

June 1690

DG

THE PROPHETESS; or, The History of Dioclesian. [Altered from Philip Massinger and John Fletcher by Thomas Betterton.] Edition of 1690: No actors' names. [Geta - Leigh (Cibber, *Apology*, ed. Lowe, I, 149).] A Prologue by John Dryden was suppressed after the first performance; it appeared in the first edition of the play. Epilogue.

COMMENT. The United Company. The date of the first performance is not known, but Luttrell's copy (Huntington Library) of the play bears the date of acquisition 3 June [1690, apparently], and the play was advertised in the *London Gazette*, No 2566, 12-16 June 1690. See Fredson Bowers, "A Bibliographical History of the Fletcher-Betterton Play, *The Prophetess*, 1690," *The Library*, 5th Series, XVI (1961), 169-75. It seems likely that the opera was first given early in June 1690. An edition of *The Vocal and Instrumental Musick of The Prophetess* appeared in 1691. See *Works of Henry Purcell*, Purcell Society, IX.

Downes (*Roscus Anglicanus*, p. 42): *The Prophetess, or Dioclesian* an Opera, Wrote by Mr Betterton; being set out with Coastly Scenes, Machines and Cloaths: The Vocal and Instrumental Musick, done by Mr Purcel; and Dances by Mr Priest; it gratify'd the Expectation of Court and City; and got the Author great Reputation. [See also R. E. Moore, *Henry Purcell and the Restoration Theater* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), Chapter v; and E. W. White, "Early Theatrical Performances of Purcell's Operas," *Theatre Notebook*, XIII (1958-59), 44.]

The Muses' Mercury (January 1707, pp. 4-5): This prologue was forbidden to be spoken the second Night of the Representation of the *Prophetess*. Mr Shadwell was the occasion of its being taken notice of by the Ministry in the last Reign: He happen'd to be at the House on the first Night, and taking the beginning of the Prologue to have a double Meaning, and that Meaning to reflect on the Revolution, he told a Gentleman, He would immediately put a stop to it. When that Gentleman ask'd, Why he wou'd do the Author such a Disservice? He said, Because while Mr Dryden was Poet Laureat, he wou'd never let any Play of his be Acted. Mr Shadwell informed the Secretary of State of it, and representing it in its worst Colours, the Prologue was never Spoken afterwards, and is not printed in Mr Dryden's Works, or his Miscellanies.

Cibber (*Apology*, ed. Lowe, II, 13-14): A Prologue (by Dryden) to the *Prophetess* was forbid by the Lord *Dorset* after the first Day of its being spoken. This happen'd when King William was prosecuting the War in Ireland. It must be confess'd that this Prologue had some familiar, metaphorical Sneers at the Revolution itself; and as the Poetry of it was good, the Offence of it was less pardonable.

Wednesday 18

A FAST DAY

Late June
DG

BELPHEGOR; or, The Marriage of the Devil. [By John Wilson.] Edition of 1691: Prologue On the Occasion that the Play fell to be acted next after the *Prophetess*. No actors' names. Epilogue, Spoken by Imperia.

COMMENT. The United Company. The date of the first performance is not known, but the Prologue implies that it followed soon after *The Prophetess*. The play, however, was not licensed until 13 Oct. 1690.

Langhaine (*English Dramatick Poets*, 1691, Appendix): Notwithstanding it was decry'd on the Stage, I think it far surpasses many others that have lately appear'd there.