

Westminster Abbey
The Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries



The Re-Dedication
of a Memorial to
Hannah Pritchard

1709–1768

Tuesday 4th September 2018
6.15 pm

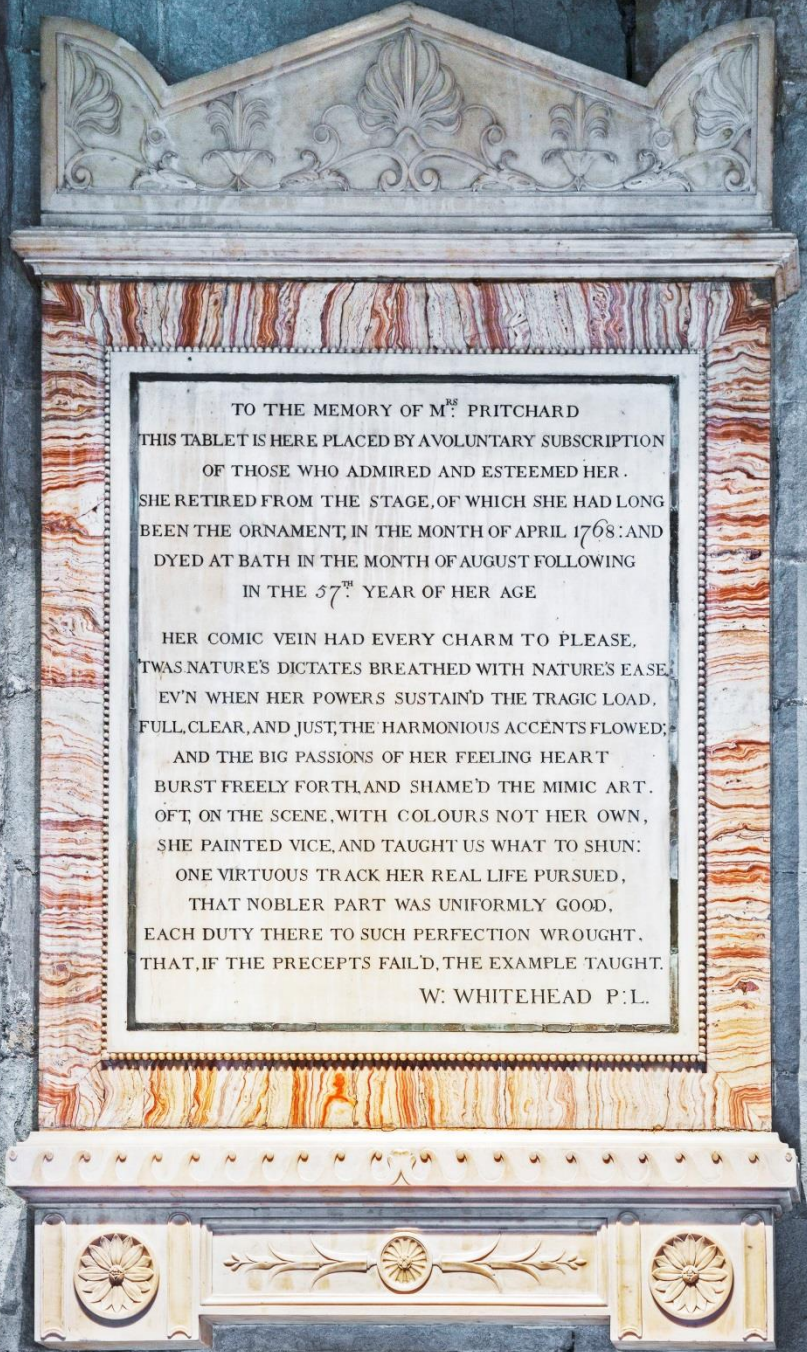


P. Hayman fecit 1750

*Wm. Adell fecit
Culterid April 20 1769*

FRANÇOIS HAYMAN

JAMES MACARDELL. C. S. 149 [61]



TO THE MEMORY OF M^{RS}. PRITCHARD
THIS TABLET IS HERE PLACED BY A VOLUNTARY SUBSCRIPTION
OF THOSE WHO ADMIRERD AND ESTEEMED HER .
SHE RETIRED FROM THE STAGE, OF WHICH SHE HAD LONG
BEEN THE ORNAMENT, IN THE MONTH OF APRIL 1768 : AND
DYED AT BATH IN THE MONTH OF AUGUST FOLLOWING
IN THE 57TH YEAR OF HER AGE

HER COMIC VEIN HAD EVERY CHARM TO PLEASE,
T'WAS NATURE'S DICTATES BREATHED WITH NATURE'S EASE,
EV'N WHEN HER POWERS SUSTAIN'D THE TRAGIC LOAD,
FULL, CLEAR, AND JUST, THE HARMONIOUS ACCENTS FLOWED;
AND THE BIG PASSIONS OF HER FEELING HEART
BURST FREELY FORTH, AND SHAME'D THE MIMIC ART.
OFT, ON THE SCENE, WITH COLOURS NOT HER OWN,
SHE PAINTED VICE, AND TAUGHT US WHAT TO SHUN:
ONE VIRTUOUS TRACK HER REAL LIFE PURSUED,
THAT NOBLER PART WAS UNIFORMLY GOOD,
EACH DUTY THERE TO SUCH PERFECTION WROUGHT,
THAT, IF THE PRECEPTS FAIL'D, THE EXAMPLE TAUGHT.

W: WHITEHEAD P:L.

HISTORICAL NOTE

*'Pritchard, by nature for the stage design'd,
In person graceful, and in sense refin'd'*

Hannah Pritchard (1709–68) was one of the great actresses of the eighteenth century, excelling in tragedy and comedy. On stage she was a pioneer, interpreting important female roles by contemporary playwrights and bringing many Shakespearean roles to life in ways that had never been seen before. It was when she played Rosalind in the famous 1740 production of *As You Like It* that audiences first appreciated her huge comic talent—not to mention the potential of the role itself. Many noted the clarity and resonance of her voice and a natural way of acting that was quite new at the time. A couple of years later her Lady Macbeth, which saw her towering over David Garrick as her wavering husband, must have been little short of terrifying. Several artists of the time, including Zoffany and Fuseli, captured her in the part.

The long list of roles she performed and the frequency with which she played them—it is worth noting that she was acting right up to a few weeks before her death—bear witness to her extraordinary commitment and to the depth of her talent. As she grew older, she lost none of her popularity, even in an age that idolised youthful beauty.

The memorial which is being re-dedicated today was originally in Poets' Corner, 'here placed by a Voluntary Subscription of those who admired and esteemed her'. There it remained until the 1930s, by which time Hannah had been almost completely forgotten. Ironically, the monument was removed to the triforium to make way for a bust of her contemporary, Samuel Johnson, who famously described her as a 'vulgar idiot'.

Hannah grew up without privilege. To use the language of our own day, her father Edward Vaughan was a migrant. Having come from Wales as a young man in hope of a better life, he made a precarious living as a staymaker—making the whalebone stays

that kept ladies' dresses in place. His shop was just beside Drury Lane Theatre, so Hannah would have grown up with the bustle and noise of the theatre all around her. When she married William Pritchard, Hannah was just twenty, and by the time she was performing *Rosalind* a few years later, she already had three daughters, aged nine, three, and one. By all accounts her marriage was a very happy one and, despite all her commitments as a working mother, Hannah was devoted to her children.

Remarkably, Hannah and William (who became treasurer at Drury Lane Theatre) found time to run their own thriving theatrical dressmaking business. They were commissioned to make the dress for the wedding of the seventeen-year-old Charlotte of Mecklenburg to George III in 1761. On the wedding day Hannah also helped to prepare the nervous young German princess for the ceremony and, as the leading actress of the day, gave her advice on deportment.

For many years Hannah Pritchard was virtually forgotten. This is no doubt in part because she was 'a woman of domestic virtues whom scandal did not touch', as Sybil Rosenfeld wrote in the introduction to *Born to Please*, Anthony Vaughan's 1979 biography. Today, as interest grows in the huge contribution made by the actresses of the eighteenth century to English theatre, Hannah Pritchard is once again appreciated by anyone with more than a passing interest in theatre history.

David Vaughan
seven times great-nephew of Hannah Pritchard

ORDER OF SERVICE

The Very Reverend Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, gives

THE WELCOME

Hannah Vaughan, the eight times great-niece of Hannah Pritchard, reads

from THE HANNAH PRITCHARD MEMORIAL

HER comic vein had every charm to please,
'twas Nature's dictates breathed with Nature's ease.
Ev'n when her powers sustain'd the tragic load,
full, clear, and just, the harmonious accents flowed;
and the big passions of her feeling heart
burst freely forth, and shame'd the mimic Art.
Oft, on the scene, with colours not her own,
she painted vice, and taught us what to shun:
one virtuous track her real life pursued,
that nobler part was uniformly good,
each duty there to such perfection wrought,
that if the precepts fail'd, the example taught.

William Whitehead (1715–85)

THE ADDRESS

by

David Vaughan

THE RE-DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL

Fiona Ritchie, Associate Professor of Drama and Theatre, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, says

I ask you, Mr Dean, to re-dedicate this memorial in honour and memory of Hannah Pritchard.

The Dean says

TO the greater glory of God, and in thankful memory of Hannah Pritchard, and all that she achieved and contributed to the life of this nation, I re-dedicate this memorial: in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Reverend Christopher Stoltz, Minor Canon and Precentor, leads

THE PRAYERS

Let us pray.

ALMIGHTY God, we praise thee for Hannah Pritchard whom today we remember with gratitude, whose gifts and ambitions have enriched humanity: and we pray that by the dedication of our own abilities we may share with others the great inheritance which we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

O GOD, who by thy Spirit in our hearts dost lead us to desire thy perfection, to seek for truth, and to rejoice in beauty: illuminate and inspire, we beseech thee, all playwrights and actors; that in whatsoever is true and pure and lovely, thy name may be hallowed and thy kingdom come on earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

All these our prayers and praises let us offer to almighty God, in the words that Jesus has given us,

OUR Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

The Dean pronounces

THE BLESSING

UNTO God's gracious mercy and protection we commit you. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**