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Sex, Death, Dickens, and the Early American Musical

*This article argues that the stage version of Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop*, adapted by John Brougham as *Little Nell and the Marchioness*, may be the first American book musical. Its enduring success was largely attributed to the performance of Lotta Crabtree in the dual roles from 1866 onwards. If the status of the play is justified, then it may require some scholarly re-visioning of the early history of the American musical. Laurence Senelick is Fletcher Professor of Drama and Oratory at Tufts University and a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. His translation of the letters of Konstantin Stanislavsky is about to be published by Routledge.*

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Dickens has always been catnip to playwrights. Even when his novels had not finished their serial publication, they were seized on by dramatic carpenters and refurbished for the stage, with abrupt endings tacked on. Not all his works, however, were equally popular or effective in the theatre. *The Old Curiosity Shop* first appeared on stage as a “burletta in two acts” by Edward Stirling at the Adelphi Theatre on 9 November 1840, and London did not see another version until 1853, when E. T. Smith’s adaptation at Drury Lane ran only one performance.¹ A similar lack of interest was evinced by managers in North America, where the fad for the novel was so great that New Yorkers met the ships from England carrying the latest installment with the shout, “Is Little Nell dead?” Even then no attempt was made to capitalise on this enthusiasm in the American playhouse.

It has been conjectured that the paucity of dramatic versions of *Curiosity Shop* was due to the death of its heroine, which did not accord with the conventional happy ending;² but, as we shall see, this was by no means a

handicap. More pertinently, there is no leading man in the traditional sense and consequently no romantic love interest. Also, the peregrinations of Nell and her grandfather across half of England would seem to pose a problem for pre-Brechtian dramaturgy.³ Yet *The Old Curiosity Shop* offers a number of features that should have been attractive to lessees and actors. A pathetic heroine in Nell, a cautionary figure in her gambling-addict grandfather (those early melodramas *The Gamester* and *Thirty Years in the Life of a Gambler* were still potent dramatic fare), a hissable villain in the dwarfish money-lender Quilp, and comic relief in the duo of the magniloquent Dick Swiveller and the stunted slavey he nicknames the Marchioness.

Eventually, *The Old Curiosity Shop* did enjoy a vibrant and perennial stage life in the form of a musical comedy. *Little Nell and the Marchioness*, which had its trial run in Boston in 1866, might even make the claim to being, if not the first American book musical, then a close runner-up. Julian Mates claims this honour for *The Archers* of 1766. A century goes by before the next candidate, G. L. Fox's *Humpty Dumpty* promoted by Gerald Bordman, but it has no cohesive story-line.⁴ Of the other claimants, E. E. Rice's *Evangeline* did not appear until 1874, N. Salsbury's *The Brook* not until 1879. *Little Nell* may lack a specially composed musical score, but it not only antedates its rivals, it offers the most coherent plot. Nor did its success quickly fizzle out, since it was regularly revived for nearly two decades. Neither variety nor minstrelsy, neither serious drama nor pure melodrama; not unalloyed burlesque, comedy, pantomime, extravaganza or farce, it deftly amalgamated elements of each.

Little Nell and the Marchioness had been confected deliberately as a star vehicle. Its author, the Dublin-born John Brougham (1814-1880) had, after an active career on the London stage, most prominently as Dazzle in the premiere of Boucicault's *London Assurance*, established himself in New York as a comic playwright. "The American Aristophanes," as grandiloquent journalists styled him, was an old hand at filleting Dickens: his dramatisations include *Dombey and Son*, in which he played the double role of Joe Bagstock and Jack Bunsby, *David Copperfield*, appearing in the juicy character part of Micawber, and *Bleak House*. Brougham was a dab hand at selecting a few salient episodes that would allow opportunity for actors to make effects. In *Little Nell* he created a sure-fire hit, as the title-page of the manuscript reads, "Expressly for Miss Lotta."

Lotta Crabtree (1847-1924) had made a fortune in gold as a juvenile entertainer touring the mining camps of the Far West and became the darling of San Francisco. Song, dance, banjo playing and a modicum of impersonation were the components of her act.⁵ At the age of seventeen, a young woman still adept at projecting cuteness, she made her New York debut at Niblo's Saloon on 1 June 1864 in a variety programme, as the Civil War still raged. What had made the

unskillful laugh now made the judicious grieve. With more sophisticated urban audiences and her own maturing charms, Lotta needed more effectively-fashioned scripts to maintain her popularity. A magnetic star in a book musical, adapted from the work of a famous author, with substantial supporting parts, in an elaborately staged production artfully integrating dancers, singers and specialty artists with recurrent displays of Lotta's talents: this was what Brougham provided her in *Little Nell and the Marchioness*. And to make a show of versatility, Lotta would play both of the contrasting title roles. In the words of the Polish actress Helena Modjeska, "She infused life in the parts she played and her realism was simply wonderful."⁶

Not every veteran theatre-goer shared this opinion. An English commentator on dramatic adaptations of Dickens, T. Edgar Pemberton, remarked in the 1880s, probably with Lotta in mind: "A pit-fall to some actresses has been a desire to display versatility of talent by 'doubling' the parts of The Marchioness, and Little Nell, and the result has always been disastrous to one or other of the two characters, and sometimes to both. Poor Nell, however, has generally been the greater sufferer."⁷

In Dickens's novel, Nell is always at the forefront. The Marchioness is something of an afterthought, the "small servant" not entering until Chapter 34, and not being christened the Marchioness for another 200 pages. As often happened in serial fiction, an auxiliary character gradually moves centre-stage as an unintended attraction when the public demonstrates its interest. It had already happened with Sam Weller in *The Pickwick Papers*, even to the degree of Dickens's reviving him in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, the framing story of *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Dickens quickly intuited the comic potential that lay in teaming the flamboyant Dick Swiveller with the starved and abused housemaid.

Brougham gave this coupling both a romantic patina and a musical accompaniment, again to suit Lotta's abilities. Her forte was not pathos, but exuberance, high spirits, ingenuousness seasoned with mischief. In the play, Dickens's situations and characters were made springboards for variety turns, with Swiveller as her partner in a double act. In Brougham's adaptation Act Three takes place at a fair in Highgate, which is not in the novel. He invents the character of Corkey Jack, a street minstrel who accompanies the Marchioness to the fair, giving her the opportunity to reprise Lotta's favorite routines. Also in keeping with her new prominence, it is the Marchioness, not Dick, who inherits a small legacy, enabling them to marry.

It is likely such flourishes led Pemberton to judge Lotta's hijinks as "extravagant." Other commentators who have left impressions of her performance were unrestrained in their praise. In evaluating Victorian actors in

Dickensian roles, one American theatre historian ranked Lotta's Nell and Marchioness with Henry Irving's Jingle, William Florence's Captain Cuttle, Charlotte Cushman's Nancy and Joseph Jefferson's Caleb Plummer.⁸ These were, in his opinion, fully consummated incarnations of the fictional creations.⁹ On the nineteenth-century English-speaking stage, the impersonation of Dickens's characters constituted a line of business in itself. They were so familiar to every class, not only through the printed text but by way of penny readings, advertisements and the illustrations of Phiz and Cruikshank, that an actor had to satisfy an audience's pre-formed expectation of how the character would look and sound. With the rise of music hall, such performers as Bransby Williams would add quick-change to potted accounts of the novels, distributed among a gallery of Dickensian types.¹⁰ Rapidly shifting from character to character, Williams and his counterparts stimulated an audience steeped in Dickens to remember familiar situations and quotations.

The Irish journalist T. P. O'Connor recalled of Lotta's Nell and Marchioness, "the one all pathos, the other all comedy. She was really perfect in both."¹¹ It is clear, however, that there was an imbalance in the partition of interest. There was no question that the Marchioness stole the show. In the words of one London critic, "Lotta's Marchioness is a performance *sui generis*. It is the quaintest, oddest conception in the world, and though it may be heresy to say so, in her break-down is the funniest thing ever done in comic dancing... Lotta's face as she sits on the kitchen table, eyeing the dreadful mutton-bone, haunts me. No words can describe the fantastic tricks of this actress."¹²



Figures 1 & 2. Lotta Crabtree as the Marchioness.

Photo: Sarony, NY. All images are from the author's Collection of Theatrical Imagery.



Figure 3. John Rogers statuette of Lotta as the Marchioness.
Advertised by a stereogram from J. W. and J. S. Moulton, Salem, Mass.

What stuck in his mind was minstrel-show hijinks and mugging. The large number of surviving images of Lotta in that role in an oversized mobcap—photographs and stereograms, engravings, lithographed posters and trade-cards, even a Rogers statuette—testify and contribute to the iconic nature of her performance. There are almost no images of her as Little Nell. It was her kinetic antics that captured the imagination of the public which preferred her as a high-kicking urchin rather than as a demure damsel in distress. It enabled her to keep the play in her touring repertoire for many years, long after she was the appropriate age.

From an historiographical standpoint, two questions arise: first, why should this durable production have been so overlooked or underestimated by historians of the American musical? In part this is due to the myopic focus on New York endemic to American theatre history.¹³ After an 1866 try-out at the Continental Theatre in Boston, Lotta opened *Nell and the Marchioness* at Wallacks Theatre in New York on 14 August 1867. It ran for only seven performances. Although it raked in a phenomenal amount of money in that time, the show has been dismissed as a flash in the pan. This is to overlook the fact that in the post-bellum period the most prosperous productions and richest actors avoided New York and used the new network of railways to tour the towns and villages of America with a reliable repertoire of unsophisticated and loose amalgams of drama and music. Disregard of this phenomenon accounts for such indiscriminate generalising as Lawrence Levine's highly debatable high-brow/low-brow formula.¹⁴ It explains why *The Black Crook* upstages such perennial travelling shows as William A. Mestayer's *The Tourists in a Pullman Palace Car* in the standard texts. Lotta, in her double roles, became as familiar

and as wealthy as she did because she relied on the undemanding audiences of the “road” to welcome the annual revival of her favourite showpieces.

BOSTON THEATRE.

J. B. BOOTH LESSEE AND MANAGER

OPENING OF THE REGULAR SEASON

And brief engagement of the CHARMING COMEDienne and VOCALIST (aptly termed by the New York Press the "Diamond Edition of Dramatic Delights")

LOTTA!

Who will appear in that beautiful creation of CHARLES DICKENS'S GENIUS, framed and set to the Drama by JOHN BROUGHAM, Esq., and entitled

LITTLE NELL AND THE MARCHIONESS.

* * * On account of its more rapid descent the Green Curtain will be used at the end of each act, instead of the usual one.

Monday, September 14th, and Every Night

Till further notice, will be presented, with New Scenery and Appointments, the Drama, in 4 acts, entitled

LITTLE NELL!

AND

THE MARCHIONESS!

LITTLE NELL.		LOTTA
THE MARCHIONESS.		
Old Grandfather Trent	Mr. W. H. Leman	
Dick Swiveller James Lewis	Barton	Edwarda
Daniel Quilp H. A. Weaver	Showman	Edmore
Hampson Brass S. H. Forsberg	Abdallah	Quishman
Ned Trent A. Leonard	Mrs. Quilp (her first appearance)	Miss F. Dana
Mr. Shum S. J. Willis	Mrs. Jarley	Mrs. J. Moore
Corky Jack Dan. J. Maguire	Sally Brass	Mrs. S. Flood
Reuben Kadger J. McGee	Mrs. Fenwick	Mrs. T. H. Brown
Poxy Joe Ambrose	Mrs. Simmons	Miss A. Winslow
Higgins J. Taylor	Mrs. George	Miss E. Long

SYNOPSIS OF SCENERY AND INCIDENTS.

ACT I.—SCENE 1—QUILP'S HOUSE. Little Nell and her friends. The Hypocrite and his victim. SCENE 2—Dick Swiveller and his companions. SCENE 3—BLACK BOOTS. Dinner for three! Search fare for small people. The leg of mutton. SOPHRONIA, the Marchioness. SONG and BANSO SOLO.

ACT II.—SCENE 1—THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP. Grandfather Trent and the cards. Wonderful calculation. The old gambler and his grandchild, Little Nell. SCENE 2—The Marchioness and her spelling-book. SCENE 3—CURIOSITY SHOP. Balls in possession. Little Nell's plan for a journey to the country. "We'll wander amongst the wild flowers, and never think of money again."

ACT III.—SCENE 1—Street. The prodigal pair. The plot and pursuit. SCENE 2—Swiveller's apartment. The patient and his nurse. The Marchioness dresses for the ball. SCENE 3—A landscape. Mrs. Jarley and Abdel Kader, Jr. Little Nell and her grandfather. "You can't get shrunken cheeks and white lips." The show-woman's charity. Honesty and rascality. SCENE 4—PAIR AT HIGHWAYS. The Thimble Finger and his victim. SONG—LOTTA. UNRIVALLED CLOG DANCE BY THE MARCHIONESS. Quilp's tight rope evolutions. The trap-door.

ACT IV.—SCENE 1—The kitchen of the Ale House, and Little Nell's bedroom. Gambling and robbery. "Tis the work of devils to tempt a poor, old, half-witted man to the commission of such a crime." Tabber. SCENE 2—Brass's house. The bride and the bridegroom. Portion of a costly wardrobe. Trunk for Serratus. Swiveller and the Marchioness. DANCE. SCENE 3—Quilp to his glory. The wolf and the lamb. He partest; restitution will come. SCENE 4—Swiveller's wedding party. The hymn secured. Will of Daniel Quilp, Sen. "The Heaven's reward for unselfish humanity, truth, and patient endurance." APOTHEOSIS.

LOTTA MATINEE, SATURDAY, AT 2 1-3 O'CLOCK.

NOTICE—OPERA GLASSES of superior quality can be hired at the stand in the Lobby of the Theatre.

Balcony \$1.00	Dress Circle 50 cents
Parquet 75 Cents	Family Circle 30 cents
Orchestra Chairs \$1.00	Private Boxes According to location
Box Office open daily from 9 A. M. to 10 P. M.	
Seats secured Six Days in advance	

THE REFRESHMENT SALOONS in the Lobbies of the Boston Theatre are now open under a new management, and will be found complete in all first-class requirements. The Lunch Counters supplied from the PARKER HOUSE.

Figure 4. Programme for *Little Nell and the Marchioness*, Boston Theatre, Boston, Mass., in the mid-1870s. Lotta is a guest star and the rest of the roles are played by the regular members of the stock company.

The neglect of *Little Nell* by historians is, however, somewhat excusable given the fact that Lotta jealously guarded the script. Unlike Brougham's other Dickens dramatisations, it was never published. It was a Tufts University doctoral student, the 70-year-old Irene Comer, who discovered two manuscript promptbooks and Lotta's sides, used from 1867 to 1885, in the Boston offices of the administrators of the Crabtree estate. She also uncovered the show's ground plans and property lists at the New York Public Library.¹⁵ I have been able to consult the text as published in Ms. Comer's dissertation.

The second, more salient historiographical question is: what should account for the phenomenal success of this patchwork musical, beyond the

appeal of its star? Why should it not only put any other version of *The Old Curiosity Shop* in the shade, but exercise such a grip on the imagination of the American public. In my opinion, there are some powerful underlying and contributory factors. One is the counterpoint of the two heroines. The ubiquitous phenomenon of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first adapted to the stage in 1852, had accustomed audiences to the theatrical pairing of an ill-sorted couple: the angelic Little Eva of the blond ringlets and the loose-limbed imp Topsy of the beribboned corn-rows. In Mrs. Stowe's novel, Topsy is as episodic as the Marchioness, but stage versions gave her license to interpolate whole minstrel acts. Although the original players of these characters in the perennial G. L. Aiken version (published in 1852), the Boston actress Mrs. George C. Howard and her little daughter Cordelia, are remembered, later generations rarely identified the players behind the masks. Eva and Topsy became generic; and by the twentieth-century, could be exploited as a familiar variety double-act by the Duncan Sisters.



Figure 5. Rosetta and Vivian Duncan in *Topsy and Eva*, c. 1920.

The dainty white girl and the “shif’less” picanniny provided the template for Lotta’s study in contrasts.

Beyond this, however, are more salient motives for the appeal of Nell and Eva and to a lesser extent Topsy and the Marchioness in their time. It has to do with the Victorian obsession with infant mortality and juvenile sexuality. American literature and folk art of the first half of the 19th century is sodden with tears over the death of children. Innocence, unsullied by the blight of experience, was returning to its heavenly origins. The last fifteen paragraphs of Chapter 26 of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* are the quintessence of deathbed pathos, extravagantly overwrought. In stage productions, the tableau that followed Eva's premature demise had become an eagerly awaited feature. To soft music and garish lighting, one or more angels would be flown from the grid to accompany the beatific child's ascension to heaven. Eva's assumption was an invention of the stage adapters, for Mrs. Stowe paints her passing in more restrained tones, stressing its serenity and mystery. She refers to the "angel-figure" of the dead child and the "celestial expression" on her face; but no divine intervention takes place. Even in George L. Aiken's boiler-plate version, the stage direction reads simply "*Solemn music, slow curtain.*" Yet the theatrical tableau had become so fixed in the national imagination that as late as 1938 in his illustrations to a limited edition of the novel Miguel Covarrubias portrays Eva on her upward journey.



Figure 6. The apotheosis of Little Eva in the Jarrett and Palmer production of Uncle Tom's Cabin. A lithographed trade card advertising its version with "newly freed slaves" c. 1865.

Little Nell's death, protracted by Dickens over weeks and chapters, may have provided the model for Eva's. Both authors felt the fictional losses deeply. Mrs. Stowe explained to her brother's parishioner, Mrs. John T. Howard, "...Your Annie reproached me for letting Eva die. Why? I could not help it. I felt as badly as anyone could! It was like a death in my own family, and it affected me so deeply that I could not write a word for two weeks after her death!"¹⁶ Compare this statement with Dickens's "...I am the wretchedest of the wretched...Nobody will miss her like I shall. It is such a very painful thing to me, that I cannot express my sorrow..."¹⁷ So when Oscar Wilde and others make fun of Nell's death, it may be they are conflating it in their minds with the awkward claptrap and stage carpentry that accompanied Eva's death on stage. Lotta and Brougham contributed to this confusion by lifting from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* its most memorable moment. *Little Nell and the Marchioness* ends with her marriage to Dick Swiveller and a tableau of blissful celebration. The stage direction then reads: (*When the first Tableau is fairly seen, the backing of it opens and discovers LITTLE NELL ascending to Heaven. Second Tableau.*) (p.199).¹⁸ Eight encores were then provided, the final one to a theme from Offenbach's *Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*, thereby grafting the popularity of *opéra bouffe* to a sentimental scena.

If the child succumbing to premature mortality consumes and obsesses the Victorian imagination, the child as sexual prey fascinates and titillates it. In Dickens' novel, "Nell is nearly fourteen" (Ch.7) and until she leaves London, she is in perpetual danger of being legally raped, used as a sexual pawn by other characters. Even then, only the conventions of fiction prevent her, wandering poor and friendless, from being violated by bargees or factory workers. At the start, her brother Fred suggests that Dick Swiveller marry his sister, a suggestion that first appalls Dick, but, by dint of self-persuasion, he consents to throw over the buxom and more worldly Sophy Wackles. Fred's intention is to raise Nell for "two years time, in three, in four" (Ch. 7), just as baby farmers reared their charges for prostitution, and his motive is the same—profit. "A pretty face," "Fine girl for her age, but small," appraises Swiveller, who later boasts to Sophy, "there is a young lady growing up at this present moment for me" (Ch. 8).

The greatest peril is from Quilp. The most libidinous character in the whole Dickens canon, he lecherously expatiates on Nell's blossoming charms: "You look very pretty today... How should you like to be my number two?" (Ch. 6); "Such a fresh, blooming, modest little bud, neighbour... such a chubby, rosy, cosy, little Nell" (Ch.9). His own wife is just such a meek blond martyr as Nell, sacrificed to her mother's greed as Nell is to her grandfather's gambling addiction. Mrs. Quilp suffers what Brecht calls *sexuelle Hörigkeit*, a kind of libido-driven submissiveness, dominated by an erotic fascination for her monstrous husband. "Quilp has such a way with him when he likes, that the

best-looking woman here couldn't refuse him if I was dead... and he chose to make love to her" (Ch.4). Later, Quilp smokes, lolling in Nell's bed (Ch. 11), while she "shrunk timidly from all the dwarf's advances."¹⁹

In confecting a play to show off Lotta, Brougham pared away scores of characters and episodes, but managed to retain most of the innuendo. The very first scene takes place in Quilp's home, where his disillusioned mother-in-law complains:

MRS. JINIWIN. What do you think this poor-spirited daughter of mine had the audacious imperence (sic) to say? Why, that the ill-looking, ill-conditioned baboon could marry any woman he liked!"

to which the obsequious lawyer Sampson Brass replies, "Well, I am not prepared to say that he could not. His powers of persuasion are, not to mince the matter, stunning..." (pp.97-98)

Nell's first entrance is into Quilp's home. His comments are aggressive, many of them directly from Dickens:

QUILP. Charming little Nell, nice, appetizing little Nell. Stay, we must get Mrs. Quilp to put her under the pump... (p.99).

How would you like to be my No. 2? (p.104).

No. 2, my second, when Mrs. Quilp the first is dead, -- to be my wife, my sweet, beautiful cherry-lipped wife. Ha! ha! you don't understand the honor I intend for you. Mrs. Quilp won't live more than three or four years. You'll be just old enough for me then, so be a good girl... (p.105).



*Figure 7. Edward Coleman as Quilp in Little Nell and the Marchioness, a role he frequently revived.
Photo: William W. Silver, NY.*

The second scene has Quilp's intruding into Nelly's abode, the curiosity shop, and here he forces a physical assault on her:

QUILP. What a nice kiss that was, just upon the rosy part, what a capital kiss. How jolly it would be to be married to such a chubby, rosy, cosy little Nell—so small—so compact—so beautifully molded—with such blue veins and such a transparent skin, and such winning way (p.132).

Going beyond Dickens, he proposes to Brass an abduction:

QUILP. Tell these fellows to be ready to assist me in taking her away from that old imbecile. She always sleeps on the sofa, so as to be ready to attend on him at the slightest indication. I'll be there myself and—
(*Whispering business with BRASS.*) (p.141)

The audience is free to imagine what it likes in this whisper.

The abruptness of this offered violence precipitates the flight of Nell and her grandfather. Once they leave London, Quilp is out of their life (unlike what happens in the novel) and the focus shifts to the antics of the Marchioness. However, the scene of Nell's demise differs considerably from that which so affected the novel's readers. In Dickens, she dies a slow, lingering, peaceful death

in a rural vicarage, amidst medieval relics of piety and weeping friends, over the course of many chapters. In the play, as she is abed in an inn, the gambler Foxy Joe and her brother Ned creep in to steal her grandfather's money. This break-in causes her to die of shock. The vulnerability of the recumbent virgin when a lowlife and a brother who earlier proposed to sell her intrude in the dark has obvious overtones of sexual assault.²⁰

Conversely, in the play, when Swiveller falls ill, the Marchioness moves into his bedroom and plays her banjo to buck him up. In the novel, she is, in contrast to Nell, not a victim, but what Michael Steig calls a child-woman, capable of agency and of human love; he refers to her "veiled sexuality."²¹ True to melodramatic convention, the death of Nell in Brougham's play is immediately followed by the wedding of Dick and the Marchioness under her legal name Sophronia Sphinx. Dickens has her educated over a number of years before the nuptials can take place. On stage, although she is presumably the same age of Nell, her low caste and spirited nature make her eligible for an adult relationship.

All in all, the centrality of *Little Nell and the Marchioness* to the history of the American popular stage deserves more attention than it has hitherto received. Arguably the first American book musical to attain lasting success, and, incidentally, the first such to be based on a work by Charles Dickens, it foreshadows *Oliver!* and whole hymnals of *Christmas Carols*. Furthermore, beyond Lotta's talent, its popularity derived from deep-rooted cultural preoccupations: a doubling of contrasted female types attractive to the American imagination and an exploitation of deeply-ingrained Victorian obsessions about sex and death in the guise of light entertainment.

¹ S. J. Adair Fitz-Gerald, *Dickens and the Drama being an account of Charles Dickens's connection with the stage and the stage's connection with him* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1910), 145.

² Walter Lazenby, *Stage Versions of Dickens' Novel in America to 1900* (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1962).

³ The mid-century adaptations of Jules Verne's panoramic novels by himself and Dennery were extremely expensive and required immense stages. Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, which covers a hemisphere and several decades, was first put on at the Norwegian state theatre and treated as a *féerie*. English adaptations of Dickens were generally fare for smaller houses.

⁴ Julian Mates, *The American Musical Stage before 1800* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1962); Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 23-24; Roger Allen Hall, "The Brook: America's Germinal Musical," *Educational Theatre Journal*, 27:7 (October 1975): 323-30.

⁵ The standard works on Lotta are Constance Rourke, *Troupers of the Gold Coast; or The Rise of Lotta Crabtree* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1928) and David Dempsey with Raymond P. Baldwin, *The Triumphs and Trials of Lotta Crabtree* (New York: Morrow, 1968). See also Helen Marie Bates,

Lotta's Last Season (Brattleboro, Vt.: E. L. Hildreth, 1940).

⁶ Helena Modjeska, *Memoirs and Impressions of Helena Modjeska: An Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), 376.

⁷ T. Edgar Pemberton, *Charles Dickens and the stage*. A record of his connection with the drama as playwright, actor and critic (London: George Redway, 1888), 153-54.

⁸ From an unidentified clipping in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

⁹ One might add to this roster Robert Keeley's Sairey Gamp, Mrs. Keeley's Smike, Jenny Lee's Jo, J. L. Toole's Artful Dodger and Beerbohm Tree's Fagin and Micawber. See also Kate Field, *Pen Photographs of Charles Dickens Readings Taken from Life* (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1871), 54.

¹⁰ Bransby Williams (1870-1961) was particularly noted for his Dickens impersonations as well as those of famous actors like Irving and Beerbohm Tree.

¹¹ T.P. O'Connor, *Daily Telegraph* (London), reprinted as "An Irish tribute to 'Lotta'," *The Living Age* 323 (November 15, 1924): 399-400.

¹² Quoted in Rourke, 326.

¹³ Gerald Bordman in the *Oxford Companion to the American Theatre* even gets the plot wrong, among other details, relying on a synopsis of the novel.

¹⁴ See Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: the Emergence of a Cultural Hierarchy in America*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Irene Forsyth Comer, *Little Nell and the Marchioness: Milestone in the Development of American Musical Comedy* (PhD diss., Tufts University, 1979). The scripts are now in the Harvard Theatre Collection.

¹⁶ Quoted in Raymond Weaver, "Introduction" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (New York: Limited Editions Club, 1938).

¹⁷ Letter to Forster, January 7, 1841.

¹⁸ Page references are to the Irene Cromer dissertation.

¹⁹ Laurence Senelick, "Little Nell and the Prurience of Sentimentality," *Dickens Studies* 3:2 (Oct 1967): 146-59.

²⁰ When Lotta played the double role in London in 1884, she was obliged to use Charles Dickens Jr's version, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, which was closer to the novel: it included Kit Nubbles, her brother was Fred not Ned Trent, Quilp drowned (and was not arrested), and Nell's death took place in a churchyard. This version reduced the stage time devoted to the Marchioness, although she was shown playing cards. Lotta therefore interpolated much of her own business into the English play.

²¹ Michael Steig, "Phiz's Marchioness," *Dickens Studies* 2:3 (Sept 1966): 141-46.