when on the first Day of it I was standing, myself, to prompt the Prologue, he took me by the Hand and said, Young Man! I pronounce thy Play a good one; I will answer for its Success, if thou dost not spoil it by thy own Action. . . . I succeeded so well in both, that People seem'd at a loss which they should give the Preference to.

*A Comparison Between the Two Stages* (1702), p. 16: *Ramble*: Ay, marry, that Play was the Philosopher's Stone; I think it did wonders. *Sullen*: It did so, and very deservedly; there being few Comedies that came up to 't for purity of Plot,

- DL Manners and Moral: It's often acted now a daies, and by the help of the Author's own good action, it pleases to this Day.
- Monday 13 YB CONCERT. Mr Purcel's Farewel, set by Mr Finger, with other variety of Musick (*Post Boy*, 9 Jan. 1695/6).
- Tuesday 21 COMMENT. Robert Shirley to Thomas Coke, Chartly, 21 Jan. 1695/6: I must agree with you that Wit and Sense seem this winter to have suffered an eclipse, and the dramatic writers more especially have showed how little they consulted either. I do assure you, I have not of late met with more of both than in your ingenious diverting letter to me, so that I am satisfied Wit is not retired out of town, but has only forsaken the stage. We that live in these northern parts are forced to range over fields and woods to find subjects of diversion, for in the frozen season of the year, there is nothing that is more so in the country than conversation. In my last ramble, either my own innate fancy, or the aversion I had to see such plays wrote in English as would hardly bear the reading, made me imagine I met with one of the Muses that had left the town, and by her discourse seemed to be Patroness of Dramatic Poetry. You know, Sir, to meet with a Nymph in the desert was no rarity in some countries heretofore, but yet I vow and swear between us, I asked her the occasion of her leaving the town, to which she made this sudden answer:

*Neglected Wit is silent at a time  
When puns, or bombast, stuff each doggrill rhyme.  
In comic strain when they'd describe a fool,  
The author proves the only ridicule.  
In tragic verse while others fain would boast,  
Landing some thousand Romans on the coast,  
In what they would express themselves are lost,  
Make Romans cowards, and make English great,  
And make Bonduca valiant, to be beat.  
Would Congreve or would Blackmoor now engage,  
They might with manly thoughts reform the stage:*

. . . As for Mr Southern's play, I have not yet seen it, so that I cannot at present give you my thoughts on it (HMC, 12th Report, Appendix, Part II, Cowper MSS., II, 359-60).

*Thursday 30*

*A FAST DAY FOR THE MARTYRDOM OF CHARLES I*

## February 1696

- LIF THE HUSBAND HIS OWN CUCKOLD. [By John Dryden Jr.] Edition of 1696: Prologue, Written by Mr Congreve, Spoken by Mr Betterton. No actors' names. Epilogue, Spoken by Mrs Bracegirdle, Written by Mr Dryden.
- COMMENT. Betterton's Company. The date of the première is not known. The Dedication to the play, written in Rome, is dated 20 Aug. 1695 N.S., and the advertisement of the play in the *London Gazette*, No 3200, 9-13 July 1696, represent the limits on its production. In a letter, dated (probably) November 1695, Dryden refers to the forthcoming appearance of his son's play, and on 26 May 1696 he negotiates with Tonson for its publication (*Letters of John Dryden*, pp. 79, 82). Probably the play appeared early in 1696, and certainly not much later than April 1696.
- John Barnard, "The Dates of Six Dryden Letters," *Philological Quarterly*, XLII (1963), 400-401, believes that Dryden's letter was written ca. 26 May 1695 and that the play was probably acted in late 1695.