

(International Federation for Theatre Research, 1969).

Griffen. *See* GRIFFIN.

Griffes, Mr [*fl.* 1791]. *See* GRIFFITHS, JOHN.

Griffin. *See also* GRIFFITH and GRIFFITHS.

Griffin, Mr [*fl.* 1729]. *See* GRIFFITH, THOMAS.

Griffin, Mr [*fl.* 1751? 1755?], *puppeteer*.

A Mr Griffin, of Tyburn Road, was the proprietor of a puppet show during the 1750s, and presumably was the person who started young Nancy Dawson (d. 1767) on her dancing career. The story is told that one day Griffin sent "Jack Pudding" into the streets of St Giles's to announce that *Jane Shore*, complete with the humors of Punch and Joan, would be presented at the King's Head Tavern in Oxford Market. Jack Pudding returned with Nancy, whom he had picked up in the streets. During the performance Griffin stole away behind the scenes with her, and Jack revealed them to Griffin's wife, who attacked them. Griffin left his wife and took Nancy with him. The incident supposedly took place when Nancy was 16, either in 1751 or 1755, depending on which year of birth for Nancy is correct, if either.

Griffin, Mr [*fl.* 1767–1796?], *actor, singer*.

A Mr Griffin who had played small parts and singing roles at Bath and Bristol from as early as 1767 acted Hastings in *She Stoops to Conquer* at the Haymarket Theatre on 1 July 1778. The *Morning Chronicle* of the following day said "Mr. Griffin is a good personable figure, & though not quite so handsome a man, puts us in mind of Mr. Brereton. . . . He shews some want of judgment." During his summer engagement at the Haymarket, Griffin also acted Mervin in *The Maid of the Mill*, Drusius in *Bonduca*, Clarin in *The Gypsies*, and Mat o' the Mint in *The Beggar's Opera*. After the mainpiece on 21 August 1778 he sang a hunting song.

In 1778 Griffin also served in Joseph Glassington's strolling troupe and played at Stourbridge Fair in Cambridge. In 1779 and 1780 he was again in Bristol, and in 1781–82 he sang at Portsmouth. A clipping at the Guildhall dated 3 September 1789 stated that a Mr "Griffen" was one of the performers in *The Recruiting Serjeant* when it was presented at a theatre at the first gateway from Hosier Lane at Bartholomew Fair. Perhaps our man was the Griffin who acted at Drogheda in Ireland in August 1796.

The Master Griffin who played children's roles at Bristol in 1780–81 was probably our subject's son.

Griffin, Mrs [*fl.* 1729]. *See* GRIFFITH, MRS THOMAS THE FIRST.

Griffin, Benjamin 1680?–1740, *actor, singer, playwright*.

If we can believe a notice in the Burney Collection at the British Museum, Benjamin Griffin was born in 1680 in Oxnead, Norfolk, the son of the Reverend Benjamin Griffin, Rector of Buxton and Oxnead and Chaplain to Sir Robert Paston, Earl of Yarmouth. Most of those details are very likely true, though the birthdate may be a decade too early. Young Benjamin was educated at the Free School of North Walsham in Norfolk, after which his father apprenticed him to a glazier in Norwich. Not caring for that trade, the story goes, Benjamin ran off with a troupe of strolling players, the Duke of Norfolk's Company; they performed at the Duke's palace in Norwich during the 1711–12 season. If Benjamin left his apprenticeship at that time, he surely must have been born later

than 1680—or he began his apprenticeship very late.

In the summer of 1714 Griffin acted with the Duke of Southampton and Cleaveland's Servants at Richmond. The group offered his first play, *Injured Virtue*, an adaptation of Dekker and Massinger's *The Virgin Martyr*. The play was repeated by the troupe at the King's Arms Tavern in Southwark on 1 November 1714, with Griffin playing Sapritius—his first recorded part. The play was published in 1715. *The History of the English Stage* (1741) had little good to say of the work or of Griffin's other attempts at playwriting: "By mistaking his Talents he attempted to commence Dramatic-Poet, by vamping up an old Play or 2 of *Massinger* and *Dekker* and scribbling a few Farces, all which met with the deserved Contempt of such Trifling Performances."

John Rich engaged Griffin at the new Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, where Griffin appeared in the first half of 1715 in four premieres: Sterling in *The Perplexed Couple* on 16 February, Ezekial Prim in *The City Ramble* on 2 June, Sir Arthur Addlepatte in his own *Love in a Sack* on 14 June, and Choleric in *The Doating Lovers* on 23 June. On 17 August he acted Sebastian in *The False Count*. In 1715 Griffin is said to have written, with Lewis Theobald, *The Complete Key to the last new Farce, the What-d'ye-Call-it* (by Gay). Griffin is also said to have been the author of what is now Egerton manuscript 2320 at the British Museum, a diary of plays acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields from September 1715 to June 1721, at Drury Lane from September 1721 to May 1733, at the Haymarket from September 1733 to March 1734, and at Drury Lane from March 1734 to November 1736. Griffin was, indeed, at those playhouses during those periods. The diary was continued by another hand beginning September 1737, when Griffin was in Rotterdam.

Under Rich at Lincoln's Inn Fields Griffin acted from 1715 to the end of the



Harvard Theatre Collection
 JOE MILLER, BENJAMIN GRIFFIN
 (in long wig), JOHN HARPER,
 THEOPHILUS CIBBER, MARY HERON
 and JOHN HIGHMORE
 detail from "The Stage Mutiny" by Laguerre

1720–21 season. Short and slight of build, according to Chetwood, Griffin established himself quickly as a low comedian, specializing in testy old men and skirts parts. Some of his roles at Lincoln's Inn Fields were Charino in *Love Makes a Man*, Sir William Wisewood in *Love's Last Shift*, Gerrard in *The Lucky Prodigal*, Mother Griffin in *The Woman's Revenge*, Scruple in *The Fair Quaker*, the Beggar in *The Royal Merchant*, Dorcas Guzzle in *The Cobler of Preston*, Don Lopez in his own *The Humours of*

Purgatory (premiered on 3 April 1716; published that year), Gripe in *The Woman Captain*, Tickletext in *The Feign'd Curtizans*, Fernando in *The Fatal Marriage*, Polonius in *Hamlet* (on 2 February 1717), Ogle in his own *The Masquerade* (premiered on 16 May 1717; published that year), Shylock in *The Jew of Venice*, Barnaby Muckland in *The Lady's Triumph*, Pierrot in *The Jealous Doctor*, Simon Pure in *A Bold Stroke for a Wife*,

Day in *The Committee*, Gomez in *The Spanish Fryar*, a Carrier in *I Henry IV*, Gripe in *The Busy Body*, a Witch in *Macbeth*, Dorante in *The Gamester*, Foresight in *Love for Love*, Alphonso in *The Pilgrim*, Sir John Indolent in his own *Whig and Tory* (premiered on 26 January 1720; published that year), Scrapeall in *The Squire of Alsatia*, Sir Hugh in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Sir Paul in *The Double Dealer*, and Nitt the Tailor in *Coriolanus*.

During that same period he put in an appearance at Bartholomew Fair: on 24 August 1719 he acted Signor Diego Fizziggo in the droll *The Constant Lovers*. The booth was that of the Widow Leigh and Griffin's comic partner at the theatre, William Bullock. For his benefit on All Fools Day in 1721 Griffin wrote to *Mist's Weekly Journal* asking for the kind of support the *Tatler* had always given the theatrical profession. Mist, for reasons that are now obscure, responded with a puff that offended someone, for *Appleby's Weekly Journal* on 17 June reported that "Mr Griffin of the New Play House has been under examination before the Committee for seditious Libels, on account of Mr. Mist's paper." The benefit, which featured Griffin as Alphonso in *The Pilgrim*, brought the actor a respectable £129 10s. 6d., presumably before house charges.

According to Griffin's "Humble Appeal to the Publick," published in the *Daily Post* on 11 June 1733, Griffin had worked before 1721 quite contentedly at Lincoln's Inn Fields under John Rich. That year, he said, he was approached by the elder Thurmond and by Shaw, spokesmen for the Drury Lane managers, asking him to change companies. Griffin at first refused, but Stede the prompter finally persuaded him to join the Drury Lane company. His contract there was for three years at a weekly wage of £4 and a benefit each year before 15 April with £40 house charges. He was assured of advancement. Then, just after Griffin moved to Drury Lane, the managers of both patent houses agreed not to allow actors to change companies without a private agreement; Griffin, like it or not, was trapped at Drury Lane. When his contract expired in 1724 he received a note from Castleman, the treasurer, offering him a renewal but at £3 weekly, a benefit in May, and £50 house charges at his benefit. Unable to return to Lincoln's Inn Fields, Griffin continued at Drury Lane at a reduced income until 1729. When Norris died, Griffin was raised to £4 weekly, but no change was made in his benefit arrangements. Suddenly, on 4 June 1733, he was discharged without notice or explanation.

All that must have rankled, yet Griffin's performance record shows that he appeared in a number of new and often very good roles during his stay at Drury Lane, and he kept many of his old parts. From September 1721 until the fall of 1733 Griffin tried such new characters as Abel in *The Committee*, Tribulation in *The Alchemist*, Gripus in *Amphitryon* (previously Norris's part), Manuel in *She Wou'd and She Wou'd Not*, Cimberton in *The Conscious Lovers*, Plausible in *The Plain Dealer*, the Doctor in *Apollo and Daphne*, Subtleman in *The Twin Rivals*, Calianax in *The Maid's Tragedy*, Taylor in *The Provok'd Wife*, Isander and Cleon in *Timon of Athens*, Sir William Freeman in *The Village Opera*, Aminadab Prim in *The Lover's Opera*, Silence in *2 Henry IV*, Mrs Fardingale in *The Funeral*, Justice Clack in *The Jovial Crew*, Trapland in *Love for Love*, the Surgeon in *The Relapse*, Sir Politick in *Volpone*, Busy in *Bartholomew Fair*, Scrub in *The Stratagem*, Sands in *Henry VIII*, Tipkin in *The Tender Husband*, Sir Oliver in *She Wou'd If She Cou'd*, Sir Toby in *The Comical Revenge*, Old Wilfull in *The Double Gallant*, Peachum in *The Beggar's Opera*, the Old Woman in *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*, and Lovegold in *The Miser*—one of his most popular roles.

Griffin of Drury Lane seems not to have been the Griffin who, with his wife, appeared

on 29 November 1729 at the Front Long Room next to the Haymarket Theatre with a group headed by Tony Aston. On that date that Mr Griffin acted Loveworth in *Tunbridge Walks*, and on 1 December he played Sullen in *The Stratagem*. Benjamin Griffin's schedule at Drury Lane, so far as the bills show, would have allowed him to appear in these pieces, but the roles seem not to be in his line, and so far as we know Benjamin Griffin never married. We take, the Griffin who acted with Aston to have been (perhaps) Thomas Griffith.

Though Griffin's roles at Drury Lane would suggest that he was prospering there, his complaints in 1733 show that he was not. Indeed, by the early 1730s the situation behind the scenes at Drury Lane was growing increasingly unstable; through death and retirement the management of the theatre was changing, and the years of relative peace and prosperity were at an end. Whether by his own choice or not, Griffin was not acting as frequently as before. *The Comedian* in 1732 said that there was not anyone who frequented Drury Lane who "does not wish that Griffin acted oftener than he does." In the spring of 1733 things came to a head. The management had fallen into the hands of Mary Wilks, Hester Booth, John Ellis, and John Highmore; Theophilus Cibber, the scapegrace son of Colley, had expected to inherit a share in the management when his father retired, but that was not to be. Disgruntled, and surrounded by many other Drury Lane performers who were unhappy, Theophilus petitioned the Lord Chamberlain. Griffin was one of Cibber's group of malcontents, and when the theatre managers discharged him on 4 June 1733, he wrote his *Humble Appeal*, describing his financial status at Drury Lane since 1721.

The managers tried to defend themselves by boasting that they had given Griffin a present of 10 guineas. Cibber, presumably with the cooperation of Griffin, brought out a windy rebuff which cited, among other things, Griffin's diligence. Griffin, Cibber said, was a very popular attraction and had played the taxing role of Lovegold in *The Miser* some 20 to 30 times during the previous season. In September 1733 Cibber led his followers to the Haymarket Theatre, leaving Drury Lane, with a much weakened company, in the hands of John Highmore.

Griffin played Lovegold on 23 August 1733 and Shallow in *Sir John Falstaff* on 4 September at a Bartholomew Fair booth which he operated in partnership with Cibber, Bullock, and Hallam. Then he joined Cibber's rebels at the Haymarket to appear as Trapland in *Love for Love* on 26 September. At the Haymarket between then and March 1734 Griffin tried such new roles as Sir Francis in *The Provok'd Husband*, Fondlewife in *The Old Bachelor*, Barnaby in *The Amorous Widow*, Roger in *The Scornful Lady*, and Sir Credulous in *The Mother in Law*. When Highmore capitulated, Cibber's players returned to Drury Lane, and on 12 March 1734 Griffin acted Sir Credulous there. For the rest of his career Griffin played at that house, trying, among other new roles, Butts in *Henry VIII*, Sir Jasper Fidget in *The Country Wife*, Moneytrap in *The Confederacy*, and Learchus in *Aesop*. Little is known of his activity outside the playhouse during the late 1730s, though he was in Rotterdam on 30 August 1737 for some reason. The trip seems not to have been extensive, however, for he was back at Drury Lane by 10 September.

The *Daily Advertiser* on 19 February 1740 reported that "Yesterday died of an Astmatick Disorder, at his Chambers in Clement's Inn, Mr Benjamin Griffin, a celebrated Comedian, belonging to Drury-Lane Theatre." A clipping at the British Museum claims Griffin was 60 years of age. He had acted right up to the end: on the previous 12 February he had appeared as Day in *The Committee*. The *Daily Post* lamented Griffin's death, calling him "a



Harvard Theatre Collection
 BENJAMIN GRIFFIN as Tribulation,
 and BENJAMIN JOHNSON as Ananias
 by van Bleeck

kind good natur'd worthy Friend, always ready to do good offices; a facetious companion and one whom everybody lov'd. By his death the whole Town will have an irreparable loss." On the following 4 March administration of the goods, chattels, and credits of Benjamin Griffin, late of the parish of St Clement Danes, bachelor, was granted to his sister and next of kin, Helen Dalton, widow.

About 1747 *A Clear Stage and No Favour* recalled that "While *Griffin* liv'd the *British Stage* cou'd boast,/ What *France* long since in her *Moliere* had lost." The prompter Chetwood in 1749 called Griffin "not only a good actor, but a pleasing poet." And Thomas Davies in his *Dramatic Miscellanies* (1784) said that Griffin and Ben Johnson

were much admired for their just representation of the canting puritanical preacher and his solemn deacon and botcher {in *The Alchemist*}; there was an affected softness in the former which was finely contrasted by the fanatical fury of the other.—Griffin's features seemed ready to be relaxed into a smile, while the stiff muscles and fierce eye of the other admitted of no suppleness or compliance. There is still to be seen a fine print of them in these characters, from a painting of Vanbleek; they are very striking resemblances of both comedians.

The Peter van Bleeck work referred to was completed in 1738 and is now in the Garrick Club. The artist engraved it in reverse in 1748. The reproduction of the engraving in Mander and Mitchenson's *Picture History of the British Stage* incorrectly identifies Johnson as playing Tribulation and Griffin as Ananias; the roles should be reversed. Benjamin Griffin was also pictured by John Laguerre in his satirical print, "The Stage Mutiny," which depicts Theophilus Cibber's revolt from Drury Lane in 1733. Griffin is shown wearing a huge wig and a large three-cornered hat.

Griffin, J. [fl. 1796], equestrian. See **GRIFFITHS, J.** [fl. 1772–1796].

Griffin, Philip [fl. 1670?–1708], actor.

A manuscript cast in a 1691 edition of *Julius Caesar* listed Philip Griffin in the role of Casca; the cast