

Papers from the History Seminar of Kalamazoo College

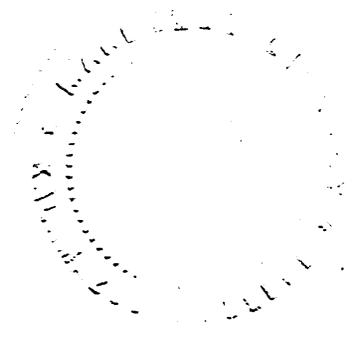
No. ~~53~~ 56

The Theater in Kalamazoo from 1860 to 1890

by

Marion Johns

January, 1955



53910

The Theater in Kalamazoo from 1860 to 1890

I.	The Status of the Theater	
	A. Growth of Importance in the United States.....	1a
	B. Growth of Importance in Kalamazoo.....	2a
II.	Facilities in Kalamazoo	
	A. Union Hall.....	1
	B. Academy of Music.....	2
III.	Types of Entertainment	
	A. Drama.....	7
	B. Comedy.....	25
	C. Opera.....	33
	D. Ballet.....	35
	E. Concerts.....	35
	F. Lectures.....	36
	G. Circus.....	36
	H. Minstrel Show.....	37
	I. Variety Show.....	38
	J. Variety in type.....	38
IV.	Home Talent	
	A. Amateur Dramatic Club.....	41
	B. Argonauts.....	43
	Bibliography.....	44

During the period between 1860 and 1890, the theater in the United States was at its most brilliant peak.¹ At that time the almost universal medium for carrying ideas to the masses was the public platform. Edwin Booth and Charlotte Cushman must be set against the background of an age that listened to and was moved by Sumner, Douglas, or Lincoln.² An age accustomed to such public speaking was ready to sit breathlessly while the poetic Booth spoke the matchless sililoquies of Hamlet. The actors faced comparison with the greatest Americans of the day and the result was an art that has never been surpassed west of the Atlantic.³

Other factors helped to make the stage prominent during this period. In the decades immediately preceeding and following the Civil War, cities were growing rapidly and wealth was mounting. Urban Americans were beginning to have leisure to play and could afford more expensive pleasures. Before the Civil War, the only sport that could be called national was horse racing.⁴ By the middle of the nineteenth century, Americans were ready to take a step forward into the national play life. The theater as an institution quickly responded. Down to the passing of Booth in the early nineties, the theater was the chief source of entertainment for the people of growing cities.⁵ That the great days of the stage should end at almost

1. Oral S. Cood and Edwin Mins, Jr., The American Stage from the series "The Pageant of America", p. 4.

2. Ibid., p. 5

3. Ibid., p. 5

4. Ibid., p. 5

5. Ibid., p. 5

the precise time that sports and out-of-doors pastimes of the present age entered upon the scene is not without significance. This new interest in sports and the development of industrialism which eventually led to movies were primarily responsible for the decline of the theater.⁶

Kalamazoo followed about the same general trend as the rest of the United States. However, the theatrical movement in Kalamazoo was a little slower than in most cities in the East and Middle West. The theater did not gain importance until the 1870's. There was little information available during the period from 1860 to 1870, but it is doubtful that the theater held such an important place in this city as it did in others during this same period. It would only be natural that the theater in Kalamazoo would develop after both Detroit and Chicago had large theaters established.

One anonymous person wrote an article for the Kalamazoo Gazette in which he clearly stated his feeling about the growth of the theater in the city in the 1870's.⁷

"Why such a hungry need on the part of so many of us for amusement? Why should every troupe seek Kalamazoo year in and year out to administer over our needs and carry in their pockets the hard earned money of hundreds? Tens of thousands of dollars are every year paid to traveling troupes and shows More money is now being paid for theaters in all of our large towns and cities than for minister's salaries."

One can see that the theater was beginning to come into its own in Kalamazoo around the early 1870's. The theater continued to grow so rapidly that another building had to be built in 1882 to accommodate the traveling showpeople.

6. Good and Mins, op. cit., p. 6

7. Kalamazoo Gazette, April 14, 1872. (Hereafter referred to as the Gazette.)

Facilities

Union Hall was the only amusement place in Kalamazoo until 1882 when the Academy of Music was built. It was located on the second floor at the south end of the block at Main and Portage on the site of the Pratt block.¹ The theater seated only one thousand people. The acoustic properties were not good. The stage was of modest size and was at the south end of the hall.² An example of the type of entertainment that might be presented at Union Hall over a three month period can be seen in the bookings for January, February, and March in 1873.³

January	
24, 25, 27	Agnes Wallace Combination
28, 29	Royal Yiddo Japanese Troupe
February	
6	Reverend A. A. Willett's lecture
7, 8	Black Crook Combination
11	Edwin Booth and theatrical troupe
13	German Society Ball
24	W. H. Legard Troupe
27	Theodore Thomas Orchestra
March	
12	Charles Turbush Fifth Avenue Theatrical Company
21	Anna E. Dickenson, Lecture
26	Dr. Chapin
31	John B. Gough, Lecture

One can see the variety and balance in this list of entertainments.

In the spring of 1879 the first movement to change Union Hall into a fine opera house was afloat. Mr. A. L. Bigelow made a proposi-

1. Kalamazoo Gazette, Centennial Issue January 21, 1906

2. Ibid., January 21, 1906

3. Gazette, January 24, 1873

tion to the proprietors to sell fifteen hundred tickets at \$2.50 for the first entertainment therein, so that they could make the building the finest opera house in Michigan outside of Detroit.⁴ The Gazette continued by saying:⁵

"He will soon begin a canvas to see who will subscribe for tickets to be paid for when the opera house is finished, ready for use. We shall have more to say about this matter soon."

However, nothing more was said or done about the matter until after plans were being made to build the Academy of Music. During the summer of 1881, work was begun on Union Hall. It was entirely remodeled and furnished in a modern style; the stage enlarged, new scenery and stage equipment added, and a ladies' retiring room or parlor built.⁶ Opera chairs were even put in. The work of remodeling was entrusted to a Mr. J. M. Wood of Chicago.⁷

The Plainwell Independent had a few words to say about the project of fixing up the old theater.⁸

"Now that Kalamazoo is to have a first class opera house and don't care a copper whether Union Hall goes to the dogs or not, the proprietor of that concern has awakened from his twenty year's sleep, and is going to place it in shape to meet the needs of a civilized community."

When the work on Union Hall was finished, everyone was pleased with the transformation.⁹ The opening was delayed for almost a week, however due to a national misfortune - the death of President Garfield.¹⁰

During the same period the Academy of Music was beginning

-
4. Gazette, January 25, 1879
 5. Ibid.
 6. Gazette, July 12, 1881
 7. Gazette, July 12, 1881
 8. Gazette, June 22, 1881
 9. Gazette, September 28, 1881
 10. Gazette, September 23, 1881

to take shape. The theater was built to fill a need in Kalamazoo. Theatrical conditions in the late '70's were entirely inadequate. It was impossible to stage a real production due to the lack of stage room. The good road shows were dodging Kalamazoo.¹¹ There was a real need for a good theater, so the move started.

In response to a call made, a citizen's meeting was held on March 26, 1881, and a large number of prominent men of the village were present.¹² Mr. De Yoe stated that the purpose of the meeting was to consider the building of an opera house to fill a long felt need for the convenience and comfort of the citizens of Kalamazoo.

On the motion of Mr. De Yoe, President Ranney was appointed chairman and William Eaton, secretary.¹³ Mr. De Yoe made a motion that a committee of three be appointed by the chair, for the purpose of selecting a committee of nine to take into consideration the various sites obtainable, plan for raising the necessary funds, together with the character of the building. The motion was unanimously carried.¹⁴

The chair appointed for the committee Mr. E. W. De Yoe, Dr. Foster Pratt, and Dallas Bouderman. The committee reported back the names of the following gentlemen: A. C. Wortley, Frank B. Stockbridge, J. C. Sebring, Peyton Ranney, Fred Bush, H. Allen Potter, Frank M. Clark, D. H. Cohn, and Robert Burns.¹⁶

11. Scrapbook - Theaters, June 11, 1930

12. Gazette, March 27, 1881

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

The St. Nicholas lot on South Rose Street facing the park was selected as the theater site on April 19, 1881, and the committee started the task of raising \$10,000.00 by public subscription.¹⁷ However, the subscriptions did not start out to be as liberal as the committee had hoped. They particularly found fault with the wealthier citizens.¹⁸

On May 23, 1881, the Opera House Committee had about \$8,000.00 subscribed. The stock company was formed and arrangements were made to erect the building.¹⁹ On July 5, the ground was broken.²⁰

The Academy of Music was opened on May 8, 1882. The Gazette had the following to say about the event.²¹

"The long anticipated event has occurred, and last evening, the Academy of Music, that temple of the muses, which since March, 1881 has been before the people of Kalamazoo in one shape or another, was thrown open to the public, and an intensely admiring throng it was that packed the house even to the abode of heaven borne.

The universal expression last evening was that the Citizens Committee, the stockholders, and everyone concerned in the carrying out of the enterprise had done all that had been promised to those who subscribed to the fund and given the city a much handsomer edifice than had been looked for.

As soon as the doors were open last evening the throng began to enter, and on all sides could be heard exclamations of admiration, the ladies in particular, being exceedingly demonstrative, while some seemed for the nonce to be unable to express their feelings

The owners of the building are Messrs. Bush and Patterson who were the building contractors and who bought out all the other stockholders. . . John V. Redpath, a gentleman widely known is the manager and Mr. Bidwell is the stage manager.

17. Scrapbook - Theaters, October 18, 1926

18. Gazette, May 12, 1881

19. Gazette, May 24, 1881

20. Gazette, July 6, 1881

21. Gazette, May 8, 1882

The cost of the building can be itemized as follows:²²

Ground	\$8,100.00
Building	36,300.00
Heating	3,600.00
Lighting and Plumbing	2,800.00
Decorations	3,000.00
Upholstering and Drapery	3,300.00
Seating	4,400.00
Stage Scenery and fillings	4,500.00
	<u>\$66,000.00</u>

The opening play was a revival of J. Sheridan Knowle's great tragedy, Virginius, The Roman Father. The cost included:²³

Virginius.....	John McCullough
Appius Clandius.....	Edmund Callier
Iclius.....	John A. Lane
Caius Clandius.....	H. C. Barton
Dentataes.....	H. A. Langdon
Titus.....	Charles Kedder
Servis.....	Frank Little
Virginia.....	Miss Kate Forsythe
Cneius.....	George Griffith"

The opening of the Academy of Music was a gala affair and it did much to encourage good theatrical companies to play in Kalamazoo. It's obvious that the interest and desire for a new theater in Kalamazoo was felt among the people. The people were interested enough in the theater to work and subscribe money in order to have a new building erected.

22. Gazette, May 9, 1881
23. Ibid.

Professional Entertainment

Many professional actors and actresses stopped at Kalamazoo to entertain the people. Some of them were famous, while others were not. Some performed excellent shows, while others did not. A great variety of entertainment appeared in Kalamazoo from 1860-1890, including drama, comedy, opera, and minstrel shows, Kalamazoo had a well-balanced program of visiting theatrical people.

Perhaps it would be interesting to look at a description of Kalamazoo as seen through the eyes of one of the professional people who came here in 1860. This was written in the diary of Mrs. Sam Cowell during her husband's concert tours.¹

" . . . Our hotel is on Main Street, of course the principle street of the 'village' (for so it is, though boasting of more than 6,000 inhabitants, so says our licience) The streets are lighted by gas, and are . . . broad, but owing to the rapid growth of the city they are very badly paved and muddy The streets are really alive. Carts passing and repassing constantly. Men and women walking briskly 'pro and con' all evidently with business to do, and intent on doing it This is a great horse place. The streets are full of vehicles, and most of them have two horses in each. . . . Concert this night, \$43.00".

Mrs. Cowell's husband, Sam, was the king of comic song in the '50's. They were here only for one night because they had an engagement in Chicago.²

1. W. Willson Disher (Ed.) The Cowells in America, page 197-200.

2. Ibid., page 200.

The dramatic play was the type of entertainment that was performed the most during that period. One of the largest dramatic groups that ever came to Kalamazoo was the Madison Square Theater Company. This group appeared in Kalamazoo ten times between 1882 and 1887. On September 21, 1882, this company produced the play Esmeralda.³ This play was taken from the old story of true love U. S. money. Around this idea were grouped the various incidents which lead to the happy denouement.⁴ This same company and play were also to be seen in Kalamazoo on May 13, 1883 and April 22, 1884. A large audience greeted the performance in 1883 and all parts were excellently taken.⁵

Hazel Kirke was one of the more famous of the Madison Square Theater Company's presentations.⁶ This play was presented in Kalamazoo on two occasions, March 11, 1882 and November 11, 1883. There was a large audience in the theater for both performances. The play was beautifully mounted, and Kalamazoo had never witnessed so finished a performance of that popular drama.⁷

On January 27, 1883, this group produced The Professor which was well received.⁸ Also on March 7, 1884, Young Miss Winthrop was presented. This play only added to the good reputation which the company already had in Kalamazoo.⁹ On February 10, 1887, they appeared in Saints and Sinners. The stars, Miss Viola Allen and Mr. Cauldack, were repeatedly brought before the

3. Gazette, September 15, 1882

4. Gazette, September 22, 1882

5. Gazette, May 14, 1883

6. Arthur Hornblow, A History of the Theater in America, page 270

7. Gazette, November 12, 1883

8. Gazette, January 28, 1883

9. Ibid.,

the curtain because of their popular performance.¹⁰ On March 21, 1885 and October 23, 1886, the group presented Private Secretary. The play was a grand success and everyone was pleased by the Madison Square Theater Company.¹¹

Another strong dramatic company that visited Kalamazoo was Daniel Frohman's New York Lycium Theater Company. On March 11 and December 23, 1889, this group presented The Wife. The characters were evenly balanced and the stage settings were in keeping with the literary merit of the composition. It was one of the dramatic events of the season.¹²

The Museum Company from Chicago also presented some excellent plays in Kalamazoo. Ticket of Leave Man was presented on May 5, 1871.¹³ On November 9, 1875, the group put on the play Two Orphans. No one performer absorbed all the excellence in the presentation. Instead all of the players were meritorious throughout. The Gazette felt that "the time will be long before there is another opportunity of witnessing the peer of this company."¹⁴

Many of the dramatic companies that appeared in Kalamazoo were engaged for a week. These groups would have a change of program nightly. Maxwell's New York Theater Company was one of these companies. From February 24 to the 29 in 1881, this company presented the following plays:¹⁵

Monday	The Octaroon
Tuesday	Streets of New York
Wednesday	Ticket of Leave Man
Thursday	Under the Gaslight

-
10. Gazette, February 11, 1887
 11. Gazette, October 27, 1886
 12. Gazette, December 12, 1889
 13. Gazette, May 6, 1871
 14. Gazette, November 2, 1871
 15. Gazette, February 23, 1881

Friday	Joshua Whitcomb
Saturday	The French Spy
Saturday (Matinee)	Cynthia, the Gypsy Queen

None of these companies had outstanding stars, rather they strived for a balanced company. A. R. Wilbur's Madison Square Company was another group who had a repertoire which they presented in a period of one week. From October 7 through November 1, 1886, they put on the following plays.¹⁶

Monday	Fanchon the Cricket
Tuesday	The Galley Slave
Wednesday	A Celebrated Case
Thursday	East Lynn
Friday	Van, the Virginian
Saturday	The Atonement

One of the most famous personalities to visit Kalamazoo was Joseph Jefferson in his immortal rendition of Rip Van Winkle. He appeared here on October 13, 1874.¹⁷ Jefferson's popularity and fame could be found in his artistry and personal satisfaction. Jefferson was by no means the greatest actor America had ever produced, but he was in all probability the best beloved.¹⁸

Frank Mays appeared in Kalamazoo on three different occasions. The first one was on February 10, 1878, when he appeared in Davy Crockett. The Gazette ranked Mr. Mays among the first American actors.¹⁹ On December 4, 1880, he appeared in Van, the Virginian. Again on December 24, 1890, he was seen in Nordeck. Both these plays were excellently presented, Mr. Mays was a finished actor and he had the support of some first class people.²⁰

16. Gazette, October 25, 1886
 17. Gazette, October 9, 1874
 18. Cood, op. cit., page 208
 19. Gazette, February 10, 1878
 20. Gazette, December 25, 1890

A famous actress who frequented Kalamazoo was Miss Minnie Moddern. On November 17, 1883, she appeared in The Puritan Maid in which she was excellent. The play was about "the minds and ways of that mistake of civilization called Puritianism."²¹ On April 19, 1886, she appeared in the play In Spite of All. The Gazette felt that it would be a long, long time before the audience of the Academy of Music would forget the play or players that charmed their fancies, aroused their mirth, and more effectively than all, touched their hearts.²² On January 1, 1887, she appeared in Caprice, where she captured the audience in the opening scene and retained her hold until the curtain fell.²³

Another actress who came to Kalamazoo many times was Miss Ada Gray. She had a large repotoire of plays. When she was in the city from February 10 to 12, 1889, she presented Lucretia Borgia, Lady Audley's Secret, and Ruth Tredgett.²⁴ All three of these plays received good reviews. In 1880, she appeared on May 31 and June 1 in Ruth Tredgett and The New Magdaline, respectively.²⁵ In 1882 she appeared in town on February 2, in her presentation of East Lynn. The Gazette felt that she was a fine actress and had her parts down to perfection.²⁶

Kalamazoo was fortunate to have one of America's leading actors come to the city - Lawrence Barrett. On October 20, 1884, he appeared in Francisca De Rimini, in which he portrayed Lancratti, the hunchback. The Gazette printed the following review:²⁷

-
21. Gazette, November 18, 1883
 22. Gazette, April 20, 1886
 23. Gazette, January 4, 1887
 24. Gazette, February 9, 1879
 25. Gazette, May 30, 1880
 26. Gazette, February 3, 1882

Mr. Barrett in the role of Lancrotto made of the unpleasant man, yet true and chivalrous soldier, a forceful character, one that won the hearts of all for the sensitive man and injured husband, though pitiful for all whose heart's affections were made subserviant to a state intrigue.

Needless to say there was a large audience at the Academy of Music that night.

A group of players calling themselves Plunkett's Constellation presented four plays in 1872 from April 18 to 22. They were Won at Last, Fanchon the Cricket, Pocahantas, and The Stranger.²⁸ They received good reviews, however the people of Kalamazoo did not seem to patronize the group. The Gazette felt that it was a shame that the citizens did not give better support to such an excellent company as the Plunketts because they certainly were worthy of patronage.²⁹

Miss Charlotte Thompson appeared in Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre on March 21, 1888.³⁰ It was a work of art from beginning to end and not the least detail was neglected, however the audience was light. When she reappeared on February 19, 1879 in The Hunchback, she played to a large audience that was worthy of her performance. The dresses she wore in the play were worth \$4,200.00.³¹ On April 23, 1890, she again appeared in Jane Eyre. She presented a grand characterization which showed what the remarkable woman was capable of doing.³²

S. A. Lord's Dramatic Company with Miss Louie Lord as the star opened on June 30 and continued until July 5 in 1875 with a program change nightly. There was not a poor actor in the troupe and each night the audiences were larger. However, the Gazette felt that "It does not speak well for the

28. Gazette, April 19, 1872

29. Gazette, April 21, 1872

30. Gazette, March 22, 1878

31. Gazette, February 19, 1879

32. Gazette, April 24, 1890

taste of our citizens to pack the hall full for minstrel shows and let such exhibitions as this go without being seen."³³

Another famous actress from New York was Miss Kate Claxton in her play The Two Orphans which was an unfailing success in the East.³⁴ She appeared in Kalamazoo three times in this play in 1881, 1882, and 1884. All three times she received small audiences and bad reviews for her efforts. The play was not liked in Kalamazoo.

A play entitled Hoodman Blind was presented on January 22, 1887 by B. B. Horning and Charles H. Bradshaw.³⁵ This play was successful as it left a favorable impression upon the spectators. It was a melodrama full of natural situations in a deep plot. Bradshaw and Horning made a strong team and their support was evenly balanced.³⁶

Another melodrama that appeared in Kalamazoo was called The Boy Tramp. Madam Neuville was seen in this play on February 28, 1887 and October 13, 1890. The play was on the sensational order, being composed of many thrilling situations. Madam Neuville was an actress of the old school and her rendition of the maniac mother proved that she had complete control of herself. The Company was as good as any that had been seen in Kalamazoo.³⁷

Probably one of the most frequent actresses to Kalamazoo in the 1880's was Madam Rhea, a very prominent star in New York. On March 4, 1882, she appeared in Adrienne Lecouveur. On January 14, 1884, the French Society

33. Gazette, July 2, 1875

34. Cood, op. cit., page 554

35. Gazette, January 16, 1887

36. Gazette, January 23, 1887

37. Gazette, February 29, 1887

40. Gazette, June 4, 1885

41. Gazette, November 20, 1885

42. Gazette, November 24, 1889

43. Gazette, November 18, 1881

star appeared in School for Scandal. All agreed that the lady was an excellent artist after witnessing this performance.³⁸ On June 30, 1884, she appeared in Frau-Frau. After the fall of the curtain, a large number of ladies and gentlemen remained to pay their respects to the lady, and they were received by her in a very happy manner.³⁹ On June 3, 1885, she again appeared. This time in a play called The Power of Love. The Gazette said the following about her performance.⁴⁰

"Madam Rhea has appeared in Kalamazoo several times, but each succeeding visit only strengthens her hold upon our citizens as no other actress is held in such favor in this city. She portrays the part of a simple-minded romantic Swiss girl and also the part of a handsome Alpine lad. . . . The audience testified its approval by frequent and hearty applause."

On November 19, 1885, she appeared in A Dangerous Game. The play was strong and excellently presented.⁴¹ On November 23, 1889, she appeared in Josephine. This play was well constructed; the dialogue being beautiful, the pathetic situations well drawn, and the scenes were stirring. Madam Rhea was grand, as always.⁴²

On Thursday, November 17, 1881, Miss Georgie Woodthorpe was seen in Dash. In contrast to the fine work of Madam Rhea and her wonderful plays, this play was one of the border dramas made up with no particular plot, but intending only to show the speciality acting of the star.⁴³

On February 21, 1885 and November 29, 1886, Charles Maubury presented The Wages of Sin. This was one of the most powerful plays on the

38. Gazette, January 15, 1884

39. Gazette, July 1, 1884

40. Gazette, June 4, 1885

41. Gazette, November 20, 1885

42. Gazette, November 24, 1889

43. Gazette, November 18, 1881

American stage at that time. It abounded in trite and true sayings and thrilling incidents which were within the bounds of probability. The play pictured the sin of a deceitful woman. The company was very strong and interesting. The audience was well pleased with the performance.⁴⁴

On January 7, 1881 Agnes Leonard was seen in Woman's Faith. The audience was not large, however. The Gazette stated that "the best troupes that have visited Kalamazoo this winter have had the smallest houses. 20¢ shows that smack of codfish and inferiority seem to be what our people enjoy."⁴⁵ But on September 14, 1887, one of the largest audiences was present to see Evangeline as presented by the Rice Company. This play was like a "sparkling wine which improves with age."⁴⁶ There was a very pretty group of girls in the performance and everyone was pleased with the entertainment.

On October 4, 1881, Lillian Cleves was seen in Only A Farmer's Daughter. Union Hall was filled to see this performance. The play turned on the theme of domestic affection, and had the novel feature of having the plot develop by means of a supposed dream.⁴⁷

Fanny Janauscheck was one of the foreign actresses of distinction who came to this country to make America her permanent home.⁴⁸ She was America's gain in the theatrical world. She appeared in Kalamazoo quite a few times. On May 29, 1882 she appeared as Mary, Queen of Scots in Lady Deadlock. Her acting made a deep impression upon the audience as the dignity

44. Gazette, November 30, 1886
 45. Gazette, January 8, 1881
 46. Gazette, September 15, 1887
 47. Gazette, October 5, 1881
 48. Hornblow, op. cit., page 231

of the wronged queen seemed to sit naturally upon the tragedienne.⁴⁹ On April 3, 1884, she appeared in the powerful Jewish romance, Zillah. The presentation was a notable dramatic event in Kalamazoo. The portraying of a Jewish mother by the great artist was a wonderful piece of acting and showed to good advantage the versatile powers of the lady.⁵⁰ On January 15, 1885, she appeared in My Life. Her presentation of a dual role dramatically apposed was but another evidence of the acknowledged ability of the actress.⁵¹

Another actress who visited Kalamazoo, but who was not as well-known as Janauscheck was Pearl Eytinge. She appeared in Brentwood on October 4, 1882. There was a small audience for this performance. The Gazette reportedly enjoyed the acting of Miss Eytinge, but was not very pleased with the play. He felt that "the first act was tedious, and while the three succeeding ones were better, they showed their relationship to the first act, just as a handsome child sometime looks like a homely brother."⁵¹

When Harry Meredith came to Kalamazoo on May 3, 1880, he played a dual role of twin brothers in Ranch 10.⁵² The play itself was very well put on, the scenic effects being excellent. The play was one of the border drama school, however. The company was a strong one and the parts were all well taken. The tendency to overdo was avoided. The twins in the hands of Mr. Meredith were well created.⁵³ Mr. and Mrs. McKee Rankin were in Kalamazoo on November 18, 1882 to present the drama Forty-Nine. The Gazette was disappointed

49. Gazette, May 30, 1882

50. Gazette, April 4, 1884

51. Gazette, January 16, 1885

52. Gazette, May 4, 1883

53. Gazette, May 4, 1883

that there was not a better audience. It felt that it only proved that the opinion of the showmen that Kalamazoo could not appreciate good drama was correct.⁵⁴

When the Charles Palmer Danites Company presented The Danites on October 13, 1883, most people wished they had not come to witness the five acts of the celebrated play which were dragged around the stage in a very dreary, and amateurish way. The Gazette felt that "the entertainment could be summed up in the words of the Chinaman in the play, No goodie, like hellee."⁵⁵

On December 15, 1884, and March 28, 1887, The Planter's Wife was seen in Kalamazoo with Mr. Harry Lacy and Miss Edna Carey in the leading roles. The play was put on in grand style. Mr. Lacy was very good and the support given him was excellent. Miss Carey as the Planter's wife did remarkably well. She had fine stage appearance and dressed her part superbly. Both were called before the curtain at the end of the third act.⁵⁶

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century there was a definite trend in American literature toward realism. In the drama of the same period this movement was championed by James A. Herne. Herne's realism lay in the presentation of character. His men and women were recognizable American people, who thought and acted in a recognizable way. Outstanding of his plays was Hearts of Oak.⁵⁷ This play was presented in Kalamazoo in 1882, 1884, and 1889. The play was very well received and the reviews were good.

54. Gazette, November 19, 1882

55. Gazette, October 14, 1883

56. Gazette, March 29, 1887

57. Good, op. cit., page 286

A disappointment came with the production Nobody's Claim with J. S. Alexander. The play appeared in Kalamazoo on April 4, 1884. The play itself was the most fuzzy kind, with a lot of people moving about the stage in a sort of purposeless manner. There was a little firing of pistols and a few disjointed exclamations. The acting of the company was fully up to the worth of the play.⁵⁸

On January 15, 1889, and September 12, 1890, Robert Downing appeared in Kalamazoo in The Gladiator. He received an ovation for a reception. It was seldom that Kalamazoo people took kindly to a new aspirant for public favor.⁵⁹ He was a great actor and his work endeared him to the people of the city as he made an impression that was lasting.⁶⁰

David and Milton Higgins were seen in Burr Oaks on September 26, 1885. The play was composed of some humor, a pinch of pathos, some dramatic situations, some atrocious villainy, one song, and a declamation.⁶¹ The Gazette felt that "any person contemplating writing a play can combine the above constituents in due proportion and may possibly have a worse play than Burr Oaks; the chances are, however, that he will have a better one."⁶²

A play about the moonshiners in the South was presented by Laura E. Danity in A Mountain Pink on February 15, and December 5, 1884. It was a delightful occasion for the people of Kalamazoo. The play dealt with the mountain folks of North Carolina, and seemed "radiant with the breezes of

58. Gazette, April 6, 1884

59. Gazette, January 16, 1889

60. Gazette, September 18, 1890

61. Gazette, September 27, 1885

62. Gazette, September 27, 1885

that favored region."^{62a} The play moved in a most satisfactory manner, as it was well staged.⁶³

A play that was presented on December 1, 1886 by Lily Clay was not as well received. The play The New Adamless Eve was reviewed with disgust. The Gazette had the following to say about it.⁶⁴

"The women of Kalamazoo had the good decency to stay away, for not one was in the house. Some of their husbands evidently had not. There was absolutely no dramatic merit in word or action - on the contrary the insinuations were of the vulgar and the lines non-sensical. The singing was bad. The general content of the performance was to show as much female body as possible in what were really elegant costumes. The least further said about the performance the better."

One actress who appeared in Kalamazoo many times was Miss Maggie Mitchell. On May 13, 1868 she appeared in Little Barefoot.⁶⁵ On March 14, 1883 she appeared in The Little Savage. She was suffering with a severe cold and labored under great difficulty. The audience fully appreciated the situation and gave her a hearty encore.⁶⁶ On February 26, 1884, she appeared in The Pearl of Savoy. Miss Mitchell would always be a favorite with Kalamazoo people. The audience was full of faces not usually seen in the theater, and this high attendance was due to the high esteem she held as an actress among the people of this section.⁶⁷ When she appeared in Farle on March 15, 1887, a large audience was there to see her. Her company was an excellent one which helped make her performance run quite smoothly.⁶⁸

62a. Gazette, February 16, 1884

63. Gazette, February 16, 1884

64. Gazette, December 2, 1886

65. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, May 6, 1868

66. Gazette, March 15, 1883

67. Gazette, February 27, 1884

68. Gazette, September 13, 1890

Edwin Mayo appeared in Kalamazoo on September 12, 1890 in The Silver Age. He was an excellent actor and he gave the character of Cool Jack a very eriditable presentation. It was a character, which to present intelligently, requires a person with a vast amount of histrionic ability. This, Mr. Mayo carried out to the letter. His manly appearance and the cool and deliberate manner in which he handled the part were proofs that he had made it a deep study.⁶⁹

Another great actor from New York who visited Kalamazoo was James O'Neil. He appeared on November 1, 1886 and January 22, 1889 in Monte Cristo. The Gazette gave excellent reviews to the actor and the play. The paper felt that the text had been closely followed and those who knew the story were able to understand the play easily. The play, itself, was like "wine which improves with age, and the more one sees of it the more interesting the situations become."⁷⁰ James O'Neil held the attention of the audience so closely that one might think they were magnetized. He was a noble actor and justly entitled to all honors which had been bestowed on him.⁷¹

On January 19, 1889, Miss Julie Marlowe appeared in Ingomar, the Barbarian. The people of Kalamazoo felt she was a truly great actress. Nature had endowed her with all the qualities that go to make a real artist. Ingomar was a beautiful work abounding in a series of pleasing scenes. These scenes were intelligently interpreted by this charming actress. If ever Miss Marlowe were to come back to Kalamazoo, "she would certainly be given a reception that would be an ovation," the Gazette felt.⁷²

69. Gazette, September 13, 1890

70. Gazette, January 23, 1889

71. Gazette, January 23, 1889

72. Gazette, January 20, 1889

On September 21, 1878, and January 24, 1880, Henrietta Chaufran appeared in Parted, or The Bank Failure. This was a play about the cruel results of defrauding the poor. The Gazette reporter felt that "it would have been a severely entertaining picture for the principals of a late gigantic failure in this village had they been present."⁷³

Frederick Warde was seen on April 23, 1883 in his presentation of Richelieu. It was one of the finest dramatic events that Kalamazoo had witnessed on the boards of the Academy.⁷⁴ Mr. Warde and his company came to Kalamazoo unknown, but when he returned on October 2, 1885 in the play, Virginus, he was greeted by an overflowing audience.⁷⁵

On November 14, 1887, Miss Edith Sinclair and Mr. Edward M. Favor presented The Box of Cash. The Gazette felt that it was the worst nightmare that was ever perpetrated on a civilized community. There was not a redeeming feature in the entire performance, and it took a lot of nerve to present such a conglomeration on the stage.⁷⁶

Miss Cara Tanner appeared in Alone in London in 1886 and 1887. On September 11, 1886 when she was in town the reviews read that the play was not very realistic, although Miss Fanner was good.⁷⁷ But when she reappeared on October 7, 1887, the paper felt that this melodrama was the best of all London successes that had been brought to this country. The many realistic incidents of which the play was made up would long be remembered by those in attendance.

73. Gazette, September 22, 1878

74. Gazette, April 24, 1883

75. Gazette, October 3, 1885

76. Gazette, November 15, 1887

77. Gazette, September 12, 1886

The actress was called before the curtain with rounds of applause, the like of which were never before heard at the Academy.⁷⁸

A little different type of drama was found in the play entitled The World. The play with J. Z. Little appeared in Kalamazoo in 1882, 1883, and 1884. The play itself was not very strong, the scenery being the chief attraction.⁷⁹ This part of the show was excellent as the scenery was so realistic. Examples of the different scenes presented were sinking ships, a lunatic asylum, a revolving wall, and the moon upon the lake.⁸⁰ Mr. Little was very good but the rest of the cast were such as would be expected in a play which depends on scenery for its success.⁸¹

Although many nineteenth century American actors made their fame in native plays and adoptions, some written especially for them, they almost all tried their hand at Shakespeare, the touchstone of the actor's quality.⁸² Some of the most famous appeared in Kalamazoo. Perhaps the most famous of them all was Edwin Booth in Hamlet. He appeared in Kalamazoo on February 14, 1873 and September 22, 1886 in this play. The Gazette felt that Booth was an ideal actor. His reading, gestures, expression of his features spoke sentences. His performance was in contrast to his support "like a diamond set in a pot of mush."⁸³ The great tragedian had so mastered his art that rant was an unknown quality to him. His most sudden expressions were those of the greatest fervor and awakened the most vivid emotions.⁸⁴

78. Gazette, October 8, 1887

79. Gazette, May 18, 1883

80. Ibid.

81. Gazette, April 1, 1884

82. Gaby Call (Ed.) Actors on Acting, page 462

83. Gazette, February 15, 1883

84. Ibid.

The celebrated actress Mrs. Macready performed at Union Hall on January 25, 1872. The play was The Merchant of Venice. Mrs. Macready sustained the part of Shylock much better than the Gazette had supposed it possible for any woman to do.⁸⁵

Another foreign actress who made her home in America was Madam Modjeska.⁸⁶ She appeared in Kalamazoo on September 17, 1883 as Rosalind in As You Like It. She had a large audience and did an excellent job.⁸⁷ Also in the same year, on October 29, Miss Margaret Mather appeared in Romeo and Juliet. The audience felt they were looking at a dramatic genius. Miss Mather was repeatedly called before the curtain and received unstinted applause.⁸⁸

On April 13, 1886, Mr. Miln appeared in Hamlet. His conception of the melancholy Dane was not traditional. The rendition had the merit of a bold and startling originality, but beyond this few features presented themselves that could be recommended. His rather Beefy Hamlet offered little ground for praise.⁸⁹

Another actor who was most likely to be seen in a Shakespearian play was Thomas W. Reene. On April 10, 1813 and November 20, 1885, he appeared in Richard III. He was a good tragedian and the people enjoyed him, but he could not be compared to Booth.⁹⁰ On April 14, 1884, he appeared in Macbeth. The play was good, but the Gazette spent more words complimenting the city of Kalamazoo for being fully equal to put the play on in metropolitan style with

85. Gazette, January 26, 1872

86. Hornblow, op. cit., page 231

87. Gazette, September 18, 1883

88. Gazette, October 30, 1883

89. Gazette, April 14, 1816

90. Gazette, November 21, 1885

facilities of the Academy of Music.⁹¹

When Madam Janauscheck appeared in Macbeth on March 21, 1890 the Gazette was impressed with her act, as can be seen.⁹²

"There is no denying the fact that she is the greatest tragic actress living, and when she bids adieu to the stage, it will be hard to find one on whom the mantle can fall. There is about her art a noble, classic originality. Her art is her own and never does she stoop to trickery to make her work effective. She is the embodiment of all that is really great."

The one dramatic play that was presented most often in Kalamazoo, however, was Uncle Tom's Cabin. The following companies produced the play in the city. On August 22, 1868, McFarland's Theater Company presented a good rendition of Uncle Tom's Cabin.⁹³ On April 5, 1878, Slaven's Uncle Tom's Cabin Combination presented it at Union Hall. All the parts were well taken and there were meritorious features throughout. The jubilee singing which was interspersed in the play was an interesting feature and the cotton picking scene was a new and valuable addition.⁹⁴ On January 12, 1878, the Lottie Combination played Uncle Tom's Cabin to a large house at Union Hall. The parts representing Topsy, Uncle Tom, and Eva were exceptionally well taken.⁹⁵

On May 27, 1880, Thoop and Bibbins presented the same play. They added a live donkey and bloodhound to the stage.⁹⁶ In 1881 on December 17, Miss Keltve Louge was seen in the play with a group of students from Memphis University. Along with a pack of Siberian bloodhounds and a donkey.⁹⁷ Also in 1881 the Boston Ideal Company presented the play with Blanche Slader as

-
91. Gazette, April 15, 1884
 92. Gazette, March 22, 1890
 93. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, August 23, 1868
 94. Gazette, April 6, 1878
 95. Gazette, January 13, 1878
 96. Gazette, May 28, 1880
 97. Gazette, December 18, 1881

Topsy. There were eleven hundred people in the crowded audience who stayed the performance out. This was a high tribute to any performer.⁹⁸

On December 22, 1880 this play was presented by George E. Stevens.⁹⁹ Again this company came to Kalamazoo on January 24, 1882. This was one of the best presentations ever seen in the city. The company had developed some specialities, such as immense culan bloodhounds, and an educated donkey. The singing of the quartette and the beautiful songs and dances of the quintette were loudly encored. The closing scene, the transformation representing the death of Uncle Tom with a tableaux of Eva in heaven fitly closed the revival of the old drama.¹⁰⁰

On May 30, 1881 and May 18, 1882, the Joey Rice Company presented Uncle Tom's Cabin. They had large bloodhounds on the stage and on their first visit one of the dogs bit an actor.¹⁰¹ When the company returned in 1882, they had added to the group a trick donkey named Jerry.¹⁰² When the Boston Double Uncle Tom's Cabin Company was in Kalamazoo on April 11, 1882, the Gazette was not impressed with the show.¹⁰³

"As was to be expected, the entertainment last evening, consisting of a couple of donkeys, some bloodhounds, and incidently a dramatic company, drew a crowded house. The time worn play, which like Banquo's ghost, 'will not down,' seemed to please the spectators as much as ever, and as long as the managers find the returns from the box office satisfactory, this play will continue to be produced let the critics write it up or down."

Draper's double Uncle Tom's Cabin Company came in 1883 and 1884. The dramatic

-
98. Gazette, November 2, 1881
 99. Gazette, December 23, 1880
 100. Gazette, January 25, 1882
 101. Gazette, May 31, 1881
 102. Gazette, May 19, 1882
 103. Gazette, April 12, 1882

merit of the Company would not bear close examination. Many were willing to stay until Uncle Tom's translation to Eva's paradise. Those who did not attend were congratulated on what they escaped.¹⁰⁴

The writer who produced his own plays and brought them to Kalamazoo most often in the 1830's was Bartley Campbell. On February 2, 1830 he presented The Galley Slave. This play was well written and the people enjoyed it.¹⁰⁵ On January 4, 1832, he presented My Geraldine. This drama aroused the deepest emotions by its strong situations. The scenic effects were especially good.¹⁰⁶ In 1834, he produced My Partner which starred Louise Aldrich and Charles T. Parsloe. This play was about the civilization of California.¹⁰⁷ In 1834 on September 23, Siberia was presented. This was a romantic play in six acts and seven tableaux. The stage settings were superb.¹⁰⁸ He brought White Slave to Kalamazoo on February 3, 1835. This play was well mounted and the audience was pleased.¹⁰⁹ This play was again performed on October 19, 1837. It was a realistic drama about life in the South before the War.¹¹⁰ On February 23, 1837, he presented Clio. This was a well staged play, the most meritorious feature being the earthquake scene in the fourth act.¹¹¹

Many comedy plays were performed in Kalamazoo. They were usually very well received by the citizens of the city, as the latter seemed to enjoy that type of entertainment. On May 17, 1837, A. O. Miller and his troupe

104. Gazette, May 3, 1834

105. Gazette, February 3, 1830

106. Gazette, January 5, 1832

107. Gazette, March 18, 1834

108. Gazette, September 24, 1835

109. Gazette, February 4, 1835

110. Gazette, October 20, 1837

111. Gazette, February 24, 1837

appeared at Union Hall in the play Hidden Hand. The audience was not large, but those that did attend laughed themselves almost to death.¹¹² On October 28, 1879, the farcical comedy of Widown Bedott was presented with Neil Burgess in the lead. Mr. Burgess as the widow could not be beat. The Hall was well filled and the audience was pleased as the performance was laughable to the end.¹¹³

One of the most favorite comedians at that time was Denman Thompson. He appeared as Uncle Josh in Joshua Whitcomb in 1878, 1879, 1881, 1884, and 1885. Mr. Thompson was a comedian of first quality and his audience was convulsed with laughter at his capital hits the Gazette reported.¹¹⁴

On March 19, 1880, Miss Ada Cavendish appeared as Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing. Miss Cavendish made a most excellent Beatrice and almost made one hold their breath with some of the flights of elequent acting. The audience was highly delighted with the performance.¹¹⁵

On February 5 and October 21, 1880, Charles L. Davis appeared in Alvin Joslin. This play was about a New England farmer. The audience was kept in a hearty laugh all the time. In fact, the play was devoted almost entirely to mirth, and it was one of those cases where there is too much of a good thing.¹¹⁶

On March 15, 1880, Miss Jane Combes appeared in Gilbert and Sullivan's comedy, Engaged. In the play as the sentimental, yet practical

112. Gazette, May 18, 1887

113. Gazette, October 29, 1879

114. Gazette, May 11, 1879

115. Gazette, March 20, 1880

116. Gazette, February 6, 1880

Belinda, Miss Combes created great fun by her peculiar rendition of this really difficult part.¹¹⁷

On April 1, 1881, Miss Helen Coleman appeared in Widow Bedott. Her version of the play was adopted from the original manuscript. It was a faithful representation of a possible character and not an extravagant caricature of humanity. The audience was well satisfied as could be seen by the continued laughter throughout the performance.¹¹⁸

On November 22, 1881 and September 19, 1882, Mr. M. B. Curtis appeared in Sam'l of Rosen. He always had a large audience as his comicalities of "Sam'l" were delightful.¹¹⁹

Another comedian who visited Kalamazoo was William Horace Lingard. In 1872, on May 26, he appeared in A Pretty Piece of Business. This play was well received and enjoyed by the audience.¹²⁰ On January 13, 1883, he was seen in Stolen Kisses. The play was presented to a slim audience which should have been smaller because of the quality of the play. It began at 8:15 and the three acts, including long waits, only lasted until 9:30. A few impersonations by Mr. Lingard brought it to an end at 9:45. This was certainly a short performance for the price and the quality did not make up for the quantity, said the Gazette.¹²¹

The Jolly Pathfinders were a group of musical comedians who visited Kalamazoo many times. On October 13, 1883, and October 31, 1884, they presented Six Peas in a Pod. The audience was in a state of laughter for the

-
117. Gazette, March 16, 1880
 118. Gazette, April 2, 1881
 119. Gazette, September 20, 1882
 120. Gazette, May 27, 1872
 121. Gazette, January 14, 1883

whole two hours. The play was one of the frothiest kind, made up of singing and comedy.¹²² On September 8, 1884, they presented a play entitled Scraps, which pleased the audience very much.¹²³ Again on September 7, 1887, they appeared in Kalamazoo. This time they presented a play called Fun by Express. There was nothing to the performance but fun, which was kept up for the whole evening.¹²⁴

On January 16, 1883, the Harrisons presented Our Infant, in Two Screams and One Shriek. This was an extremely funny play with the infant as the boss of the family. It kept the spectators in a grin all through the performance. The company was an excellent one.¹²⁵

On May 17, 1886, the kings of comedy, Baker and Farron were seen in A Soap Bubble. The play was simply a thread of dialogue which served to connect the special features which the two gentlemen introduced. Baker and Farron had a lot of power with which they pleased the audience who laughed and applauded for three hours.¹²⁶

Mr. Roland Reed appeared in Kalamazoo several times. On February 2, 1884 he appeared in the comedy Cheek. The play was well mounted and was a success as a mirth provoker.¹²⁷ On November 10, 1887 he appeared in Humbug. This play was brimful of fun. There was a peculiarity about Mr. Reed's humor that made him attractive because it was so different from that usually seen. The play was cleverly put together with a plot that kept the audience

122. Gazette, October 14, 1883
 123. Gazette, September 9, 1884
 124. Gazette, September 8, 1884
 125. Gazette, January 17, 1883
 126. Gazette, May 18, 1886
 127. Gazette, February 24, 1884

thinking what would be next. Mr. Reed was an excellent comedian and never permitted an opportunity to slip by where he could make a hit.¹²⁸ On March 22 and October 12, 1889, he appeared in The Woman Hater. Because his humor was of the dry and infectious order, he caught the interest of his audience and held it. On his last visit to Kalamazoo the Gazette was quite angry because the show was poorly patronized. It continued by saying:¹²⁹

"Kalamazoo's reputation as a show town is not the best and if the people do not take a tumble and be more liberal the first thing they know she will be in the soup, as no good attraction will stop here."

Miss Flora Moore, a comedienne, was seen in Bunch of Keys on January 22 and April 21, 1884. The play kept the audience in a roar all through the evening. However, the play was one that after seeing it once, the second time one would apt to be bored.¹³⁰

The comedian John T. Raymond was a very popular visitor in Kalamazoo. In 1879 he appeared in the play There's Million in It.¹³¹ On October 3, 1883, he appeared in In Paradise. At this time he scored another triumph. He had the magnetism about him which compelled laughter. If he would be given a good part in a play, no matter how worn and flimsey the plot would be, the audience would be sure to be thoroughly entertained.¹³² On March 7, 1885 he appeared in For Congress. This play was a campaign joke in four parts and a hit at the parties of the day.¹³³

When Sol Smith Russell appeared in Felix on November 14,

128. Gazette, November 11, 1887

129. Gazette, October 13, 1889

130. Gazette, April 21, 1884

131. Gazette, May 13, 1879

132. Gazette, October 14, 1883

133. Gazette, March 8, 1885

1885, he had a large audience. The piece was very originally constructed with good situations. Mr. Russell as Felix was unapproachable. The audience was very appreciated and the convulsions of laughter that followed each other so closely must have been painful.¹³⁴

On February 2 and August 18, 1886, Fowler and Warmington's Comedy Company presented Skipped by the Light of the Moon. It was a highly enjoyable performance both times. The play was a gold mine and would continue as such for the Gazette believed.¹³⁵

On February 18, 1887, Monroe and Rice presented My Aunt Bridget. The comedy was part musical and all funny. The people who were in it were among the best on the stage. They were repeatedly applauded and the audience was sorry when the curtain fell on the last set.¹³⁶

In 1887, on October 25, Mr. Delboner and his company of comedians presented Puddle's Pond. Delboner was really a wonder. Some contortionists have been in Kalamazoo but there was never one equal to him. He could place himself in any conceivable position. He looked like a frog, acted like a frog, and he could double himself into more shapes than a frog.¹³⁷

On June 15, 1887, Waite's Comedy Company presented Uncle Reuben Lowden. This play was very amusing. One moment the audience was laughing at the antics of the honest old New Englander and at the next moment they were almost in tears in sympathy with the poor orphan. The admission

134. Gazette, November 15, 1885
 135. Gazette, February 3, 1886
 136. Gazette, February 19, 1887
 137. Gazette, October 26, 1887

price for the play were very low, ranging from ten to thirty cents.¹³⁸

The most popular comedian who ever came to Kalamazoo was W. T. Scanlan. Every time he appeared the audience was large. He was in Union Hall on May 19, 1884 in Friend and Foe.¹³⁹ He appeared in this same play again on September 16, 1884. His appearance was excellent.¹⁴⁰ On May 23, 1885, he appeared in The Irish Minstrel. He received the nickname of Peek-a-Boo. This was the title of a song that was in The Irish Minstrel. He rapidly won his way into the hearts of the people in this play.¹⁴¹ On January 11, 1886 and January 15, 1887, he appeared in a new play entitled Shane-no-Lawn. This play was written with the express purpose of furnishing a role which would bring out Mr. Scanlan's strong points. The play was greeted with enthusiastic and long continuing applause. The audience did not care about the play as much as just seeing Scanlan.¹⁴² The audience was the largest of the season when he appeared in 1877. The aisles were filled and many stood up during the entire performance.¹⁴³

The George S. Knight Comedy Company appeared in the play entitled Over the Garden Wall on December 18, 1885 and April 27, 1889. The play was a succession of laughable and absurd situations. These situations were sandwiched in with the latest hits for laughing purposes only. The company with Mr. and Mrs. George Knight was an excellent one and they produced the extra dash which made it very entertaining.¹⁴⁴

-
138. Gazette, June 16, 1887
 139. Gazette, May 20, 1884
 140. Gazette, September 17, 1884
 141. Gazette, May 24, 1885
 142. Gazette, January 12, 1886
 143. Gazette, January 16, 1887
 144. Gazette, April 28, 1889

On September 4, 1889, the Hettie Bernard-Chase Group presented Little Coquette. A more amusing skit than this one would be hard to find. The management was right when he advertised this play with one hundred fifty laughs in one hundred fifty minutes.¹⁴⁵

Donnelly and Gerrard were seen in the play Natural Gus on October 8, 1889. They were greeted by an audience which laughed until their sides were sore over the antics of the two comedians. There was a large audience that came to see this show.¹⁴⁶

On October 18, 1889, Mr. Harry Fitzgerald and Miss Ella Lewis appeared in Chuckles. These two were one of the best comedy combinations of the day. The nonsensical absurdity of the play was proof that it was rightly named. It was a conglomeration of drama, music, and singing, all of which were neatly woven together. There was a plot running through it, but it was of no consequence.¹⁴⁷

On January 14, 1890, Little Trixie was presented with Mr. J. A. La Borge and Miss ~~May~~ Smith Robbins. The play was a cleverly constructed pot pourri of everything funny, laughable, and entertaining. Nothing else could have been expected from an audience than enthusiastic outbursts of satisfaction.¹⁴⁸

On September 15, 1890, W. C. Ferrell's New York Comedy Company presented Miss Helen Vaughn in Estranged. The play was an excellent comedy with a tinge of pathos. The play was used as a medium to introduce the people of Kalamazoo to Miss ~~Vaughn~~. The audience was not slow in letting her know that she was

145. Gazette, September 5, 1889

146. Gazette, October 19, 1889

147. Gazette, October 19, 1889

148. Gazette, January 15, 1890

pleasing them. She had a strikingly pleasant manner and was natural in her work.¹⁴⁹

Many different Opera Companies came to Kalamazoo, In 1868 on May 28, the Italian Company, Gazziniga- Lotti was in town. They played to a small audience, although their entertainment was excellent.¹⁵⁰

On April 11, 1872, the Wallace Sisters were in town. They presented Loan of a Lover. There was a full house and the opera was good. The songs and dances by Minnie and Maude were encored and the talented children easily became favorites with the audience.¹⁵¹

There was a fine audience out to greet the Straksosch and Hess Opera Company on April 6, 1881. This was the first appearance of Miss Abbie Carrington as Arline in The Bohemian Girl. She had a full, round voice, which she had under perfect control.¹⁵²

On February 9, 1882, when the Hess Opera Company presented Olivette, there was a very small audience. The entertainment was excellent - one of the best seen in Kalamazoo. The Gazette felt that the¹⁵³

" . . . encouragement for opera companies to come here is very slim. In fact, last night proved that Kalamazoo deserved the name given it by managers, of the worst town for opera in the United States. Here we have every element of a good entertainment, yet the musical culture of Kalamazoo will pass it by and crowd a minstrel show."

The Hess Company did return however, on September 2, 1883, with Fra Diaualo. This time the reviews were not as good. The female chorus would have been

149. Gazette, September 16, 1890

150. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, May 30, 1868

151. Gazette, April 12, 1872

152. Gazette, April 7, 1881

153. Gazette, February 10, 1882

much better if there was one face among it that would not stop a clock. The entertainment taken as a whole was a failure.¹⁵⁴

The Wilbur Opera Company was in Kalamazoo in 1883 and 1884. On January 8, 1883 they presented Olivette. The opera was well put on and all parts won hearty applause. The singing was excellent, the acting was good, and the costumes were appropriate.¹⁵⁵ On January 18, 1884, the opera company presented Prince Consort. This opera was intended to satorize the petty German army with its forty generals and sixteen privates. The female chorus was very good and the audience had the pleasure of seeing young girls who did not look like grandmothers playing they were young once more.¹⁵⁶

The Thompson Opera Company were in Kalamazoo twice in 1885. On March 3, they presented Beggar Student. This company was a favorite wherever they appeared. The opera itself is one of the best of the popular light operas with catchy music and elegant costumes.¹⁵⁷ They appeared on October 22 in Gilbert and Sullivan's The Mikado. The ensembles were good and the bright colored costumes were handsome. The troupe was full of good looking girls.¹⁵⁸

Another famous Opera Company that came to Kalamazoo was Grau's New York Company. They appeared on February 24, 1890 in Brigands. This performance had the audience in a state of hilarity. They especially enjoyed fat Alice Hosmer's Spanish dance. This dance was so ridiculously funny that before she could retire, she was obliged to repeat it four times.¹⁵⁹

-
154. Gazette, September 3, 1883
 155. Gazette, January 9, 1883
 156. Gazette, January 19, 1884
 157. Gazette, March 4, 1885
 158. Gazette, October 23, 1885
 159. Gazette, February 25, 1890

In 1887, on September 26, the MacCollin Opera Company presented Francis, the Blue Stocking. It was the first time the opera had been presented in Kalamazoo and the company did an excellent job. There had never been seen in the town the superior of this one. It was a shame that as fine an entertainment as this should have been greeted by such a small house. But that did not seem to discourage the people, as they gave the opera the same as if there had been a fine house in attendance.¹⁶⁰

Besides the operas that were presented in Kalamazoo, there were ballets and concerts. One of the ballets that was seen in Kalamazoo was produced by McManus and Oats called Undine. It appeared in the city on September 21, 1868. It was almost devoid of plot, but the ballet was far in advance of any that had ever been seen in the city.¹⁶¹

The Doctor of Alladtora was presented on April 25, 1883. The costumes were brilliant and the dances superior.¹⁶²

A few concerts were also performed in the city. On March 10, 1884, Miss Emma Thursby gave an excellent piano concert.¹⁶³ On February 18, 1886, the Musin Grand Concert Company presented their program. Mr. Musin on the violin was one of the best who ever visited Kalamazoo.¹⁶⁴

On September 2, 1886, the Grand Concert Company appeared at the Academy of Music. The audience was only fair sized, but it was composed

-
160. Gazette, September 27, 1887
 161. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, September 22, 1868
 162. Gazette, April 26, 1883
 163. Gazette, March 11, 1884
 164. Gazette, February 19, 1886

of those who moved in the highest social circles and could appreciate such renditions. The program was as follows:¹⁶⁵

List		6th Rhapsodie
Becker	Herr Emil Ecker	Fruhlingzeit
Roff	Miss Lenore Sherwood	Covatina (Violin)
Mulder	H. Raphael Koester	Staccato Polka
Cowen	Madame Marie Gibson	Never Again
	Miss Lenore Sherwood	

On May 20, 1889, the Ludwig Concert Company presented a program in Kalamazoo. The performers were Irish national music artists. Their program was excellent.¹⁶⁶

Many lecturers came to Kalamazoo. Examples of what might have been seen here are as follows. Ralph Waldo Emerson came on February 10, 1860. His lecture was entitled "On Manners". It was one of the brightest character both in thought and style. The Gazette would not undertake an abstract of it as "no adequate ideas could be given of it by a simple synopsis."¹⁶⁷

On November 16, 1881, the committee in charge of the lecture program for the winter announced the following schedule:¹⁶⁸

November	29	- The Lyceium Opera Company
December	13	- Professor R. L. Cumnoch
	21	- Paine - Broccalini Combination
	31	- Judge Albion W. Taurgie
January	20	- Mrs. Levermore
	27	- John B. Gough
	31	- Joseph B. Angell

This is an example of the types of programs presented in

165. Gazette, September 3, 1886

166. Gazette, May 21, 1889

167. Gazette, February 17, 1860

168. Gazette, November 16, 1881

Kalamazoo: Great London Circus, Sanger's Royal British Managerie, and The Grand International Allied Show.¹⁷³ Their show included such speciality acts as Balinar - the largest elephant in the world, twenty elephants - all sizes and both sexes, twenty racing camels, two grant black and two sacred camels, Chang, the Chinese Giant, and General Tom Thumb and his wife.¹⁷⁴ Everytime this group visited, peofple from other cities would come to see the greatest show on earth.¹⁷⁵

Many minstrel shows appeared in Kalamazoo. The people enjoyed these and they were well attended. In 1868, on June 22, the McFarland California Minstrel Show visited the city. It was a good show as it was composed of good stock.¹⁷⁶ On February 13, 1869, The Great Arlington Minstrels appeared.¹⁷⁷ Also in the same year and the same week, the New Orleans Minstrels were in town.¹⁷⁸ On October 18, 1872, The Harry Robinson Minstrel Show performed. This group kept the audience in the best of humor during the entire performance.¹⁷⁹

On March 5, 1883, the Collender's Consolidated Spectacular Colored Minstrels appeared in Kalamazoo. It was seldom that a minstrel entertainment could give such general satisfaction.¹⁸⁰ On July 11, 1886, the Haverley Minstels performed. The program was varied and attractive, the jokes lively and new, and the music of an excellent order. There was nothing offensive and everything to enjoy in the performance.¹⁸¹

This is just a sample of the various troupes that came to Kalamazoo. It was a popular form of entertainment and the houses were always

173. Gazette, July 10, 1881

174. Gazette, July 10, 1881

175. Gazette, June 12, 1883

176. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, June 23, 1868

177. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, February 10, 1869

178. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, February 9, 1869

179. Gazette, October 19, 1872

180. Gazette, March 6, 1883

181. Gazette, July 12, 1886

full.

Many variety shows were performed in Kalamazoo as well as shows which were varied in type. One of the variety shows to appear in Kalamazoo was a combination of Messrs. Smith, Waldron, Cronin, and Martin who called themselves the "Big J". The group was seen in the city on October 21, 1881. Their specialities were very good, especially Mr. Martin's charcoal drawing of the handsome village attorney.¹⁸²

On Wednesday, January 3, 1883, M. B. Leavett and Tony Pastor's United Combination appeared in the city. Every nationality was represented and novelties were featured from the various nations.¹⁸³

Pat Rooney's New York Star Combination appeared in Kalamazoo in 1883, 1884, and 1885. The specialities of this group were excellent and the audiences were large.¹⁸⁴ Evidently the people of Kalamazoo liked these variety acts, as they always seemed to have full houses.

Examples of the shows that were varied in type were the tableaux, bell-ringers, animal acts, pantomime acts, and musical acts. In 1866, on October 5, Shakespearean Tableaux were shown at Union Hall. They included such scenes as a vision of Queen Katherine from Henry VIII, the player's scene from Hamlet, and the witches' scene from Macbeth.¹⁸⁵ On March 6, 1878, the Bunyan Tableaux showing scenes thirty feet in width and weighing over four thousand pounds were shown. These scenes were supposed to be the finest work of art of its kind in the world. There were over sixty magnificent scenes with life size figures.¹⁸⁶

182. Gazette, October 22, 1881

183. Gazette, January 4, 1883

184. Gazette, November 3, 1883

185. Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph, October 5, 1866

186. Gazette, March 7, 1878

Quite often bell ringers would visit the city. Some examples of the performers are as follows: in 1872, the Peak family played at Union Hall; in 1884, Werner's Concert Troupe performed in the city; in 1890, the Royal Hand Bell Ringers visited here. These performances were quite popular with the citizens of Kalamazoo.

A few animal acts appeared in the city. One example was Logienia and his troupe of learned birds, performing white mice, and Russian Cat which performed on October 25, 1868.¹⁸⁷ Another example was Professor Morris and his trained dogs and educated ponies which appeared on June 1, 1887. The military drill by the ponies would have put to blush many crack military companies.¹⁸⁸

The best pantomimé acts that ever visited Kalamazoo was Tony Denier's troupe with Grimaldi, the best trick clown in America. The group appeared in 1879, 1880, and 1885. They presented a very unique and interesting performance and the audience was in continuous merriment.¹⁸⁹

Some glee clubs also found their way to Kalamazoo. On June 14, 1882, the Mozart Glee Club presented a program here. The music was of a high class, but could be appreciated as popular music.¹⁹⁰ On April 12, 1890, the University of Michigan Glee and Banjo Club presented an excellent program.¹⁹¹ Also in 1890, on December 1, the Harvard quartette presented an excellent program of eleven numbers.¹⁹²

187. Gazette, October 16, 1868

188. Gazette, June 2, 1887

189. Gazette, May 17, 1879

190. Gazette, June 15, 1882

191. Gazette, April 13, 1890

192. Gazette, December 2, 1890

A different type of musical entertainment was presented by Mary and John McCoy. They appeared on October 18, 1883. They were blind musicians who graduated from the Michigan School for the Blind.¹⁹³ A musical treat for Kalamazoo came with the appearance of the McGibney Family. This group was composed of a mother, father, and fourteen children. They appeared on September 24, 1884. The talent of the entire family was undoubted. The sight of the family itself was worth the price of admission alone.¹⁹⁴

One can see that Kalamazoo had a rich variety of entertainment. Although every type of performance was seen here, the kind most preferred were the comedies and the minstrel shows. These shows had the largest audiences.

193. Gazette, October 20, 1883

194. Gazette, September 25, 1884

Home Talent

Private theatricals were a popular source of entertainment in Kalamazoo. During the '70's there were two clubs, the Amateur Dramatics Club and the Argonauts.¹ Some of the plays presented by the Amateur Dramatics Club were as follows.

On December 6, 1870, the Union Spy was presented. The old war feelings were aroused and the spectators imagined themselves as active participants in the scenes from the War. The project was purely for benefit, the entire proceeds going to the relief of the suffering poor without distinction of race, creed, party, religion, or sect.² The same play was again presented on February 23, 1872. The proceeds went to the poor.³

On April 2, 1872, The Hidden Hand was dramatized at Union Hall by the drama club. The play for an amateur performance was of such a character as to reflect honor on Kalamazoo.⁴

March 26, 1875 was the evening that Ten Nights in a Bar Room was presented. The dramatic club spared no pains or expense in putting the piece on. Even a full orchestra was present.⁵

On June 11, 1876, The Dramatic Club gave a presentation

-
1. Scrapbook - Theaters, October 18, 1926
 2. Gazette, December 7, 1870
 3. Gazette, February 24, 1872
 4. Gazette, April 3, 1872
 5. Gazette, March 27, 1875

of Dicken's Cricket on the Hearth. The characters were as follows:⁶

John Perrybingle	D. Bleykee
Mr. Tackleton	C. Babcock
Cabb Plummer	F. H. Tuthin
Edward Plummer	I. N. Wattles
Dot	Miss Lulu Cobb
Bertha	Miss Florence Smith
Mrs. Feding	Miss Kate Webb
May	Miss Nellie Heevill
Lily Slowboy	Miss Jennie Silbelt
Spirit of the Cricket	Miss Edith Smith

The entertainment given at the residence of Mrs. William De Yoe on April 12, 1877 for the benefit of the home of the friendless was all its friends could deserve. The house was packed full to see Miss Ella Barnes in the leading role of Threasa. All the performers did well considering their ages.⁷

On December 4, 1878, the club gave a grand entertainment for the benefit of the public library. The comedy of Everybody's Friend was presented with an excellent cast of characters including W. H. Redington, C. J. Mason, Nat Wattles, Florence Smith, Clara Kennicott, and Mr. W. De Yoe.⁸

On January 1, 1880, the play Masks and Faces was presented for the benefit of the public library reading room. The play was well rendered for amateurs. Miss Kennicott and Mrs. Cooke were entitled to great credit for their energy and self-sacrifice. The costumes were all fine and appropriate and much better than many professional troupes can boast.⁹ On May 27, 1885, Mr. Frank Howard and one hundred ladies and gentlemen from Kalamazoo presented The Spy of Shilad. Although there were many things a harsh critic

6. Gazette, June 7, 1876

7. Gazette, April 13, 1877

8. Gazette, December 5, 1878

9. Gazette, January 2, 1880

might censure, this drama was very satisfactory as a whole.¹⁰

The Argonauts were not as active as the Amateur Dramatics Club. On September 29, 1881, they presented a play entitled Decker. The cast included:¹¹

Clifford Gardner.....	Frank Knappen
Byron Stakes.....	Fred Hadge
Moses Decker.....	R. F. Hill
Rev. Mr. Blodgett.....	F. A. Severns
Robert Benjamin.....	George Bemier
Mrs. Benjamin.....	Miss Minnie Sherwood
Safaith Decker.....	Miss Den Bleyker

On February 1, 1882, the group presented Electric Disturbances. It was the old story of love with a new feature of electricity moved in.¹²

The theater played a definite part in the life of Kalamazoo citizens. The interest in the theater grew in the city during 1860-1890, the same as in the rest of the United States. With the building of the Academy of Music in 1882 the people showed their interest for better productions. Better performers came to Kalamazoo during the late 1800's and in most cases they were greeted with a large audience.

10. Gazette, May 28, 1885

11. Gazette, September 30, 1881

12. Gazette, February 2, 1882

Bibliography

Books

Toby Cole (Editor), Actors on Acting, Crown Publishers, New York 1949.

Oral Sumner Cood and Edwin Mins, The American Stage, in the series The Pageant of America, Yale University Press, New Haven 1929.

M. Willson Disher (Editor), The Cowells in America being The diary of Mrs. Some Cowell during her husband's concert tour in the years 1860-1861, Oxford University Press, London 1934.

Arthur Hornblow, A History of the Theater in America Volume II, J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia 1919.

Newspapers

Kalamazoo Gazette - 1858-1890, passim.

Kalamazoo Daily Telegraph - 1864-1869, passim .

Kalamazoo Gazette, Centennial Issue - January 21, 1906.

Scrapbooks

Kalamazoo - Theaters, in the Kalamazoo Public Library.