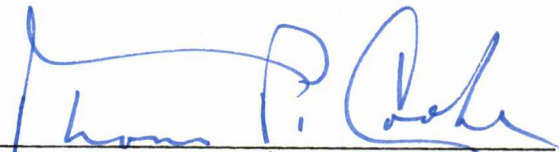
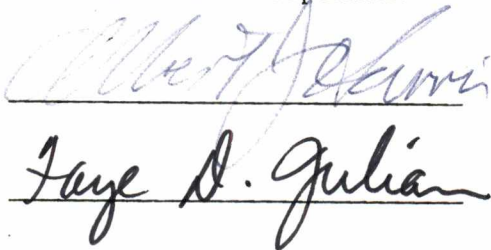


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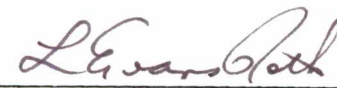
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Chris Alan Deatherage entitled "An Actor of Yesterday: A Critical Review of the Career of David Warfield." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Speech and Theatre.

  
Thomas P. Cooke, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and  
recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:

  
Vice Chancellor  
Graduate Studies and Research

AN ACTOR OF YESTERDAY: A CRITICAL REVIEW  
OF THE CAREER OF DAVID WARFIELD

A Thesis  
Presented for the  
Master of Arts  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Chris Alan Deatherage

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## ABSTRACT

"An Actor of Yesterday: A Critical Review of the Career of David Warfield" is a study which defines Warfield as a popular and talented actor during the first quarter of the twentieth century and which seeks to examine the question of how Warfield's development as an actor influenced his award of critical acclaim. It specifically traces Warfield, the actor, through the development of his performance as Anton von Barwig in The Music Master and of Shylock in The Merchant of Venice, and by means of historically analyzing the critical reviews of these two productions, it shows how this popular star achieved a critical acclaim above which his talents could not carry him.

An Introduction presents the study in detail. It defines the problem, explains the methodology, reviews the source materials, and outlines each chapter.

The first chapter begins with a brief biography which establishes Warfield's roots and his unrefined talent in his native San Francisco, describes his struggle to become a top star in New York City, and briefly focuses on his retirement years. A critical overview of the actor's career follows the biographical section, and it concludes with a statement addressing the actor's measure of critical acclaim.

The second chapter examines how Warfield's talents took hold of the public and critical eye. It focuses upon how he molded a flat character into a three-dimensional entity, how the critics and audiences marveled at this depth of characterization, and how the portrait seemed to grow

from year to year. It then weighs these elements as to how they created for Warfield a critical and popular esteem rivaled only by Joseph Jefferson.

Chapter III examines Warfield's execution of the only role he ever assumed which was a true test of his talent. It explores the full measure of the actor's creation of Shylock and the effect his thoroughness had upon the performance. It considers the anticipation of the public and critics alike which heralded this Merchant of Venice, and it shows how that anticipation evolved into disappointment. And an epilogue which comprises Chapter IV takes a final look at the life and career of David Warfield, an actor of yesterday.

## FOREWORD

For centuries countless men and women have dedicated their lives and talents to the performing art called "theatre." They struggled against the hardships of poverty and persecution with an unfailing belief in their vocation, and their fervid efforts resulted in the firm establishment of a tradition which continues today. Some were lucky enough to gain fame and lead glorious lives; the majority, however, were not. Moderate success relegated them to the background, making of them a perpetual supporting element which slowly and respectfully ennobled a once circumspect profession. They formed the backbone of the theatre, giving it vigor, strength and sustenance, yet they remain a forgotten fraternity.

David Warfield was one of their number. He was not a great actor, yet he respected his medium, took pride in his accomplishments, and earned his share of success and fame the hard way. He never seemed to become haughty, conceited or ungrateful, always exuding an air of gentleness, humility and openness, and in his quiet way he became one of the most prominent figures of the American theatre during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Although his rags-to-riches life-story was, and is, not a famous or noble one, it exemplifies the dedication shown by that fraternity he chose as his own. He stands with them, not in the limelight, but in the dim shadows, always supporting, never leading.

When I began searching for a thesis project I purposely set out to choose a subject which would hold my attention as well as my reader's and provide at the same time a worthwhile addition to the vast body of theatrical literature. I reasoned that my efforts would best be spent exploring the career of some actor, and somehow--I do not remember--my search introduced me to an actor named David Warfield. I discovered that he was well-thought of by his contemporaries, popular with his audiences and forgotten by historians. My curiosity was aroused, and my thesis project was born.

The investigation into Warfield's career has been an on-going passion for a number of years. It began in the form of a term paper, and after nine months of exhaustive research and countless hours of writing and rewriting, it evolved into the present volume. This project has been interrupted many times in order to pursue other projects, but when they were completed, it never failed to renew an old curiosity concerning the history and significance of an actor's career. Satisfying that curiosity has proven informative, challenging and entertaining, and it has completely fulfilled the requirements I sought from the project.

I would be greatly remiss if I did not acknowledge a number of people without whose assistance this work could not be possible. I wish to thank the staff of Interlibrary Services at The University of Tennessee-Knoxville for their diligence in obtaining materials on my behalf; to the New York Public Library for making available microfilm prints of press scrapbooks without which this topic could not have been explored, and to Dr. Wandalie Henshaw and Dr. Barry V. Daniels for

suggestions offered during the project's early development. To Harriet Nichols Allen, I am deeply indebted for her uncanny ability to help me clarify and focus my thoughts in times of mental block as well as for her insightful editorial assistance and patient encouragement. I most especially wish to extend my gratitude to Dr. Thomas P. Cooke, Dr. Albert J. Harris and Dr. Faye D. Julian for their constructive comments, guidance and support in the completion of this project; we have participated in many projects together over the years, and I think it fitting that this one is added to the list. And lastly, for their support and faith which have sustained me throughout the years, I wish to thank the members of my family, to whom this work is dedicated.

October 2, 1982

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## INTRODUCTION

David Warfield, former burlesque player turned into a legitimate star by David Belasco, was one of the most popular performers on the American stage for twenty-three years. Yet he maintained that popularity by starring in only six productions between 1901 and 1924. His critics and fellow thespians often hailed him as a great, gifted actor and as the most likely successor of Richard Mansfield or Joseph Jefferson for the title of America's foremost actor.<sup>1</sup> The eminent critic William Winter asserted that no one could have predicted that Warfield would "become one of the most popular serio-comic actors of the modern stage,"<sup>2</sup> and the Galveston News reported:

David Warfield . . . like the late Joseph Jefferson . . . will be remembered long after he has passed over to the great majority. Mr. Jefferson appeared in "Rip Van Winkle" forty years, and his acting made of it a classic. Now it is David Warfield, and there is no one in view who can equal him in emotional roles.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, David Warfield received no honored place in American theatre history as did Mansfield and Jefferson. Garff B. Wilson wrote in

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<sup>1</sup>"The Greatest Living American Actor," Current Literature, February 1908, p. 148; "'Music Master' Pleases Once More," Galveston News, 20 October 1916, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks--The Music Master (hereafter designated as DBC-MM), p. 19; Untitled, Cincinnati Times, 29 February 1908, Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks (hereafter designated as RLC), vol. 477, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>The Life of Belasco, 2 vols., ed. Jefferson Winter (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), 2:10.

<sup>3</sup>"'Music Master' Pleases Once More," 29 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 19.

Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre: "David Warfield was hired by Belasco directly from a Weber and Fields burlesque."<sup>4</sup> Other historians offer little more information on Warfield's career; Glenn Hughes mentions Warfield as a famous player for whom Belasco wrote plays, and Bernard Hewett lists Warfield as one of Belasco's stars who had formerly been employed by Weber and Fields.<sup>5</sup>

By comparison, historians do discuss in some detail the careers of both Mansfield and Jefferson. To them, Mansfield was a mannered, eccentric "character star" who used the stage to express some facet of his personality. They acknowledge Joseph Jefferson as being a consummate artist who was "a national institution" and whose fame surpassed all of the popular stars of the late nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup>

In light of Warfield's reputation as a respected and popular actor, one has to ask why history ignores him. He appears to be an accomplished actor who contributed to the American theatre a consummate artistic talent equal to the power of Mansfield or Jefferson, yet historians consistently fail to discuss and analyze Warfield's career, though they discuss the careers of Mansfield and Jefferson, and thus seem to negate the significance of Warfield's talent. Either David Warfield was as

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<sup>4</sup>(Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 200.

<sup>5</sup>A History of the American Theatre 1700-1950 (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1951), p. 294; Theatre U.S.A. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 273.

<sup>6</sup>Hughes, p. 276; Lloyd Morris, Curtain Time (New York: Random House, 1953), pp. 205, 266; Howard Taubman, The Making of the American Theatre (New York: Coward McCann, 1965), p. 104; Wilson, p. 276.

good an actor as his reputation and thereby should hold a place of reverence alongside Mansfield and Jefferson, or he merely appealed to a certain theatre audience whose tastes were simple and whose artistic principles were of the commonest standards. The answer seems to take root in an observation from the respected critic, Walter Pritchard Eaton:

. . . Mr. Warfield has not yet in his career on the "legitimate" stage . . . played any part in which sweetness does not overwhelmingly preponderate, in which the contest between good and evil is more than a skirmish. He has yet to show us that he can play a scoundrel or shed illumination on the dark places of human conduct and motives. By the same token, too, he has played no part with an intellectual appeal. He has yet to show us that he can suggest the dignity of the mind as well as of the heart; that he can bring light as well as sweetness. These tasks await him in the future, and on his performance of them will depend if not his immediate popularity certainly his final award of dramatic fame.<sup>7</sup>

This study, therefore, will analyze Warfield's development as an actor, with respect to Eaton's charge quoted above, by comparing Warfield's performance of his most popular role with his most challenging one. A discussion of Anton von Barwig in The Music Master, Warfield's most popular role, will illustrate the actor's performance of roles where sweetness is dominant and good easily triumphs over evil, and it will examine the actor's monumental effectiveness in roles with an emotional appeal. A discussion of Warfield's most challenging role, that of Shylock, will examine the actor's execution of a role wherein the dark side of human nature and the dignity of the mind combine to

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<sup>7</sup>"About 'A Grand Army Man'," New York Sun, 20 October 1907, RLC, vol. 477, p. 2.

create a character whose appeal is primarily intellectual, and it will analyze how Warfield's limitations as an actor affected his final award of dramatic fame.

In the preparation of this study, use has been made of the historical method to explore and organize the plethora of uncovered information. Each piece of evidence presented has been carefully analyzed for its meaning, evaluated for its significance, and to whatever extent possible, questioned for its verity. It has then been organized and reported in what is hoped to be a readable, informative review of the career of David Warfield.

Resource materials which went into this study cover a wide variety of printed materials and fall into five general categories: theatre reference works, biographies and autobiographies of Warfield's contemporaries, books of collected criticism, feature articles and reviews in magazines and newspapers, several dissertations, and two special collections.

The present manuscript is divided into four chapters. Chapter I, entitled "Profile of a Passing Player," is written in two basic parts. The first half will introduce David Warfield in a succinct but complete biographical account which will begin with the actor's youth in San Francisco, will follow him to New York and the various theatre jobs he held before joining Belasco, and will touch upon his retirement years. The second half will provide a critical overview of Warfield's career, from his days in burlesque to his last performance in The Merchant of

Venice, and will discuss the critics' perceptions of the actor's talent and abilities in character delineation.

Chapter II, entitled "Legend of the Sweet Tears," will chronicle the phenomenon that was David Warfield in The Music Master and will contend that Warfield's success in the role was directly due to his ability to give the theatregoing public a character whose sentimentally bittersweet story would allow that public to shed "sweet tears." The first half of the chapter will review the development of the production, will summarize the plot, will list where and when the play was performed, and will discuss the statistical figures which attest the verity of this legendary production. The second half will reconstruct, point by point, Warfield's performance of Anton von Barwig by analyzing the comments of the critics as set down in their reviews, and it will conclude by analyzing Warfield's unquestionable ability to exact "sweet tears."

"The Jew that Warfield Drew," the third chapter in this thesis, will report the history of the Belasco-Warfield Merchant of Venice, and it will suggest that Warfield portrayed Shylock in order to prove his versatility as an actor and that his critics perceived in the performance no proof of that versatility. It will briefly outline the characterizations of several actors noted for their performances of Shylock before discussing in detail Warfield's conception of the role, and then the focus will shift toward a point-by-point analysis of the critical commentary found in the reviews of the production. The chapter will also contain such information as when and where the production was

performed, box office reports, Belasco's directorial decisions, and the unfavorable response to the production by the Jewish community.

The final chapter, an epilogue, will identify David Warfield as "an actor of yesterday." It will review the basic facts of his career and his method of acting, and it will address his popularity and his artistry. The chapter will offer an evaluation of Warfield's execution of the tasks Walter Pritchard Eaton had established for him and will suggest a reason why Warfield is an actor history forgot.

A study of the career of David Warfield offers more than a simple history of an actor or the mere chronicle of his accomplishments. Underneath it is the representation of an age in the American theatre where glory was gilded onto triviality, where simplicity was overshadowed by an innate cumbersomeness, and where a rare display of artistic genius atoned for a general mediocrity of histrionism. It narrates a period of transition which, with the deaths of Mansfield and Jefferson, saw the passing of popular institutions into history, which brought about a revolution in stagecraft and playwrighting, and which began to demand something more from its matinee idols. David Warfield plays a supporting role in this historical drama, and in examining his career for the quality of that performance, we become acutely aware of a rich heritage passed down by one generation to another, and we experience in retrospect the legacy left by an actor of yesterday.

## CHAPTER I

### PROFILE OF A PASSING PLAYER

"Acting," professed David Warfield, "is the art of reproduction, and there must be something to reproduce. That something must be emotion, and it must be in oneself."<sup>1</sup> The art of acting, the Warfield philosophy continued, was not easily defined and was an art dependent upon character into which an actor needed to inject his own personality. Warfield listed other elements of import--voice, eyes, mouth, gestures, craft, understanding, simplicity and sincerity--, but he maintained that personality and intuition were the two most important facets of the actor's technique. After deliberating the aspects of acting as he knew them, he would invariably conclude, "If you can, you can; if you can't, you can't."<sup>2</sup>

This simple-spoken philosophy was practiced by a man who was a popular actor on the American stage for more than a quarter of a century. It guided him through the back-street variety halls of New York, led him to fame upon the burlesque stage, and carried him into stardom in the legitimate theatre. It gained him critical plaudits which touted him as the successor of Richard Mansfield to the title of

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<sup>1</sup>David Warfield, "How I Make People Cry," Kansas City Times, 20 June 1912, Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks (hereafter designated as RLC), vol. 477, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup>"Greatness," Philadelphia North American, n.d., RLC, vol. 477, p. 57.

America's greatest actor. Yet, it did not preserve his memory in theatre annals or his once prestigious position in the theatrical hall of fame.

David Warfield stood in the hall of fame beside Richard Mansfield and Joseph Jefferson III. After Mansfield's death, critics questioned whether Warfield should succeed the late actor as the leading player of the day. A statement from the Cincinnati Times read:

Now that Richard Mansfield is dead, Mr. Warfield is probably the first of the applicants for the title of the first actor of the American stage. It would be a bit hard to name a second to him, too.<sup>3</sup>

And Warfield was deemed the only actor equal to Joseph Jefferson's portrayal of emotional roles. The Outlook stated:

Mr. Warfield, who is as unaffectedly and simply human as was Mr. Jefferson, succeeds, as did Jefferson, in vitalizing the thinnest of plays into an appealing drama, and furnishes another illustration of the perfection of his art in the field which he has chosen to make his own.

Forrest Arden simply decreed: "The mantle of Joseph Jefferson has fallen on the shoulders of David Warfield."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>"David Warfield," New York Clipper, 26 December 1903, p. 1034; Walter Pritchard Eaton, The American Stage Today (Boston: Small, Maynard and Company, 1908), p. 175; "The Greatest Living American Actor," Current Literature, February 1908, p. 198; Untitled, 29 February 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup>"'Music Master' Pleases Once More," Galveston News, 29 October 1916, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks--The Music Master (hereafter designated as DBC-MM), p. 19; "A Poor Play, a Good Actor," The Outlook, 18 January 1908, p. 115; Forrest Arden, "David Warfield Tells of Ups and Downs of His Stage Life," Chicago Examiner-American, 17 March 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 106.

While all opinions did not agree that Warfield was heir apparent to either Mansfield or Jefferson, critics generally agreed that his stature would receive a prominent place in American theatre history. It was noted, for example, that in spite of Warfield's inauspicious inauguration into the theatre he had survived to become the leader of the American stage. William Winter asserted that had it not been for Warfield's great mentor, David Belasco, Warfield "would have remained until the end of his career a denizen of the music halls, instead of becoming . . . one of the most loved and admired actors of our stage." Belasco himself wrote that Warfield was America's greatest actor whose stature had been achieved by a deftly convincing oratory power and concluded:

Future historians of the drama will refer to him as a pioneer in naturalism, the actor who introduced a new era in stage art, by acting a part not as other actors acted it but as men lived it.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, the assessment of Belasco and the others who shared his opinion was proven inaccurate. The chroniclers of American theatre history did not award David Warfield the stature that the actor's peers had predicted. In five texts of American theatre history, Warfield was casually mentioned; a typical example read: "He [Belasco] hired David Warfield from a Weber and Field burlesque show and made him a highly

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<sup>5</sup>Hugh H. Huhn, "Great Actors and Actresses I Have Met--David Warfield," Memphis Commercial Appeal, 26 September 1915, p. 9; Robert Grau, The Stage in the Twentieth Century (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 77; William Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2 vols. (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), 2:14; David Belasco, "David Warfield: Our Greatest Actor," Human Life, April 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 33.

successful character actor."<sup>6</sup> The most definitive discussion of Warfield read:

He [Belasco] wanted an emotional male star, and he made the improbable choice of a dialect comedian from the company of Weber and Fields, David Warfield, whom he had first met years earlier as an usher in the Bush Street Theatre in San Francisco. Warfield had never before played serious drama, but in Charles Klein's The Auctioneer and The Music Master, and later in Belasco's drama dealing with the physical survival after death The Return of Peter Grimm, he became so popular as a specialist in sentiment and pathos that he amassed a fortune and was able to retire from the stage.

However, these same historians devoted considerable space to Richard Mansfield and Joseph Jefferson. They wrote of their backgrounds, their successes, their failures, and their influence upon the development of acting and the theatre. They even quoted these actors and thus gave significance to their opinions. In these five texts, approximately twenty pages were devoted to the life and career of each Mansfield and Jefferson while a collective two paragraphs and eleven sentences were bestowed upon Warfield.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Garff B. Wilson, A History of American Acting, (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. 205. Cf. Ibid., p. 184; Idem, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 200; Howard Taubman, The Making of the American Theatre (New York: Coward McCann, 1965), p. 114; Bernard Hewett, Theatre U.S.A. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p. 273; Glenn Hughes, A History of the American Theatre 1700-1950 (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1951), p. 281.

<sup>7</sup>Lloyd Morris, Curtain Time (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973), p. 299.

<sup>8</sup>Cf. Hewett, Theatre U.S.A., on Jefferson: pp. 198-203, 327, on Mansfield: pp. 257, 280-83, 291, 297; Hughes, A History of the American Theatre 1700-1950, on Jefferson: pp. 73, 135, 151, 167, 187, 189, 191,

The various accounts of David Warfield's career as an actor present two conflicting viewpoints. A certain group of his contemporary critics felt that Warfield was a revered actor whose talent and contribution to the American theatre represented an achievement equal to that of Richard Mansfield and Joseph Jefferson. Other contemporaries, and the historians who followed, make little or no assessment of Warfield's talent or his career, indicating that his contribution to the American theatre was insignificant. These differing viewpoints arouse a certain curiosity about the life and career of David Warfield. Is he worthy of his reputation and deserving of an honored place next to Mansfield and Jefferson, or did he merely appeal to a certain audience whose judgement was based upon common, inartistic standards?

David Warfield (né Wohlfelt or Wollfeld) was born in San Francisco on November 28, 1866.<sup>9</sup> The eldest of Sigmund and Louise Wohlfelt's

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210, 245, 249, 265, 268, 277, 318, 444, on Mansfield: pp. 234, 276, 281, 295, 318, 328, 330, 332, 334, 340, 342, on Warfield: pp. 281, 294, 330, 335, 357; Morris, Curtain Time, on Jefferson: pp. 77-78, 82, 140, 189, 190-91, 205, 207, 224, 231, 236, 237, 264, 270, 276, 288, 364, on Mansfield: pp. 223, 266-68, 276, 286, 302, on Warfield: pp. 299, 307; Taubman, The Making of the American Theatre, on Jefferson: pp. 102, 104, 121, 126, on Mansfield: pp. 116, 122, 126, 139, on Warfield: pp. 114-15; Wilson, A History of American Acting, on Jefferson: pp. 97, 109, 116, 120, 121, 146, 159, 162, 169-71, on Mansfield: pp. 206-13, 218, on Warfield: pp. 184-105; Idem, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre, on Jefferson: pp. 33, 79, 92, 144, 161, 165, 169-71, 177, 200, 258, 271, 275, on Mansfield: pp. 275-78, 336, on Warfield: p. 200.

<sup>9</sup>This is the official date of birth given by Warfield; he could, however, have been as much as three years older, the exact date of birth unknown due to the destruction of all public records in 1906 by the earthquake and subsequent fire that struck San Francisco in April of that year. E.g., in 1906 Warfield wrote that at seventeen he became a

four children, Warfield always looked back upon his early childhood as a time in which his thoughts were constantly centered on the theatre and everything connected with it. He related that as a small boy he could mimic people's mannerisms and would often entertain his school chums with some new impersonation. Of this period in his life Warfield wrote: "All this was really only those instincts waking up in me that later made me an actor."<sup>10</sup>

About 1880 Warfield discovered the San Francisco theatre district, sought every opportunity to witness performance after performance, and tried to break into the business while selling matches and newspapers to the theatre district's employees and patrons. He was described as

. . . a pathetic looking little chap . . . who had a plaintive smile and a genius for imitating stage favorites. He was laughed out of every theatre in town but continued to haunt them, determined someday to secure a part.<sup>11</sup>

When he was fourteen,<sup>12</sup> Warfield was hired as a program boy at the Standard Theatre and became an usher at M. B. Leavitt's Bush Street

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program boy at the Standard Theatre, and 1917 he wrote that the event occurred at age fourteen. Cf. David Warfield, "My Yesterdays," Bohemian, December 1906 and Idem, "My Own Story," pt. 1, McClure's, September 1917.

Unless specifically cited, the biographical data is taken primarily from parts one and two of "My Own Story" with some additional information drawn from Gary D. Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography."

<sup>10</sup>David Warfield, "My Own Story," pt. 1, McClure's, September 1917, RLC, vol. 478, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup>Helen M. Morosco and Leonard Paul Duggar, The Oracle of Broadway (Caldwell, Idaho: Claxton Printers, Ltd., 1944), p. 12.

<sup>12</sup>This account was chosen because it was used most consistently by Warfield.

Theatre two years later. The positions he held at these theatres only enhanced his dream of a stage career because he felt that they transported him a step nearer to fulfilling that dream.

Warfield wrote that during these years he had the opportunity to see acting and to criticize it as a first step toward learning his craft. He marveled at such talented actors as James O'Neill and Edwin Booth (whom he declared to be the greatest actor he had ever seen), but ironically it was the bad actors who fed his ambition to go onto the stage: ". . . what made me determine more than anything else to become an actor was not the good acting that I saw, but the bad acting."<sup>13</sup>

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact chronological order of the following events because accounts vary and dates are not included. While ushering at the Bush Street Theatre, Warfield's acting talent was clandestinely employed. The manager of the theatre, C. P. Hall, was notoriously strict in granting free passes to the gallery, and when he did so, it was his personal habit to call up the stairs to the doortender, "All right for two up there." One night Hall found the gallery packed with boys. The manager sensed some deception, and on the following night, he hid in a turn of the gallery stairs. The sound of "All right for two up there" drifted past him, and Hall caught his young usher in another attempt to sneak a couple of his friends into the theatre. Warfield lost his job that night.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>David Warfield, "My Yesterdays," Bohemian, December 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup>Felix Isman, Weber and Fields (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1924), p. 239.

Sometime after he lost this job, Warfield received encouragement to go on the stage, and he began auditioning for several California touring companies. He was hired by Bartley Campbell as an extra in Siberia--a very spectacular production with impressively ornamented Russian costumes and several long ballets. After one of the ballets, the impish Warfield muttered, "Now we get the kidney ballet," without thinking. The remark happened to be heard by the management, and Warfield was dismissed from the company for his indiscretion. The incident, however, did not deter his ambition.<sup>15</sup>

Warfield's next venture on stage found him as a thirteen-dollar-a-week member of an amateur repertory group headed by an aspiring actress named Fanny Wood. He had been introduced to her by a mutual friend, Frank Wright, who had been hired as manager and leading man for the company. Miss Wood's plan was to present a different play every night during a tour of Southern California's smaller towns. The first--and only--production was The Ticket of Leave Man in which Warfield played the role of Melter Moss.

The show opened in Napa, California to "a few people in addition to the 'deadheads',"<sup>16</sup> and was a failure. Deteriorating patronage forced Miss Wood to close at the end of the week, and Warfield returned to San Francisco and a job at the Bush Street Theatre. Later that same year, 1888, Warfield joined another repertory company, this time playing an

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<sup>15</sup>David Warfield, "My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm," American Magazine, December 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 1, RLC, vol. 478, p. 106.

old man in The Queen's Shilling. This experience also ended after one week, and Warfield wrote that from the opportunity he had "gained nothing . . . but confidence, which is about all that experience with a stock company affords."<sup>17</sup>

It was during this period of his life that Warfield began entertaining his friends at social functions, and their applause served to feed his ambition. This period was filled, too, with many one-night stands which Warfield termed his "feeling out" period wherein he learned the technical side of acting. At the same time, he felt "the dawning of an appreciation of the fact that there was something wonderful about the art, even more wonderful than it looked from the front of the house."<sup>18</sup>

The climax of his amateur period came when the young Wohlfelt, adopting the surname of Warfield, appeared at the Wigwam, a cheap San Francisco vaudeville house that allowed smoking and beer for an admission price of ten to thirty cents per seat. Warfield had persuaded the manager to allow him to try his act which was little more than five minutes of the German, Irish and Italian dialect stories he had been using to entertain his friends, plus a burlesque of three stars in famous scenes (Sarah Bernhardt's death scene in Camille, Henry Irving in The Bells and Tomasso Salvini in Othello--even though he had never seen Salvini perform).

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<sup>17</sup>"My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm," RLC, vol. 478, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Second on the bill, he grew more and more nervous as his appearance approached and at one point seriously wished that the act preceding him would never end. But it did, and Warfield pulled himself together and tried to walk out on stage like a professional. The story of what happened follows in Warfield's own words:

I put on a smile and tried to speak, but there was something the matter with my voice. I began a story, but the thread of it got lost--my Italian was speaking German and my Irishman was trying to talk with an Italian accent. People in the audience began to look at each other and grin.

"Try a song!" someone shouted, and there were other suggestions from the audience--less pleasant ones. I began my story all over again.

I had good material to work with if I could get it over--I knew that. But I didn't know how to get it over. I didn't even know how to make myself heard. There was a lot of noise in the theatre at best, and as I struggled on with my story it increased to an uproar. The stage manager beckoned to me from the wings. The curtain was coming down, but not soon enough for the audience. I heard a hissing as if ten thousand steam pipes had suddenly burst. The manager, disgusted, told me to wash up and go home.<sup>19</sup>

This painful experience forced the twenty-three-year-old Warfield to decide to try his luck in New York. He had always loved San Francisco and had lived there all of his life, yet because of his "failure" at the Wigwam, he decided there was no future for him in the San Francisco theatre, and that if he were ever to succeed as an actor, his success would have to be made in New York. This decision made, he arranged a benefit for himself which raised a total of sixty dollars to which his mother added another fifty dollars. From this money he purchased a one-way ticket to New York.

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<sup>19</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 1, RLC, vol. 478, p. 106.

On the eleventh day of November 1890, David Warfield left San Francisco on his six-day journey to New York, putting all thoughts of failure out of mind and vowing never to return to San Francisco unless he was a "star." In later years he was to credit that failure at the Wigwam as the luckiest thing that ever happened to him, for it was that incident which acted as the catalyst in uniting Warfield with another San Franciscan, David Belasco, who thirteen years later would bring this "failure" home as a star.

On November 17, 1890 David Warfield arrived in New York. The forty-five dollars with which he had arrived in the city were almost exhausted as Warfield began canvassing the amusement houses for a job. The first job he accepted was at Paine's Concert Hall on Eighth Avenue. He wandered inside and approached the manager, selling himself with a mixture of truth and fabrication, saying that he had last played San Francisco and that all of his notices had been lost in transit. Paine auditioned him on the spot and offered him fifteen dollars a week to perform the same dialect stories with which he had "failed" at the Wigwam. Three days after Warfield opened, Paine placed a placard in the window which read: "David Warfield/Direct from San Francisco."

A short time after Warfield began the job at Paine's, he ran into William A. Brady, a fellow San Franciscan who had been running amateur productions in the San Francisco Bay area when Warfield had sold matches on the streets. Brady had become a successful producer and was then in the process of casting a play called The Inspector. He offered Warfield the role of Hiram Joskins at twenty-five dollars a week. It was a

minimal part, and Warfield was to do his "specialty" [i.e., his Hebrew routine] in the last act. Warfield gladly accepted the role and was told to inform Brady's office that he had been hired.

Warfield went into rehearsal at once and opened The Inspector a few days later in Newark, New Jersey. His "specialty" in the last act--the story of an argument at a Jewish lodge--was well received by everyone but Brady who told him to cut it, explaining that the actor was not suited for Jewish characters. Years later, after Warfield had made popular a Jewish character named Simon Levi, Brady wrote:

. . . Every time I reflected with appropriate satisfaction that it was I who . . . introduced him to the legitimate--which I did--I also have to reflect that, in all solemn idiocy, I told him he couldn't play a Jewish character.<sup>20</sup>

The engagement for Brady lasted about three months, and Warfield then went on to play Honora, an Irish washerwoman, in Mark Murphey's production of O'Dowd's Neighbors. He was offered thirty dollars a week with the promise of a five dollar raise if he were well received. He got the raise and stayed with the production for the next ten weeks. He withdrew from this company because he feared that he would be stereotyped as an Irish washerwoman, and he returned to New York for the summer.

In the fall of 1891, Warfield was hired on reputation alone by John H. Russell for the number two company of The City Directory, one of the biggest hits of the day. Three weeks after Warfield had been performing on the road, Russell happened to see a performance of this

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<sup>20</sup> William A. Brady, Showman (New York: E. P. Dutton and Sons, 1937), pp. 237-38.

company and was so impressed with the actor that he promoted Warfield to the number one company. After Warfield joined that company in Boston, the production moved to the Bijou Theatre in New York for sixteen weeks. Here, he celebrated the anniversary of his metropolitan debut at Paine's Concert Hall and ended his second metropolitan season.

Next, Warfield got a chance to tackle the kind of role he had been seeking: a country boy named George Washington Littlehales in A Nutmeg Match starring Annie Lewis. The pre-New York tour proved to be less than successful, and on the eve of the New York opening at the Fourteenth Street Theatre, the manager asked Warfield to insert his Jewish specialty. Warfield protested on the grounds that the specialty was out of place, and Miss Lewis concurred, adding that if the specialty were played, she would not perform in the scene. Warfield was forced to do the act, and the star kept her word.

Warfield "made so encouraging a hit"<sup>21</sup> with A Nutmeg Match that he was engaged for the next season by Donnelly and Girard to do his old specialty work for seventy dollars a week. He accepted the exceptionally good offer, but by the beginning of the 1893-94 season, he had begun to feel that A Nutmeg Match had brought him one step closer to the legitimate stage and to continue his specialty would be a step backward in his career. He negotiated his release from the contract and spent the next few months in idleness.

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<sup>21</sup>"My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm," RLC, vol. 478, p. 31.

This inactive period ended one morning when Warfield encountered John H. Russell on Broadway. Russell asked if Warfield would like to return to his company for sixty dollars a week and if he could leave for Chicago that afternoon. Warfield agreed immediately, rejoined The City Directory in the midwest, and later began rehearsing a new play entitled About Town.

The nominal role in About Town was that of a rich butcher; the scene was one in which the butcher accompanied his wife (who was attired in the most fashionable evening dress) and several guests to a social function.<sup>22</sup> As Warfield had no lines in the scene, he knew that he would be lost as an actor unless he did something distinct. So, he put his ingenuity to work: he purchased for his costume an antiquated dress suit which was not too shabby and a light-haired wig. His appearance so contrasted with his leading lady's that the audience was convulsed with laughter upon his entrance, and later he was to acknowledge that "the notices I got the next morning were the best I had ever had."<sup>23</sup>

It was with this company and during this season that Warfield first developed the charming portrait of the Jew which subsequently would hurl him into stardom. Warfield's big moment occurred in a riotous barber shop scene in the first act of About Town between an Italian, an Irishman and a Jew. Warfield based his portrayal upon the New York Jews

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<sup>22</sup>In one account the social event was a reception and in another it was a play. Cf. "My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm" and "My Own Story," pt. 1.

<sup>23</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 1, RLC, vol. 478, p. 107.

he had observed walking along Broadway. He copied their appearance by wearing a long frock coat, a derby hat pushed down over his ears and a collarless shirt. He applied luxuriously curling whiskers and incorporated the physical gestures he had remembered. His success prompted Russell, who held a great admiration for Warfield, to promise him employment during the next season, but the famous producer suffered a total mental collapse soon afterward, and Warfield was forced to seek employment elsewhere.

In 1895 he joined George W. Lederer's New York Casino Company where he remained for three seasons. From 1895-98 he played in such popular burlesques as The Merry World, In Gay New York, The Whirl of the Town, and The Belle of New York. It was through The Merry World that Warfield was able to thrust his East Side Jew into the limelight. After carefully studying the character of the real Jew--not the overdrawn, grotesque, impossible type to which the theatre patrons were accustomed but a lovable, gentle, kind character--Warfield approached Lederer about introducing it into the show. The producer was certain that the audience would not accept the character and declined to use it.

Warfield's chance to introduce this character came when the New York Herald arranged a benefit baseball game for their Ice Fund between two teams of actors. Each actor was to wear his current costume, but Warfield decided to appear as his Jew instead. He arrived at the Polo Grounds in his shabby outfit, carrying a basket, and began peddling cracked ice. The extra attraction was so successful that Lederer relented and allowed Warfield to put the act into the show.

Warfield left the Casino in 1898 over a casting dispute with Lederer. The actor desired a particular role in a new review called Yankee Doodle Dandy, but Lederer refused, explaining that he, Warfield, could not play a sustained role and that he should stick to bit parts. As fate would have it, Warfield soon received a better offer with the prestigious burlesque team of Weber and Fields.

In 1896 the team of Joe Weber and Lew Fields leased the Imperial Music Hall, located on the north side of West Twenty-ninth Street between Broadway and Sixth Avenue, and christened the refurbished theatre the Weber and Fields Music Hall. They opened on September 5, 1896, presenting burlesques that were unintentionally patterned after the shows William Mitchell had presented fifty years earlier at the old Olympic Theatre. They offered absurd travesties of Broadway hits mixed with elements of musical comedy and featured the prettiest, shapeliest chorus line in town. Photographs of this chorus line were in as much demand as those of any star. Over the years Weber and Fields promoted such actors as Lillian Russell, Louis Mann, Fay Templeton, DeWolf Hopper, Willie Collier, Peter Dailey, Sam Bernard and David Warfield. For eight years the theatre prospered until irreconcilable differences arose between the two stars.<sup>24</sup>

A few days after the disagreement with Lederer over Yankee Doodle Dandy, Warfield met Lew Fields coming out of the Music Hall. During the course of their conversation, Fields informed Warfield that Sam Bernard

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<sup>24</sup>T. Allston Brown, A History of the New York Stage, 3 vols. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1964), 3:307.

was leaving the Weberfields and asked Warfield if he would be interested in replacing Bernard. Warfield knew that he would accept this offer, but felt that he should first speak with Lederer. His boss, upon receiving the news of the offer, countered with an offer for twice the salary Warfield was to receive from Weber and Fields, adding that if he were to go with them he would fail because his "quiet methods would be lost completely in the uproar of a Weberfield show."<sup>25</sup> But Warfield had made up his mind and signed a contract with the happy family for three hundred dollars a week.

He first appeared with the Weberfields on September 8, 1898 in Hurley Burley. Of his performance the critic for the New York Clipper wrote that "David Warfield, a new member of the organization, appeared as Solomon Yankie, and his clever Hebrew impersonation soon won him a place among the old favorites of the company."<sup>26</sup> Two short pieces, one entitled The Heathen, a burlesque of The Christian, and the other, a burlesque of Richard Mansfield's Cyrano de Bergerac entitled Cyranose de Bric-a-brac, accompanied the Hurley Burley bill. Of Cyranose de Bric-a-brac, the Clipper found it to be somewhat below the standard travesty presented at the Music Hall and added that in spite of this circumstance the actors, Warfield as Le Fret included, "made the most of their opportunities which were not of the best."<sup>27</sup> Over the next two seasons,

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<sup>25</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 2, RLC, vol. 478, p. 108.

<sup>26</sup>"17 September 1898, p. 482.

<sup>27</sup>12 November 1898, p. 626.

Warfield played in a travesty of Daudet's Sappho called Sappolio, Barbara Fidgety (loosely based on Barbara Fritchie), Quo Vass Is?, Fiddle-dee-dee, Catherine, Floradora, and the first show of his second season with the Weberfields, Whirl-I-Gig.

The following excerpt from Whirl-I-Gig illustrates the kind of material Warfield interpreted night after night for three seasons. Warfield played Sigmund Cohenski, a millionaire Jew who was vacationing in Paris with his daughter Uneeda (who was in love with the dashing Captain Kingsbridge, U.S.N.).

UNEEDA: The Captain is my ideal of a hero.

COHENSKI: A hero! Is dot a business? A tailor is a business, a shoemaker is a business, but a hero? Better you should marry a bookkeeper!

UNEEDA: A bookkeeper? I suppose you think the pen is mightier than the sword.

COHENSKI: You bet you my life. Could you sign checks with a sword?<sup>28</sup>

On October 5, 1899, Warfield eloped to Jersey City with Mary Gabrielle Bradt, an Irish Catholic girl from San Francisco. Two years later he left the Weberfield's happy family to become a Belasco protégé, and three years afterward, Weber and Fields broke up over personal and artistic disagreements. By 1912, however, Weber and Fields had settled their differences and decided to organize a reunion of as many members of the happy family as they could. Some had died; the rest had gone on to other fields--Warfield at that time was a Belasco star performing in The Return of Peter Grimm--, but they proceeded with the plan, and on February 8, 1912, they presented The Weber and Fields Jubilee.

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<sup>28</sup>Isman, p. 258.

It was during the old poker scene from Hokey Pokey that Weber, Fields, Lillian Russell and Willie Collier were unexpectedly upstaged by an offstage cry. To their amazement, on strutted a Jewish peddler, "rubbing his hands, and chatting in the almost forgotten accents of the pre-Belasco Warfield." The Belasco star had shortened his usual performance of The Return of Peter Grimm and had donned his old make-up in order that he might join in the celebration.<sup>29</sup>

It is no wonder then that Warfield always spoke of his tenure at the Music Hall with reverence, gratitude and pride. While the following quote is extensive, it best relates what it was like to have been a part of the Weberfields' happy family and the invaluable training Warfield received there. Warfield writes:

True burlesque is a very high form of the art of acting. It is a good deal like caricature in drawing. The caricaturist has to be able to draw, but back of that he has to have a peculiar kind of insight, the kind that not only understands but criticizes, and with a touch of humor puts its criticism into his work. The burlesque actor who is really an artist does something of the same thing--he presents a character with just enough humorous emphasis on its weak points to show it up, but always keeping it human and not impossibly grotesque.  
. . .

That is the kind of art that flourished at Weber and Fields, but there was nothing highbrow about it. It was all very jolly and friendly--most of the time it was screamingly funny. A performance there went off in a chorus of laughter from the audience that was terrific and spontaneous. Sometimes it spread to the actors themselves, till they had hard work to go on with their lines. And the theatre was small enough to make the whole affair intimate--sometimes the actors seemed almost too near the audience, for it isn't a good thing for a player to see too much of the people to whom he is playing.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., pp. 310-13.

But there was never anything quite like a Weber and Fields' audience, especially on opening nights, and there never will be again. About five new burlesques appeared each season, and the same audience was on hand for every one of them--a big, happy family, gathered together for a jolly celebration. Every class of life was represented--players, doctors, lawyers, politicians, editors. The supporting element was there rubbing elbows with Fifth Avenue. It was like a selected list from New York's "Who's Who." And many of these people came back again and again. Weber and Fields was one of the places to go. . . .

. . . People always thought that the Weber and Fields company was an ideal one, because of the harmony in which they apparently worked. And people were right. But you had to stay awake nights thinking up new business so that you could keep up with the others. To the audience it all seemed like wonderful team work--in fact, to the actors it was a case of each one for himself. Neither the stage director nor the author did much to help--your role was largely your own, and you had to deliver or fail. Parts grew from night to night, which resulted in a kind of stage opposition that kept you on the jump improving your performance. You had to do that or be overwhelmed.

It was a very strenuous form of dramatic education, but I am sure the training I got there was better for me than any I could have got on the legitimate stage. Above everything else you had to be resourceful. You never knew when someone might put in new business and lines, impromptu, and you had to be always ready for that sort of thing. I got into the way of doing things as they came to me, and so I could handle new situations when they were created by my colleagues without being upset by them. The peculiarly noisy methods of Fields and Weber were excellent training for me--I had to learn to get my quieter methods over right under their very noses.

The three years that I was there are among the most interesting that I have ever spent on the stage. . . . Thousands remember that playhouse and the actors in it--yet it is ended and gone forever. Weber and Fields can never happen again. It was one of those extraordinary combinations that seems to have grown up out of itself into something distinctive and inexplicably perfect. The material is not available today to create another institution like it.<sup>30</sup>

After witnessing Warfield's performance in Catherine in 1900, David Belasco offered Warfield a chance to become a star in his company. The

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<sup>30</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 2, RLC, vol. 478, pp. 108-09.

actor accepted, with the provision that he be allowed to fulfill the remainder of his contract with Weber and Fields. Belasco assented, and the two men shook hands in a gentlemen's agreement. David Warfield now firmly fixed his thoughts on the last major step of his career: the legitimate stage where he would be guided by one of the giants of the American theatre--David Belasco.

David Belasco was born in San Francisco in 1859. It was in that city that he began what was to become one of the most profound and prolific careers in American theatre history. Working at every odd job he could get in the theatre, he slowly advanced in knowledge, skill and responsibility. During the early 1870s, he was an actor with a traveling company playing the towns along the California coast. In 1876 he became first the assistant stage manager at Baldwin's Academy of Music in San Francisco and then stage manager, and he continued working there in that capacity until 1882. While there, in addition to directing and sometimes acting in the productions presented, he wrote or adapted many of them.

Belasco emigrated to New York in 1882 and worked as a stage manager for the Madison Square Theatre, a house that had been equipped by Steele MacKaye with the latest innovations in stage machinery. Here, Belasco began experimenting with methods of staging, and in 1884 he continued his experiments at the Lyceum Theatre which had also been designed and equipped by MacKaye. He remained there until 1895 when he became an independent producer.

After 1895 Belasco concentrated on four elements of a theatrical production: scenery, lighting effects, scripts and actors. His sets were solidly constructed walls adorned with authentic properties. He abolished footlights and experimented with colored silks to change the hue of the projected light, and thus slowly adopted a method of using diffused, illusionistic light to symbolize, interpret and support the mood, meaning and emotion of a scene. His plays were built around dramatic, picturesque characters in trivial, sentimental stories which appealed to the heart. As a director he promoted several performers successfully to stardom; Blanche Bates, Mrs. Leslie Carter and David Warfield were three of the most popular.

Though Belasco's productions, and thus his stagecraft, appealed to public tastes for many years, they cannot be considered modern innovations. They were, instead, spectacularly mounted vehicles which were perfectly tailored for his stars and which continued, rather than broke from, the nineteenth-century tradition of theatrical production. The man who held the promise of a pioneer at the beginning of his career was, at its end in 1931, regarded as an antiquarian.<sup>31</sup>

It was during Belasco's tenure at the Baldwin Theatre that the young David Wohlfelt first became acquainted with his future mentor. The Wohlfelts lived only a few blocks from the Belascos on San Francisco's Clara Street, and young Wohlfelt would often run errands for Mrs. Belasco and was known to pull a mischievous prank on the elder

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<sup>31</sup>Wilson, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre, pp. 251-56.

Belasco. Of David Belasco, Warfield's impression was that the future producer was always in a hurry, but that even then Belasco had begun to show his gift for stagecraft. It was the memory of Belasco's young talent that Warfield credited as being the reason he decided to join forces with Belasco.<sup>32</sup>

Warfield made that decision in 1900 following a series of events which began with a regular performance at the Weberfields' Music Hall. Belasco had been looking for a male emotional star, and after witnessing Warfield's performance in Catherine, he felt that Warfield was exactly the actor he had been seeking. Belasco thereupon sent Warfield a note through his business manager which read: "Mr. Belasco would like to see you at his office tomorrow afternoon about 5:30."<sup>33</sup> Warfield promptly arrived at the requested hour, and during the course of a brief meeting, agreed to place himself under the management of David Belasco. This association was to commence with the 1901-02 season as the actor was contractually bound to Weber and Fields for another eighteen months.

Warfield signed a three-year contract with Belasco and was to be presented as a star in plays to be provided by Belasco for the duration of that contract. For his appearance in the play(s), Warfield was to be paid three hundred dollars weekly plus 20 percent of the net profits the first year, 25 percent the second, 30 percent the third, and 50 percent yearly thereafter if the contract were renewed.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 1, RLC, vol. 478, p. 104.

<sup>33</sup>"My Own Story," pt. 2, RLC, vol. 478, p. 110.

<sup>34</sup>Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2:6-7.

Producer and playwright Belasco adapted vehicles to Warfield's individual abilities and special talents. He highlighted those areas of acting in which Warfield excelled and eliminated the necessity for those areas which would bring attention to his histrionic deficiencies.<sup>35</sup> For nearly twenty-four years, Warfield performed in New York and on the road either initial runs or revivals of only six productions.

The play with which Belasco commenced his tutelage of Warfield was entitled The Auctioneer. He commissioned Lee Arthur to write the script around the Hebrew character Warfield had been playing since his Casino days. Arthur's script did not correspond with Belasco's conception, and the producer sent it back to be rewritten in collaboration with Charles Klein. Still unsatisfied with the product handed him, Belasco began adapting the script himself. It was with that version David Warfield made his legitimate debut at the Hyperion Theatre in New Haven, Connecticut on September 9, 1901.

The plot of The Auctioneer centers around Simon Levi, a generous, warm-hearted merchant who tries to spread happiness among his loved ones and who drives a hard bargain with his customers. Through his small auction shop on Hester Street, he acquires a substantial sum of money and moves his family uptown to a new home on Lexington Avenue. Here, he gives a lavish reception in honor of his foster daughter's engagement to the son of his old friend. In order to ensure this daughter's happiness and security, he uses part of his fortune to purchase for the fiancé,

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<sup>35</sup>"Mr. Warfield and Mr. Belasco," Philadelphia Telegraph, 8 August 1912, RLC, vol. 477, p. 104.

Richard Eagen, a partnership in an investment firm and then invests the rest of the money in a bogus stock company. During the reception the fraud is discovered, and the innocent Eagen is unjustly arrested for the crime as the stunned Levi, unwilling to share his ruin with his guests, continues to maintain the merriment of the once festive occasion. The final act shows Levi once again peddling on the streets and carrying the old, worn basket with which he started business years before. His misfortune is brief, however, for the real culprit is apprehended, the monies are returned, and the curtain falls on restored happiness for all.

The engagement at New Haven's Hyperion Theatre was for two evenings. On the eleventh and twelfth of September, the show was presented at Hartford, Connecticut's Parson's Theatre and was then taken to Utica, Syracuse, and Troy, New York before it opened at the Bijou Theatre in New York on September 23, 1901. Of this experience, Warfield wrote that he was plagued with misgivings throughout the rehearsal period and that these feelings were confirmed during the out-of-town performances. Despite an overwhelming consensus that it "was a distinct failure," Warfield continued, Belasco refused to give up on The Auctioneer and that with his "inspiring encouragement," the play's debut on Broadway received notices which reversed the out-of-town verdict.<sup>36</sup> One such notice stated:

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<sup>36</sup>David Warfield, "Personal Reminiscences," Theatre Magazine, August 1917, p. 60.

Mr. Warfield has contributed a distinct character to the American stage. His Hebrew is not the gibbering, foolish and impossible creature that he is made by so many so-called comedians. Mr. Warfield's Jew of the Ghetto is a homely, God-fearing man, with a quiet streak of humor, and a fine, strong, enduring faith in his people, and withal a man of intelligence and a nice turn of wit. . . . the old patriarch, who, through all the vicissitudes of wealth and poverty, is still simple, though not ignorant, with a love for his wife and family that is as touching as it is faithful to the life of the Jew. Mr. Warfield's characterization is as fine a piece of work as the Rip Van Winkle of Mr. Jefferson or the Beau Brummel of Mr. Mansfield, and he is now rated in the same class as these great artists.<sup>37</sup>

The Auctioneer closed in New York on December 21, 1901 after 105 consecutive performances and then went on the road for twenty weeks, closing the season on May 10, 1902 at Chicago's Illinois Theatre. While the production grossed \$80,000 during this season, Belasco's actual net profit was considerably less as he had booked the road tour through the Theatrical Syndicate to whom he had to pay 50 percent of the profits.

Warfield began his second season with The Auctioneer in Boston on September 8, 1902 and toured the country for thirty-nine weeks, closing at the Victoria Theatre in New York on May 30, 1903--a total of 315 performances which grossed \$70,000. The highlight of this season came during Christmas week when on December 22, 1902, David Warfield, the star, returned home to San Francisco to play Simon Levi before a packed house. The next season, beginning on September 28, 1903, again found

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<sup>37</sup>"David Belasco and His Stars," Broadway Weekly, n.d., RLC, vol. 476, p. 23.

Simon Levi on the road, but the tour ended abruptly because of Belasco's legal battles with the Syndicate.<sup>38</sup>

The infamous Theatrical Syndicate was a conglomerate formed by six entrepreneurs whose aim was to form a monopoly that would control a chain of theatres--and thus the productions presented in them--throughout the country. These men--Charles Frohman, Sam Nixon, J. Fred Zimmerman, Al Hayman, Marc Klaw and Abraham Erlanger--successfully gained dominion over the best theatres all over the country and demanded that the managers book Syndicate productions exclusively. They also demanded an exorbitant booking charge for their services which was usually 50 percent of the profits. While the Syndicate eliminated the misunderstandings, overlapping engagements and broken contracts via their centrally organized booking operation, it also stifled competition in that independent producers who did not wish to kowtow to their demands were relegated to second-rate houses, forced to use improvised theatres, or prevented from playing a town entirely.<sup>39</sup>

David Belasco was one such independent producer. In 1901 he owned no theatre of his own, and in order to book satisfactory road tours for his stars, he often turned to the Syndicate. Belasco went to Abe Erlanger to arrange the tour for The Auctioneer and was assured of a first-class tour for Warfield in exchange for 50 percent of the profits.

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<sup>38</sup>Gary D. Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1975), p. 109; Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2:16-20, 24.

<sup>39</sup>Wilson, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre, pp. 256-58.

Erlanger stipulated that the contract be arranged through a dummy partner, one Joseph Brooks. This stipulation was a move in all probability meant to secret the agreement from the other Syndicate members, and it also aided in making the Syndicate's involvement in the transaction ambiguous.

The arrangement remained amicable until 1903 when Joseph Brooks discovered that Belasco was receiving royalties from The Auctioneer as an unnamed co-author. He promptly sued Belasco, asking the court to dissolve the partnership on the basis of withheld information. Belasco countersued, naming Klaw and Erlanger as his real partners, thus initiating the messy court fight which followed.

While they awaited the suits to be placed on the court docket, Brooks applied to Judge David Leventritt for a receiver whereupon Warfield, then touring on the road, vowed in anger that he would perform under the auspices of no one but David Belasco. When the judge heard this case, he ruled to name W. M. K. Olcott--rather than either Brooks or Belasco--as receiver for the production because he construed Warfield's statement as a threat upon the court. Warfield, then in New Orleans, immediately closed the tour on January 10, 1904, and two weeks' salary was paid to the company in lieu of two weeks' notice. Warfield explained that his action was one of loyalty to Belasco and not one of coercion against the court. Brooks responded to Warfield's action by filing an injunction, asking the court to compel the actor to return to the stage, but Judge Leventritt denied the request on the grounds that while the court could prohibit an actor from performing, it could not force him to do so.

In 1905 the original suits were tried in what turned out to be a three-ring circus with Belasco, Erlanger and their attorneys in the center ring. Innuendoes and accusations were intermingled with facts, and for every witness the prosecution presented, the defense produced a counter-witness. It was a long, confusing trial which ended in May 1905 as Judge Leventritt handed down a decision in favor of Klaw and Erlanger. Although Belasco lost this important case, the fight he waged contributed substantially to the eventual demise of the Syndicate.

Three seasons of The Auctioneer were succeeded by what was to become Warfield's most commercial vehicle, The Music Master. Warfield had begun to feel that as an actor he should expand his artistry, and so in 1904, soon after his return to New York from New Orleans, he approached Belasco with the idea of presenting a play involving a refined German who spoke correct English flavored with a hint of the native accent and who lived in America under adverse conditions. Belasco had been considering Warfield's next vehicle, and he found this idea intriguing. Belasco thereupon employed Charles Klein to write the script, and the play was born.

The play revolves around Anton von Barwig, the music master who had emigrated to America from his native Leipsig, and depicts the concluding events in a sentimental, domestic story of a man in search of his wife and daughter who had run away with his best friend. When the play opens, Barwig is found sixteen years after the flight of his wife and child, living under impoverished conditions and without the hope of succeeding in his quest. A young girl who enters requesting piano

lessons stirs some vague memory within him, and he soon learns that she is his child grown to young womanhood. He withholds this knowledge from her in order to safeguard her future, but the girl learns the truth and comes to claim her real father and restore his happiness.

The Music Master premiered a three-season stint on September 12, 1904 and continued the box office success for Warfield that The Auctioneer had created. While The Auctioneer, as noted above, netted \$70,000-\$80,000 in one season, this second play began breaking box office records. For example, during the four weeks it played Boston at the beginning of the 1906-07 season, it grossed over \$72,000, and in January 1907, a four-week run at New York's Academy of Music where the highest ticket price was \$1.50 netted nearly \$100,000.<sup>40</sup>

The following quote from Acton Davies illustrates Warfield's success in the role:

. . . It happens only once in a decade or so that an artist steps into greatness at a bound, as David Warfield did on that memorable first night. . . . I fully expected that Mr. Warfield was going to score a hit; but I must confess that the magnitude of his triumph when he at last came to Broadway staggered me almost as much as it did every one else.

During the preliminary "road" performances . . . until New York was reached Mr. Warfield played "under wraps" as it were. Belasco never once permitted him to reveal his full powers of emotion or the thousand and one exquisite little touches of pathos and tenderness which make Mr. Warfield's Herr Von

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<sup>40</sup>Frank C. Voorhies, "Nine Weeks in Boston Lion and Mouse Record," Billboard, 20 October 1906, p. 4; Notarized statement of the Gross receipts for The Music Master in Boston, October 1906 in the David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c., 170 (hereafter designated as DBC 170), n.p.; Untitled, York (PA) Gazette, 3 March 1907, DBC 170, p. 96.

Barwig the most consummate stage characterization that I have ever seen. . . .<sup>41</sup>

As early as 1906, Warfield had begun to tire of the lovable music master and asked for his release from the play in favor of a new vehicle. It was not until the 1907-08 season that his request was granted. Belasco had been busy formulating plans to present Warfield in a new play which would coincide with the grand opening of the Stuyvessant Theatre that the producer was constructing on Forty-second Street. His initial plan had been to produce for Warfield a dramatization of "The Passing of the Third Floor Back" to be written by the short story's author, Jerome K. Jerome. Unfortunately, Jerome was unable to complete the script in time to mount the production, and Belasco was forced to select another play.

The play that Belasco eventually selected for the inaugural production at the Stuyvessant was entitled A Grand Army Man, written by Pauline Phelps and Marion Short. The story centered around Wesley Bigelow, an Indiana Hoosier and member of the G.A.R., and his adopted son, Robert. Robert's father had been killed in the Civil War, and his mother, who was Bigelow's childhood sweetheart, died soon after her husband's death. Bigelow adopted the orphaned boy whom he came to love and trust as his own.

The action of the play occurs approximately twenty years later when Robert, now a young man in love, is anxious to earn enough money to

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<sup>41</sup>Acton Davies, Untitled, Red Book Magazine, April 1905, RLC, vol. 476, pp. 56-58.

marry his fiancée. Bigelow intrusts him to deposit in the bank a sum of money that had been raised to finance the new G.A.R. hall. On his way to the bank, Robert meets a confidence man who dupes him into investing the money in a scam. The boy's criminal action is discovered; he is arrested and convicted of the felony, and he is sentenced to prison. The boy is subsequently pardoned, is re-united with his sweetheart, and as in all Belasco fairy tales, they live happily ever after.

Of Warfield's performance in this third role, it was written:

. . . There have been moments when they [audiences] wondered whether Warfield was a clever actor, a lucky actor or a great actor. But after last night's performance . . . there isn't any doubt that Mr. Warfield has more individual power, more ability to compel emotion than any man on the American stage today.

. . . he has none of the heroics about him. And yet last night in this play, just as in "The Music Master," the man compelled heroic emotion. If it had been given to him to have the long nose of the tragedian, the drooping mouth and the square jaw and the robust physique America would have produced an actor that would have put to blush all the tragedians that cluster about the Forrests and the Macreadys.<sup>42</sup>

The Stuyvessant Theatre opened its doors on October 16, 1907, and Warfield remained there until May 2, 1908. As A Grand Army Man was not very popular with the general audience, on February 24, 1908 it began playing in repertory with The Music Master. From 1908 until 1910, these two plays were taken on the road, with The Music Master dominating the 1909-10 season. The 1908-09 season consisted of a tour of twenty cities in a forty-six week period beginning on August seventeenth and ending on July third. Ticket sales were apparently quite good, for one of

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<sup>42</sup>"David Warfield's New Role Tearful but Halting," New York Telegram, 17 October 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 114.

Belasco's agents telegraphed him: "Warfield seat sale opened to-day. Same old line, three blocks long. Hurrah for the Davids."<sup>43</sup>

Warfield's next sentimental vehicle was a Belasco treatment of the supernatural entitled The Return of Peter Grimm. This story revolved around a Dutch horticulturalist who returns from the grave in an attempt to right all the wrongs he committed in life. In the first act, we learn that Grimm has left his estate to his nephew, Frederick, a rogue who has gained Grimm's confidence. We learn also that Grimm wishes for Frederick to marry Kathrien, Grimm's adopted daughter, in order that the family name be preserved. Set in the middle of this exposition is a promise made between Grimm and his friend, Dr. Andrew MacPhearson, that the first of them to die will attempt to return and make contact with the other.

At the close of Act I, Grimm suffers a heart attack and dies. The second and third acts then revolve around Grimm's attempt to communicate with those around him truths that he sees in death but did not in life. He learns that the unscrupulous Frederick is the father of Willem, the dying, illegitimate son of Grimm's housekeeper and uses the boy as a medium to expose Frederick's villainy. His success in this endeavor results in the reunion of Kathrien and her true love whom she had forsaken in order to honor Grimm's wish for her marriage to Frederick. The play ends on a cheerful note as Grimm carries the dead boy into a happier world beyond.

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<sup>43</sup>Cook, pp. 149-50; "David Warfield Liked in Denver," New York Telegraph, 14 August 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 38.

Warfield's achievement in the role of Peter Grimm was described as one which would admirably supplant Anton von Barwig "as the supreme test of his ability" and that the impersonation was

. . . one of the really great achievements of modern drama. The stage has never before had another character quite like it. It bears no relation whatever to the ghost in "Hamlet" or to the supernatural manifestations occasionally encountered in other plays. Nothing in it smacks of the uncanny. This returned spirit appears dressed as in life. He enters the living room through the door. He hangs his battered plug hat upon its accustomed peg. He speaks in a low and gentle but natural voice. Mr. Warfield's success in making plausible this spirit rôle is a triumph of sheer simplicity in acting. It grows out of his imagination and it grasps and conquers the imagination of his audience.<sup>44</sup>

In the staging of the play, all of Belasco's wizardry was summoned together. The producer recounted that in constructing the play, he had to explain the subject without using any terminology foreign to the audience. In rehearsals he directed his cast to ignore the physical aspects of Warfield as the returned Grimm, for the characters they played could not see, hear or respond to the attempted communications of the deceased. Belasco told of how he kept Warfield in New York and forced his star to sit or walk upon the stage for long hours while the wizard experimented with the lights in order to achieve the right atmosphere for the play. The technical paraphernalia for the production was so intricate that a reporter noted it took a number of hours to set up the lights and scenery. This process required the services of nineteen stagehands who traveled with the company of eleven actors, plus

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<sup>44</sup>Louis V. DeFoe, "Plays and the Public," Red Book Magazine, January 1912, RLC, vol. 477, p. 102.

the assistance of fifteen mechanics furnished by the local theatres. The production also needed ten electricians, nine of whom stood during the last two acts upon an iron bridge hidden above the stage in order to effect the necessary lighting.<sup>45</sup>

Warfield's 1910-11 season began relatively late due to the unusual length of his previous season, Belasco's other ventures, and the difficulty in mounting the production. The Return of Peter Grimm was first performed at Boston's Hollis Street Theatre on January 2, 1911 and remained there for four weeks before working its way to Chicago where it finished the season after a nine-week run in that city. The next year it reopened in Baltimore before moving to the New Belasco Theatre (formerly the Stuyvessant) in New York where it enjoyed an eight month run of 284 consecutive performances. The next season, that of 1912-13, the show toured the country for thirty-seven weeks starting in Newark, New Jersey and followed a route across the northern United States, down the Pacific coast, and back through the central states to the Eastern seaboard where the final performance occurred in Atlantic City on June 7, 1913.

For what A Grand Army Man had lacked in box office appeal, The Return of Peter Grimm more than compensated. The New York Telegraph reported that the gross receipts for one week of performances in Cincinnati averaged between \$18,000 and \$19,000 and that the

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<sup>45</sup>David Belasco, "How Warfield Became a Master," Unidentified periodical, n.d., RLC, vol. 478, p. 64; "Warfield's Last Tour in 'Return of Peter Grimm'," Cincinnati Commercial Tribune, 22 March 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 8.

production had captured the Boston and Cincinnati audiences "with the firmness of its predecessor" [i.e., The Music Master]. The Boston engagement, the article continued, was extended from two to four weeks, and the capacity of Cincinnati's Grand Opera House was tested to its limits. A year later the same newspaper reported that the production had established new box office records along the Pacific coast, a feat not believed possible after the phenomenal success of The Music Master, adding that Warfield was playing to capacity houses everywhere.<sup>46</sup>

In 1913 Belasco revised The Auctioneer for a two year revival tour of the country. It opened in Baltimore on September twenty-second and a week later began a twelve-week New York run. From there the show toured major U.S. cities and ended the thirty-seven week season at His Majesty's Theatre in Montreal on June 7, 1914. The 1914-15 season began in Trenton on October fifth and traveled on a southerly route to the Pacific coast, then moved eastwards from Seattle playing one-night stands throughout the midwest and east, finally ending the season at the Manhattan Opera House where the 1400th performance of Simon Levi was celebrated. This 1400th performance occurred on April 27, 1915 and was achieved in slightly less than five years (1901-04, 1913-15).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>"Warfield in Cincinnati," New York Telegraph, 3 February 1911, RLC, vol. 477, p. 83; "Warfield's Big Business," New York Telegraph, 20 February 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup>Cook, pp. 196, 199, 209, 211-12; Billboard; "Warfield Celebrates his 1400th Performance," New York Review, 24 April 1915, RLC, vol. 478, p. 60.

The phenomenal box office sales for a Warfield play, which by now had been dubbed the "Warfield business," continued to skyrocket. Variety reported that the advance sale for the Baltimore run in September 1913 was the heaviest in the history of any Belasco production, the total sum being \$20,000. Chester Rice in the Chicago Record Herald reported that on two consecutive evenings The Auctioneer had box office receipts totaling \$4400. On the eve of Warfield's four week Chicago run in January 1914, the receipts averaged \$3780 per day from the opening day of the advance sale through the end of the second week of performances. And at two dollars per seat, the box office draw in St. Louis netted \$23,000 in one week.<sup>48</sup>

In 1915 Belasco presented Warfield in the producer's last solo attempt at playwrighting. Van Der Decken was designed as a bridge between Warfield's sentimental roles [i.e., Levi, Barwig, Grimm] and "the Jew that Shakespeare drew." The play was also produced to satisfy those critics who wished to see the actor portray a greater variety of depth and complexity in his roles, a challenge Warfield believed he could meet. The play opened the 1915-16 season in Wilmington, Delaware on December fourth, but Warfield soon became less than enthusiastic about this gloomy, obscure and inconclusive version of the legend of the Flying Dutchman. Reluctant to appear in the piece in New York, the

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<sup>48</sup>Variety, 3 October 1913, p. 10; "From 'A Quarrel in a Jewish Lodge' to 'The Auctioneer'," 4 January 1914, RLC, vol. 478, p. 34; "Warfield Makes a Record," New York Morning Telegraph, 29 January 1914, RLC, vol. 478, p. 40; "Warfield Making Records," New York Telegraph, 10 February 1914, RLC, vol. 478, p. 40.

actor soon persuaded Belasco to shelve the play in favor of The Music Master.<sup>49</sup>

The story is the Belasco version of a familiar legend. Phillip Van Der Decken, a sea captain anxious to make the port of Amsterdam in order to see his wife and child, swears to sail around the Cape of Good Hope through a fierce storm if it takes until judgement day, and slays the man who tries to prevent him from sailing. For this double crime he is doomed to perpetually sail the seas and never to grow old. He is allowed to come ashore every nine years to search for the woman whose love will free him from the curse, and he finds his salvation in a buxom young girl who is the reincarnation of his wife. She daringly boards his phantom ship, declares her love for him, and looks on with horror as he affirms his love for her and narrates his gruesome tale. The girl faints; he calls to her friends on shore to carry her away, and, leaving his treasure behind for her marriage dowry, sails away. He returns nine years later, at last freed from his curse, to find her happily wed and the mother of a small boy. In a tender scene, he bids her farewell and sails into the sunset where his ship will take him to death's rewarding peace.

Because the demands of the play were foreign to the star's capabilities, those who had eagerly anticipated this fifth Warfield characterization walked away from it surprisingly disappointed. Montgomery Phister expressed it this way:

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<sup>49</sup>Craig Timberlake, The Bishop of Broadway (New York: Library Publishers, 1954), p. 331; Cook, pp. 223, 229; "David Warfield in an Old Role," New York Times, 14 May 1916, sec. 2, p. 6.

David Belasco, in his ambitious attempts at the further exploitation of the talents of David Warfield, is unwittingly, perhaps, but nevertheless certainly, revealing the limitations of that actor. "Van Der Decken" is a triumph of the author, not of the interpreter. . . .

Phister argued that as Van Der Decken was created upon a "loftier plane" than Warfield's former characters and as Warfield's narrow comedic talents were denied him in this present role, the actor was "rushed to a ruinous defense of himself" as the romantic, semi-tragic sea captain in an "ill-advised experiment." He accurately concluded: "It is beyond the reach of Warfield's talents. It will never be enrolled among his successful assumptions."<sup>50</sup>

Other accounts bore out this sentiment. One critic stated that the initial enthusiasm was succeeded in the weeks that followed the premier by indifference. Another account amplified the problem with the play as being

. . . so far outside the region of real life and so weird and unusual that it gets by only because of the company and equipment. Compared with . . . "The Grand Army Man" [sic] and "The Music Master," . . . it is a very decided disappointment.

And in Warfield's words:

. . . "Van Der Decken?" That was ambition. I wanted to play a romantic part. I was a young man there. The public was wiser. It was a beautiful thing, but the public would rather see me in other characters.

Percy Hammond regretted the enterprise, but he defended Van Der Decken on the grounds that the production was meant to herald Warfield's portrayal of Shylock and concluded that whatever disappointment

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<sup>50</sup>Untitled, Cincinnati Tribune, 16 January 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 71.

Van Der Decken elicited was "a small price to pay" for Warfield's Shylock.<sup>51</sup>

From 1916 until 1922, David Warfield appeared in revivals of his three most popular vehicles--The Auctioneer, The Music Master and The Return of Peter Grimm. His appearance in The Music Master initiated this period, the first two years of which included a four-month run in New York, eleven weeks in Chicago and one or more weeks in all of the major eastern and midwestern cities. The Auctioneer followed, opening in New York on November 4, 1918 and then touring the southern and central states. The 1919-20 season found Simon Levi traveling across the northeast to the Pacific coast via Chicago and Seattle and was scheduled to cross back across the country via Salt Lake City and Denver. Unfortunately, this tour was abruptly terminated eight weeks early due to the multiple injuries Warfield suffered when the star, walking across a street, was struck down by a vehicle entering the intersection. He received a multiple fracture to the left leg below the knee, several facial lacerations and the loss of one tooth, and the accident caused him to miss the first performance of his career. After his recovery, the actor returned to the role of Peter Grimm and performed it on the road for the remainder of this period.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Cincinnati Tribune, 14 May 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 83; "David Warfield in a Strange Play," Ft. Wayne Post, 14 April 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 81; "A Chat with David Warfield," Cleveland Plain Dealer, 31 March 1917, RLC, vol. 478, p. 99; "There's a Reason for Warfield's 'Van Der Decken'," Chicago Tribune, 13 February 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 79.

<sup>52</sup>Cook, pp. 250-59.

In 1919 David Warfield became involved in one of the most important events in American theatre history. The date was August 6, 1919, and the event was the massive strike called by the Actors' Equity Association. Actors' Equity was formed in 1913 with the sole purpose of establishing a contract between the producers and the actors which would outline certain equitable regulations. In the beginning, the managers had adopted a benevolent attitude toward Equity, but by 1919, when Equity was seriously considering joining the American Federation of Labor as had the musician's and stagehands' union, Equity's meagre demands for the revision of the 1917 contract were met with hostility. The Producing Managers' Association recognized that an AFL-backed Actors' Equity as the sole bargaining agent for the actors would threaten the autonomy of the producers. To prove their determination, the actors voted on August sixth to strike for better working conditions, and by curtain time, 100 actors forced the closing of twelve productions.

The strike had a wide-spread effect. Most theatres were forced to go dark; others presented productions with hastily substituted understudies. The striking actors took to the streets in an effort to carry their cause to the public. Often they would stand outside the theatres and recruit new members from those who were on their way to a rehearsal or a performance. They picketed the theatres, staged fund raising shows and marched in parades along Broadway. Their ranks were led by such stars as Ethel and Lionel Barrymore, Marie Dressler, Eddie Cantor, Ed Wynn, Al Jolson and Lillian Russell.

The striking actors were not without opposition from their peers. Those actors--stars to whom the producers catered--formed their own union called the Actors' Fidelity League to counteract Equity. Actors' Fidelity--or Fidols, as Equity members dubbed them--was founded upon the premise that they were artists and therefore above the common unionism represented by the AFL which backed Equity in its battle. Among those listed on the Fidelity roster were Louis Mann, Willie Collier, Fay Bainter (another Belasco protégé), Otis Skinner, E. H. Southern, Julia Marlowe, Minnie Maddern Fiske, Margaret Anglin and David Warfield.

Warfield took a firm but passive stand on the issue. He was oft-quoted in the newspapers denouncing the strikers and extolling the virtues of his manager, David Belasco. His comments ranged from the noncommittal to mildly pointed remarks, and he backed his statements by lending his support in the solid establishment of Actors' Fidelity.

The Equity strike succeeded in closing twenty-one theatres and stopping six openings. The crippled producers eventually came to terms with Equity, and on September sixth, one month after Broadway went dark, Equity had won its fight to be recognized as the legal bargaining agency for stage people. The fight had been flamboyant, emotional and just; never again would actors be taken advantage of in terms of time and money, and everyone knew that the old days were gone forever.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Brooks Atkinson, Broadway, 2nd edition (New York: MacMillan and Company, 1974), pp. 185-91; John McCabe, George M. Cohan (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1973), pp. 149-50; New York Daily Tribune, August 1919.

The last major step in the career of David Warfield came on December 21, 1922 when he realized a twenty-year dream. A year and a half in the planning with an estimated cost of \$250,000, the long-awaited Belasco-Warfield production of The Merchant of Venice was unveiled before an eager New York audience which supported it for a twelve-week run of ninety-two consecutive performances. This production established a record run for the play at that time in the metropolis.

Shylock was the first role Warfield portrayed that had not been expressly written for him since he joined Belasco in 1901. Furthermore, it was the only role he portrayed that was at the disposal of any other actor to assume. He had achieved popularity and fame with The Music Master, but he had also suffered the criticism that he was a one-part actor. He wished to assume "at least one great part in which he could be placed in comparison to all of the great actors who had preceded him."<sup>54</sup>

Warfield's Shylock had first been revealed on November 14, 1922 before opening at the Lyceum Theatre in New York on December twenty-first. The show closed for the season on March 10, 1923, and the Warfield company, which usually would have departed on tour after closing in New York mid-season, was disbanded. In the fall Belasco sent out a road company which was regarded as inferior to the one which had been seen in New York (only the leads had been retained). This tour commenced on

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<sup>54</sup> Archie Bell, "Two Davids Bring Great Production of 'Merchant' Here," Cleveland News-Leader, 16 November 1922, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 167 (hereafter designated as DBC 167), n.p.

September twenty-eighth and played approximately forty of the country's major cities in a thirty-week tour which ended on April 26, 1924.<sup>55</sup>

Belasco's The Merchant of Venice and Warfield's Shylock met with mixed reviews throughout the two years Belasco sustained the show on the boards. Ashton Stevens approved the way Warfield tackled the part; he found himself "served with an interpretation rather than an impression or a criticism of Shylock," although one unimpressed writer offered the explanation that everything to be achieved in the role had already been gained when Warfield attempted the part. Craig Timberlake summarized the story as follows:

Belasco's The Merchant of Venice should have been, and in the eyes of many was, the pinnacle of his long career, and yet, critics were divided in their reception of the play, and Warfield's Shylock. After the New York run of 92 performances, and a year on the road, the production which had cost \$250,000, had lost \$80,000, and Belasco and his leading man were estranged, Warfield going into premature retirement from which he never returned. . . .<sup>56</sup>

There was another factor in addition to the mixed critical response which abetted the discord between manager and star. In 1924 the Actors' Equity Association was again at war with the Producing Managers' Association. Equity was now asking for a closed shop, a working environment in which no Equity member would be allowed to perform with a nonmember. The reason behind this demand was not clearly defined; one

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<sup>55</sup>Cook, pp. 295-301.

<sup>56</sup>"Great Mimic Refuses to Make It 'Shylock Revue': Stevens," Chicago Herald Examiner, 9 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Frederick Donaghey, "Warfield's Venture in a Vexing Part," Chicago Tribune, 9 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Timberlake, p. 368.

observer stated that it was to comply with the rules of the American Federation of Labor, with which Equity had become completely affiliated, and as a means to collect negligent dues.<sup>57</sup>

The issue was discussed across the country: unless the producers agreed to a closed shop, Equity would call a strike that would begin on June first when the current contract between the organizations expired. The producers flatly refused to comply, and the ever-fierce David Belasco, somewhat irrationally, announced that he would close all of his theatres and disband his companies by June first and would not renew the contracts of any of his stars, Warfield included. Warfield, then in Los Angeles, took the threat in his stride, claiming that he did not expect Belasco to take any action before June, and that as his own contract expired in April, was not worried about his future.<sup>58</sup>

On May 7, 1924, a statement from the office of Henry Miller, then president of Actors' Fidelity League, was released. The letter soundly denounced Equity as wishing to cast the independent actor into servitude. To this letter were affixed the names of twenty-five prominent actors; nineteen were the names of Fidelity members, one of whom was David Warfield. Those listed had neither authorized nor known of the usage of their names in connection with the letter, and an embarrassed Miller admitted entrusting it to his office staff which

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<sup>57</sup>"Augustus Thomas Defines Producing Managers' Position," New York Journal of Commerce, 5 May 1924, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 166 (hereafter designated as DBC 166), n.p.

<sup>58</sup>"Warfield Asserts He will Continue Tour," San Francisco Journal, 4 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

should have sought--but failed to obtain--the proper authorization before releasing the letter to the press.<sup>59</sup>

There was some justification for the use of Warfield's name in connection with the letter other than his prominence in Actors' Fidelity. He had stated that though he was not a member of Equity, he usually was supportive of its endeavors on behalf of the actors, but he could not condone this stand on the closed shop. When the Miller letter was released, Warfield publicly stated that he considered the letter "one of the most vicious statements" he had ever read and that he could not "denounce it in terms sufficiently strong enough." He responded by resigning from Actors' Fidelity and by applying for membership with Equity. This action widened the breach between him and his manager, and the two Davids were not to communicate for six years.<sup>60</sup>

It was the end of an era. Never again was Barwig's cry of "If you don't want her, I want her!" to be heard. No longer would the crafty Simon Levi shamble up and down Hester Street with his old, worn-out basket. And the production which had been the dream of a lifetime would be remembered with bitterness. David Warfield, who had spent the last twenty-four years in becoming a legend, had taken his final bow.

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<sup>59</sup>Untitled, New York Women's Wear Daily, 8 May 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; "Actors Deny Signing Fidelity Attack on Equity," New York Herald-Tribune, 10 May 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

<sup>60</sup>"So Called Statement on Equity Becomes a Boomerang," New York Review, 10 May 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Cook, p. 330.

And so, at the age of fifty-eight after a career spanning thirty-four years, David Warfield retired. The official announcement read:

David Warfield announces his intention to retire from the stage for a year, during which time he plans to tour the continent. The veteran actor, now resting in Atlantic City after a strenuous season in "The Merchant of Venice," plans to sail for Italy in September.

He never discussed his decision publicly; while the break with Belasco was a major factor, he apparently had grown weary of the long tedium of touring and wished to remain home with his wife who was in deteriorating health. Warfield himself was quoted as saying:

So now, although I've yet to see my sixtieth year, you can write me down as a veteran watching the passing show from my favorite scene--the home scene. . . .

After years on the road, roughing it and de luxe, I've learned that home is sweet and of one thing I'm sure: it's the final scene for me.<sup>61</sup>

This final scene was staged at 135 Central Park West, an apartment suite he had lived in since 1907. Here, he relaxed with his wife and dog, read his books and entertained his friends. He often had his chauffeur drive him through the park and would occasionally participate in an afternoon game of pinochle at the Lamb's Club, which was in 1942 to join the New York Academy in presenting him with a gold medal for "distinguished service in the theatre." Each November, reporters

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<sup>61</sup>"David Warfield Retiring," Billboard, 12 August 1924, p. 21; Cook, p. 330; George Brinton Beal, "Why Warfield Left the Stage--Theatrical Gossip," Boston Post, 21 January 1925, DBC 166, n.p.; David Warfield as told to John B. Kennedy, "From Footlights to Fireside," Collier's, 27 June 1925, DBC 166, n.p.

seeking an interview in honor of the actor's birthday, assembled in his study and did not seem to mind asking the same questions and receiving the same answers. Of this beloved six room home in which he spent his last days, he said: "I wouldn't live anywhere else. . . . I like it here and where in the world would one get a better view [of Central Park] than this. . . ." <sup>62</sup>

In 1924 David Warfield and his devoted manager, David Belasco, had severed relations without a word. In 1927 Ashton Stevens expressed the wish that the two Davids would "shake hands and start all over again." This wish was granted, in part, three years later when knowledge that Warfield was seriously ill became public. Belasco broke the silence between the two by sending his former star flowers and telegrams. Warfield responded with appreciative thanks, and a personal reconciliation was attained. <sup>63</sup>

On the evening of June 27, 1951, David Warfield expired quietly at his Central Park West home. The next day the obituaries recounted the extraordinary career of a man who had been predominant in the American theatre for a quarter of a century. He had risen from humble beginnings to become one of the brightest stars on Broadway, achieving fame and success with fate as his only guide. In 1904 David Warfield had

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<sup>62</sup>"Medal Presented to David Warfield," New York Times, 9 January 1942, p. 13; "David Warfield is Called Model Tennant," New York Herald-Tribune, 2 November 1941, sec. 4, p. 1.

<sup>63</sup>"Stage Today Surely Needs Old Masters," Chicago Herald-Examiner, n.d. (ca. 1927), DBC 166, n.p.; Percy Hammond, "The Theatres," New York Herald-Tribune, 27 July 1930, sec. 8, p. 1.

started a legend as the lovable old music master; in 1922 he capitulated that legend into the realization of his dream to portray the Jew that Shakespeare had drawn, and in 1924 upon his retirement from the stage, the Warfield legend had died. Twenty-seven years later, so had the man who had created that legend.

The most astonishing fact about the David Warfield legend was that it was established by a man who possessed few of the physical attributes associated with a great actor. According to various descriptions, he was prematurely aged with an unevenly lined face and an odd-shaped jaw which created a twisted smile. Only five-feet, eight-inches tall, he bore his short, wiry frame with a noticeable stoop and walked with a slow, uneasy gait. His voice was magnetic and un-musical, though with it he could convey a range of minute shades of emotion. He substituted personality for heroics and grand passion, and his physical characteristics evoked the necessary sympathy needed for his Belasco characters.<sup>64</sup>

Warfield was considered to possess two valuable assets. One was his famous smile. It began with a droop at the corners of his mouth as his eyes started to twinkle; then, it would burst into a contagious grin that displayed his wide, full set of teeth before dying in a chuckle. The second asset was his ability to reproduce Joseph Jefferson's technique of alternating tears and laughter and to capitalize upon it when playing for audience sympathy. Once the audience was on the

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<sup>64</sup>Cook, pp. 155-57; Unidentified article, RLC, vol. 477, p. 52.

verge of tears, he would check the emotion with a comic detail and then recall the sob as the laughter came. Of this ability, Felix Isman wrote: "Many an actor can alternate a tear and a laugh. Only a Warfield can summon the second tear."<sup>65</sup>

The consensus throughout the years was that the keynote to David Warfield the actor was the simplicity and sincerity in the art he displayed on the stage. Warfield's technique was thought skillful and effortless. He did not strut or pose upon the stage, exhibiting instead a natural style that faithfully reproduced the actor's observations of life and human nature. This ability was termed a positive style for which Warfield should achieve lasting fame, for it was "in reality, the acting art raised to the nth power."<sup>66</sup>

William Winter, the dean of American theatre critics, recognized Warfield for portraying the inherent power, character and knowledge of the human heart in simplistic situations. Though devoid of power and poetic feeling, Warfield displayed in his homely reflections of common, everyday life personality, sympathy, pathos and fervid emotion. His material characteristics, Winter continued, "were fidelity to minute

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<sup>65</sup>Isman, p. 241; Cook, p. 156.

<sup>66</sup>Forrest Arden, Warfield Aims at Real Drama from Real Life," Chicago Examiner, 22 November 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 49; "David Warfield at the Valentine," Toledo News, 19 April 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 67; Huhn, p. 9; Walter Pritchard Eaton, "The Rise of David Warfield," American, January 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 22; Lawrence Hall, "David Warfield: The Actor and the Man," Arena, March 1909, pp. 259-60; Kenneth Hereford, "David Warfield Actor," The Pilgrim, January 1905, p. 25, RLC, vol. 476, p. 51.

details of appearance and demeanor," but he concluded that while Warfield "has shown fine power and done fine things, he has not yet attained the summit of eminence as an imaginative actor."<sup>67</sup>

Other critics voiced the opinion that Warfield was misusing his time and talent. James O'Donnell Bennet believed that Warfield, who was entitled to better material, was wasting his talents on plays lacking in artistic opportunities. Walter Pritchard Eaton called Warfield's participation in new plays which would expand established horizons a "matter of moment to all of us," and blamed Belasco for Warfield's adherence to "the line of least resistance" by essentially playing one part. As Warfield was "greater, or more interesting, than most plays," the actor owed "it to the world to play many parts" which would search all bounds of character and experience. Eleanor Franklin stated that Warfield's "fortunate misfortune" lay in "being too clever in some distinct specialty," and Arthur Hornblow cited Warfield's stagnating craft as being "too much in one key. Prosperity seems to have arrested his artistic growth."<sup>68</sup>

Warfield's artistic growth as an actor began when he became associated with the burlesque and variety halls in New York in the

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<sup>67</sup>William Winter, The Wallet of Time, 2 vols. (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1913; reprint ed., Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 2:175-78, 185, 187.

<sup>68</sup>"Wasted Warfield," Chicago Record Herald, 22 November 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 47; "The Rise of David Warfield," RLC, vol. 477, pp. 20, 22; Plays and Players (Cincinnati: Steward and Kidd, 1916), pp. 17-18; "Notable Successes of the Young Actor Mr. David Warfield," Leslie's Weekly, 12 January 1905, p. 41; "Let the Playwright Do His Bit," Theatre Magazine, March 1918, p. 133.

1890s. From John H. Russell's *Comedians* and George Lederer's New York Casino Company through the Weberfields' Music Hall, the talent of David Warfield took shape. Of this period in his life, Amy Leslie called him not a "burlesquer," but a "thoroughly legitimate character comedian . . . [whose] delightful impersonations have been drawn upon the finest, clearest lines of genuine dramatic expression." She continued:

He is a silent, deliberate David, . . . and seldom discloses his ideas of a role before he springs it upon his expectant comrades and the public. . . . Mr. Warfield does not dance, he does not sing, he is not handsome, he is not a poseur, but each of these negatives fill out a meet of talent which is perhaps the most persuasive and definite of that in any of the actors of comedy in vaudeville.<sup>69</sup>

Then, in 1901, David Belasco announced that he would present this "silent, deliberate David" on the legitimate stage. Simon Levi, Warfield's first role for Belasco, was based upon the burlesque sketch Warfield had been assuming. William Winter called the portrayal "a genuine consistent impersonation . . . touched with tender feeling and momentarily irradiated with pathos." The physical aspects of the character were perfect; he noted the sallow complexion, wiry hair, splayfooted gait and voluable gestures. Warfield's singular achievement with the role was "in denoting a steadfast, affectionate, patient nature beneath the mean outside of a petty huckster subjected to cruel disappointment and hardship."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Some Players (New York: Herbert Stone and Company, 1899), pp. 599-600.

<sup>70</sup> Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2:14-15.

One opinion of Warfield's Levi held that it was too one dimensional because the situations which demanded pathos lacked variety and depth and destroyed any semblance of Warfield's versatility. Yet a year later, Warfield was proclaimed to be living the part in a play that was tawdry, melodramatic trash, and thus making of it "a stage gem . . . [whose] lustre will not dim with passing years." After playing the role for nearly two years, both star and play were greeted as old friends; Warfield's long association with the role was proclaimed to have not only retained, but added to, its polish.<sup>71</sup>

The announcement in 1904 that Warfield would be seen in a new role, that of Anton von Barwig in The Music Master, aroused excitement and curiosity. Many could not envision the actor as anyone other than a Jewish peddler, nor could they believe he could easily lay aside comedy for "sweet tears." Yet, all were surprised. The New York Herald announced:

The transformation of the peddler, with his side-splitting grimaces and laugh provoking Hebrew dialect into the modest German maestod, whose kindly soul is filled with music and sunshine, was remarkable.

He [Warfield] scored a genuine triumph, showed himself to be a great actor and moved the audience so greatly that the evening witnessed a remarkable success. . . .<sup>72</sup>

Two years later, the enthusiasm over the Warfield Barwig had not waned. One reviewer wrote that it was the most adequate role yet given

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<sup>71</sup>"Mr. Warfield in 'The Auctioneer'," New York Times, 24 September 1901, p. 6; Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 14 October 1902, p. 8; New York Clipper, 9 May 1903, p. 264.

<sup>72</sup>"David Warfield is a Revelation," 27 September 1904, RLC, vol. 476, p. 38.

to display Warfield's talents, and that in every scene, the actor "sounded each note with an art that gives him high rank among modern actors." Another critic concurred, stating that the "modern stage has seen few pieces of acting so artistic," and that Barwig would be remembered as a classic. To him, its greatest charm was naturalness, and its humor, pathos and artistic finish made of it "a master work of character delineation."<sup>73</sup>

The actor next tackled the role of an Indianan in A Grand Army Man. The initial response to Wesley Bigelow was filled with plaudits; upon the New York opening critics reported that Simon Levi and Anton von Barwig had been definitely replaced by Wesley Bigelow. For example, Acton Davies wrote:

Warfield, shorn of all dialect, had to vanquish the ghosts of his own two creations Simon Levi and Anton von Barwig. The result passed all expectations. . . . as old Wesley Bigelow . . . David Warfield has soared as an actor far above "The Music Master" and has made "The Auctioneer" seem a thousand miles away.<sup>74</sup>

But as weeks passed, enthusiasm lessened. Walter Pritchard Eaton pointed out that Warfield always played roles in which sweetness dominated and in which the battle between good and evil was no more than a skirmish. Warfield had yet to show that he could portray the dark side of human nature or a role with an intellectual appeal--roles which

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<sup>73</sup>"David Warfield's Brilliant Triumph," Philadelphia Public Ledger, 6 November 1906, DBC 170, p. 27; "At the Theatres," Philadelphia Bulletin, 14 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 139.

<sup>74</sup>"Belasco and Warfield Score a Double Triumph at the Stuyvessant," New York Sun, 17 October 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 114.

would suggest the dignity of the mind as well as of the heart, of light as well as sweetness. Eaton concluded that: "These tasks await him in the future, and on his performance of them will depend if not his immediate popularity certainly his final award of dramatic fame."<sup>75</sup>

Others stated that Bigelow was simply Barwig without the German accent, that every manner of the character had lived before in the music master. Lewis Hillhouse addressed both this point and Eaton's position:

Mr. Warfield's role [Bigelow] is different from "Simon Levi" and from "Anton von Barwig" only in detail. It does not afford that study in contrasts one would like to see, and unless Mr. Warfield is soon provided with a part which will enable him to show an entirely different phase of his art, he will, without justice, perhaps, be written down as a one-part actor, having no real versatility. His "Wes Bigelow" is highly artistic, it cannot be denied . . . but it is NOT different. Nothing is different but the story.<sup>76</sup>

Public interest in A Grand Army Man petered out, and Warfield returned to The Music Master. The story was best summarized in an unsigned article in the Syracuse Post:

Mr. Warfield had stopped playing "The Music Master" two or three years ago. Another play had been written for him. The public would not have it. It demanded "The Music Master" and nothing else. This season has been probably the most successful Mr. Warfield has had.

So popular was The Music Master after Warfield's return to the role that W. L. Hubbard wrote nothing more need be said about Warfield's

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<sup>75</sup>"About 'A Grand Army Man'," New York Sun, 20 October 1907, RLC, vol. 477, p. 2.

<sup>76</sup>I., "Season's Play's," Harper's Weekly, 9 November 1907, pp. 1660-61; "Even Warfield Can Not Hide Faults of Grand Army Man," Cincinnati Times, 22 December 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 52.

performance--it was so complete that perfection was the only word to describe it. Critics noted that Warfield's long imprisonment in the role did not seem to affect his performance of it. A Cleveland Leader article commented that there was no need to dwell upon the particular merits of Warfield's performance as they had long passed into tradition, adding that continuance in the role had not lessened to any degree the spontaneity of the acting nor its glory and spirit.<sup>77</sup>

In view of this public preference for The Music Master, David Belasco was determined to prevent Warfield and Barwig from becoming another Joseph Jefferson and Rip Van Winkle. Therefore, in 1911, he presented Warfield in a fourth new vehicle, The Return of Peter Grimm. William Winter hailed the effort as Warfield's first, and, to date only, venture in imaginative acting. While the eminent critic felt that the character was correctly assumed and expressed, he was disappointed that Warfield's embodiment of the spirit of Peter Grimm was neither inventive nor sympathetic, and that Warfield failed to create the slightest illusion.<sup>78</sup>

It was agreed that Peter Grimm was a character through which the actor's wonderful art could be displayed; the debatable question was whether Grimm was or was not equal to, or a rival of, Barwig. In

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<sup>77</sup>"The Music Master," 25 May 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 72; "The Music Master," Chicago Tribune, 24 November 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 48; "Colonial Theatre," 9 June 1909, RLC, vol. 477, pp. 61-62.

<sup>78</sup>Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2:122-23; Idem, The Wallet of Time, 2:187-90.

Boston, one newspaper reported that this "masterly creation of unaffected naturalness" would not bring to Warfield the widespread fame of the music master and was joined by a sister newspaper in the belief that Grimm was merely "one more variation of the part he has been taking through 'The Auctioneer,' 'The Music Master,' and 'A Grand Army Man'." The Boston reception of Warfield and the play was summarized as being a novelty that would "get by as a curio," sustaining interest only until a vehicle worthy of The Music Master could be found.<sup>79</sup>

In the fall of 1911, this controversy continued as Peter Grimm arrived in New York. One account held that Warfield's work in the role added no laurels to his fame and that the characterization was hazy. Adolphe Klauber defended the actor for playing the character with complete understanding and sympathy; it was, he wrote, a fine Warfieldian portrait which merited all critical commendation possible, for through it, Warfield had finally proven that he was not a "dialect" actor. Arthur Hornblow, reviewing the play for The Theatre, wrote that Warfield was "wholly untheatric" in such a shallow acting part--which the actor played "with perfect moderation, simplicity, and sincerity--and that the novelty of the role generated public interest in it."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>"The Return of Peter Grimm," Boston Globe, 3 January 1911, RLC, vol. 478, p. 5; "Belasco and Warfield," Boston Transcript, 3 January 1911, RLC, vol. 478, p. 3; "Boston Finds Warfield Play Very Gruesome," New York Review, 7 January 1911, RLC, vol. 477, p. 79.

<sup>80</sup>"David Warfield Back Again," Unidentified newspaper, 18 October 1911, RLC, vol. 477, p. 94; "A Remarkable and Inspiring Example of David Belasco's Genius," New York Times, 22 October 1911, sec. 8, p. 2; "Mr. Hornblow Goes to the Play," November 1911, p. xii.

Once upon the road the reviewers across the country proclaimed Grimm to be a masterful creation. St. Louis critics cited that Warfield as Grimm was a better actor than when he played Barwig for heretofore unseen talents were evident in the performance. The Louisville Herald called the role equal to anything Warfield had ever done because he managed to create a convincing character for which there was no model. However, the comment was made that "Mr. Warfield has not the opportunities given him in 'The Music Master,' nor even in 'A Grand Army Man,' but he makes the most of those given him."<sup>81</sup>

For a two year period beginning in 1913, Warfield reverted to the crafty Simon Levi in The Auctioneer. Of his return to the role, Louis Sherwin wrote that the play in Warfield's hands was "one of the rare phenomena which remind us from time to time that acting is a high art and not merely a refuge for incompetents who have neither the brains nor the industry to achieve a competency in the more laborious occupations." James O'Donnell Bennett, in a review entitled "Beautiful Acting," called Warfield's artistic acting of Levi graphic yet delicately shaded, exact and flowing in detail and so unobtrusively deft that all effort had disappeared. It was acting, he continued, which exposed the secrets of the character before even the character had fathomed them, an aspect which prompted the regret that Warfield was not an actor acclaimed for

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<sup>81</sup>"Audacious Psychic Play," St. Louis Globe, 18 March 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 7; "Warfield Triumphs in Belasco Vehicle," Louisville Herald, 1 April 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 10; "'The Return of Peter Grimm'," Unidentified newspaper, n.d., RLC, vol. 477, p. 103.

Ibsenian or Shakespearean roles which would showcase this gift of psychological interpretation.<sup>82</sup>

Toward the end of this tour of The Auctioneer, a major criticism of Warfield's characterization was expressed. Winthrop Chamberlain felt that the interpretation was overly elaborate, with too much detail, too careful painting of minor lines and unimportant shadows which slowed the performance and detracted from the artistic whole. He likened the problem to a great painter who had elaborated a great subject with the infinite attention for detail used by an artist of miniatures. He concluded that on this point:

. . . the influence of David Belasco . . . has had too much sway. For Belasco is an inveterate realist who dotes on detail. Mr. Warfield should have the courage to slash out at least a quarter of his stuff. It would result, if carefully done, in an almost flawless work of art that would send the audience home in elated satisfaction, instead of sated fatigue.<sup>83</sup>

By and large, the critics praised Warfield's embodiment of Levi in this revival; yet, a consensus revealed that Warfield was wasting his time. Warfield's interpretation of it was not thought worthy of great esteem because it was considered a second-rate acting role. One author wrote: "Genius is wasted upon such plays as 'The Auctioneer'." Another stated: "So fine an artist should serve the public as an interpreter

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<sup>82</sup>"David Warfield Returns in 'The Auctioneer'," New York Globe, 1 October 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 16; Chicago Record Herald, 18 January 1914, RLC, vol. 478, pp. 39-40.

<sup>83</sup>"David Warfield's Jewish Auctioneer," Minneapolis Journal, 12 February 1915, RLC, vol. 478, p. 53.

of life, and not as a repeater of banalities." And a third lament read:

. . . We want to see Mr. Warfield act a great character, we want to see Mr. Belasco produce a great play; and instead we are fobbed off for an entire year with a piece that, in less accomplished hands, would not be patronized by anybody.<sup>84</sup>

It is interesting, also, to note that a number of critics expressed the opinion that Simon Levi was more popular than Anton von Barwig. Peter Grimm rivaled Barwig in critical acclaim and at the box office, but Simon again captured the hearts and memories of his audience. Chester Rice wrote that since Warfield created Levi in 1901, none of his characters, especially Barwig, had been more cherished by the public than Simon Levi. Another writer credited the preference of Levi over Barwig to the fact that Levi was a living type which had to be depicted with vision and understanding in conjunction with imagination.<sup>85</sup>

The onstage Warfield had been defined as being "the physical personation and spiritual impersonation of . . . gentle, lovable, whitesouled old men," a type to which he technically comprehended and transferred plausibly, sympathetically and truthfully regardless of the circumstances of the story. The off-stage Warfield was described as an "emotionalist rather than the intellectual gymnast" with no appearance

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<sup>84</sup>"The Auctioneer," New York Post, 1 October 1913, RLC, vol. 478, pp. 16-17; "The Auctioneer," Bohemian, November 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 27; Untitled, Vogue, 1 November 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 23.

<sup>85</sup>"From 'A Quarrel in a Jewish Lodge' to 'The Auctioneer,'" Chicago Record Herald, 4 January 1914, RLC, vol. 478, p. 34; "Warfield in 'The Auctioneer'," Springfield Clarion, 20 May 1914, RLC, vol. 478, p. 46.

of the dilettante in his personality to generate experimentation with new things. Because Warfield was a man who accomplished what he set out to do, the description continued, an "out-and-out failure" for him "would be a bitter tragedy."<sup>86</sup>

These descriptions of the on- and off-stage Warfield best preface the aborted Van Der Decken. While a few critics praised the characterization as being "Warfield's greatest contribution to the dramatic stage" and proof of a versatility hitherto unknown, others objected on the grounds that the role required a leading man, not a character actor ("He is not a romantic lover, and the thread of the narrative demands the constant presentation of this ideal in the spirit of the role."). A succinctly telling comment was: "In his impersonation of the unhappy Van der Decken Mr. Warfield was quite lost in the tragic figure. . . ."<sup>87</sup>

The following comments indicate Van Der Decken was a rather unfortunate endeavor for Warfield which bordered on the laughable:

. . . Personally, I think "Van Der Decken" a superficial play full of all sorts of theatrical clap-trap, but when I look around at Powers' and see beautiful ladies staring

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<sup>86</sup>"Mr. Warfield and Mr. Belasco," Philadelphia Telegraph, 8 October 1912, RLC, vol. 477, p. 109; Untitled, Washington Star, 10 January 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 54.

<sup>87</sup>"Warfield Triumphs in 'Van der Decken,' New Belasco Play," New York Star, 8 December 1915, RLC, vol. 478, p. 65; Archie Bell, "Warfield as the Flying Dutchman," Theatre, February 1916, p. 96; Charles Collins, Untitled, Chicago Post, 25 January 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 74; "Mr. Warfield Seen in a Novel Part," Boston Transcript, n.d., RLC, vol. 478, p. 73; "David Warfield in 'Van Der Decken' at Detroit," Detroit Journal, 28 December 1915, RLC, vol. 478, p. 67; Untitled, Pittsburgh Times, 23 January 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 76; "Review of the Fuller," Wisconsin Journal, 4 April 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 81.

reprovingly at me through scalding tears I feel ashamed. There I sit cold and stony hearted while the ladies sob, and even moonfaced gentlemen one would never suspect of sentimentality wiggle uneasily and hoarsely whisper, "Say, that guy's got my goat."

To me there was a real human appeal in Mr. Warfield's "Music Master." When the poor, half-starved exile in an agony of love and despair shrieked out, "If you don't want her then I want her . . .," I always had chills sneaking up and down my spine, and I would reach hastily for my hanky to wipe my streaming eyes. . . .

But "Van Der Decken" . . . does not make me cry at all. On the contrary, I want to laugh with sheer enjoyment at Van Der Decken's good luck and the way in which he spoofs the other characters in the play and works on their fears and their sympathies and does the same with the audience.

I rather like the play, but I absolutely decline to weep. Van Der Decken is not at all pathetic to me. There he stands so well fed that he is fat and almost greasy. And wonderfully dressed and with so much money that . . . he pulls out a whole purse of gold and tosses that over and tells the overjoyed recipient to keep the change,--I can't weep over a man that is sleek and fat and has wonderful duds and oozes gold from every pore.

Mr. Belasco says that Van Der Decken is pathetic because the curse of heaven is upon him and he cannot die, but that he must forever sail the seas, coming ashore every nine years to see if any lady is going to love him enough to take off the hoodoo. But when Van Der Decken in all his good clothes and so young looking that the maiden he woos says she thinks he is only 30 years old stands in the taproom and drinks good rum with great relish and makes love with plenty of pep stands up and says, "Ah, I am changeless, changeless," am I going to pity him for that? Not a bit!

Why, Van Der Decken has a cinch. I wish somebody would hang a curse on me if it kept me always looking 30 and my clothes from wearing out and plenty of gold bulging in my pockets and gave me the ability to hug a girl when I was 240 years old and tell her she was the first woman I ever loved and get away with it. . . .<sup>88</sup>

And Warfield returned to The Music Master and laudatory adulation.

Heywood Brown, calling it an excellent performance and possibly a great

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<sup>88</sup> Richard Henry Little, "No, Mr. Van Der Decken is Not Pathetic," Chicago Herald, 30 January 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 76.

one, noted that what the character lacked in subtlety was compensated by range; where power was lacking, force atoned. Warfield's greatest assets, he continued, were voice, mouth and shoulders, the last of which were the picture of sorrow. He concluded by saying that the portrayal of Barwig was the epitome of a carefully considered and well-planned performance.<sup>89</sup>

Others continued the glowing praise. One writer called Barwig "the quintessence of . . . all the virtues with which a human being could be endowed." Another singled out Barwig's sigh which could be "heard to the remotest recesses of the galleries," and finished by reporting:

. . . He is a picture for a painter. . . . He bites his lips, shrugs his shoulders ever so faintly and brings you back through a reverie through which ring the strains of a hidden symphony with a dominant note of wistful longing. He bucks you up with a smile of ineffable sweetness and the next moment you are laughing with a mist in your eyes. It is a bit of stage magic superb.<sup>90</sup>

In 1918 David Belasco dusted The Auctioneer and prepared it for yet another revival. While the New York Tribune and New York Times both published pre-opening announcements and daily advertisements for the performances, neither newspaper devoted space to a review of the opening night performance, yet space was provided for reviews of new plays then opening on Broadway. On November tenth, the New York Tribune ran an article whose purpose was no more significant than a press release. In

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<sup>89</sup>"'Music Master' Welcomed Home," New York Tribune, 11 October 1916, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup>Ella Mae Hawthorne, "Detroit Opera House," Detroit Times, 3 April 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

1919 the same treatment was awarded the play by the Washington Post; other than the announcement of the play in the November second issue, no review or further comment was made upon the production.<sup>91</sup>

Percy Hammond in the Chicago Tribune offers a glimpse of the eighteen-year-old Simon Levi:

Of Mr. Warfield it may be said that he is everlasting. His plays are not the thing, but his acting is, and he can take a shoddy fable and turn it into a rich and minor epic. After eighteen years he does Simon Levi . . . again, a poor play in its infancy, but by his mellowing influences it has become almost as classic as "Uncle Tom" or "Rip Van Winkle."

A faithful actor is Mr. Warfield. He cheats only when cheating is a benefice. And then he does it under cover. "The Auctioneer" is a vivid example of an inexperienced lie told with all the detailed skill of the adept fabulist. . . .<sup>92</sup>

In 1920 Belasco resurrected The Return of Peter Grimm. While Arthur Hornblow gave the production a token review in The Theatre, Alexander Woollcott called the production a "welcomed revival" and wrote that Warfield's portrait of Grimm was extraordinary in detail and effect and that the actor's art exemplified a simple and perfect work "immeasurably richer than the slap-dash work" of most actors. And from the Chicago Tribune came the belief that Warfield's spell as the mellow, kind and whimsical spectre could not be resisted:

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<sup>91</sup>For a character as beloved as Simon Levi was last purported to be, it seems odd that major newspapers failed to bestow any more recognition than they gave. Cf.: New York Tribune, 5 November 1918; New York Times, 5 November 1918; "Warfield Returns to a Familiar Role," New York Tribune, 10 November 1918, sec. 4, p. 2; Washington Post, 2 November 1919; Washington Post, 4 November 1919.

<sup>92</sup>"The Theatres," 28 December 1919, sec. 8, p. 1.

. . . If Mr. Belasco's theatricalism sometimes seems a shade too apparant in the play; if the creeping spotlights are too much in evidence and a speech here and there a thought too flowery, there is always the benign presence of Mr. Warfield to atone. He humanizes the story and makes it credible.<sup>93</sup>

In 1908 Otheman Stevens proclaimed that Warfield was capable of playing almost all of the really great roles for which his physical traits were appropriate. Stevens thought Warfield would be a proficient Hamlet, but not a great Shylock, and beginning in 1922, the verdict of whether Warfield was equal to Shylock was argued in the theatrical columns of newspapers all over the country.<sup>94</sup>

Of the actual performance, Warfield was believed to have lived the part as faithfully as he had lived all of his other roles, to have portrayed a creature at home in the Venetian streets of Belasco's stage, and to have been a person who was canny, persuasive, touched with malice, torn with rage over Jessica's flight, and finally, broken and cringing in his defeat. It was thought an historic stage portrait that would be compared with the Shylocks of both the past and the future. And yet Warfield was also faced with the opinion that his Shylock

. . . was neither majestic nor uncanny in his venom for revenge. He was human, falable, whimsical--conscious of his own frailties, even when he raged most bitterly on the

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<sup>93</sup>"Mr. Hornblow Goes to the Play," December 1921, pp. 388, 416; "'The Return of Peter Grimm'," New York Times, 22 September 1921, p. 12; Sheppard Butler, "Mr. Warfield as a Beneficent Spectre," 29 December 1921, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup>"David Warfield in 'Music Master' Holds Vast Audience Under His Magic Spell," Los Angeles Examiner, 13 October 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 40.

Christians who had tricked him out of his substance and mocked his revenge.<sup>95</sup>

Other observations ran lukewarm to cold. Robert C. Benchley wrote: "Warfield's Shylock is not as good as it would have been if Warfield had played it in 1870." Arthur Hornblow affirmed that Warfield did not provide the inspiration necessary to lend a spirit of exalting beauty and power to the affair. Mary Caroline Crawford even expressed the regret of Warfield's defection from Weber and Fields when she wrote:

. . . A superb actor of burlesque, understanding thoroughly the importance of solemnity and finish to success in this line, Warfield might still have been making us laugh with his drollery instead of weep for the inadequacy of his Shylock, had not Belasco taken him from Weber and Fields to star him in "the legitimate."<sup>96</sup>

And so superlatives were lavishly bestowed upon the name of David Warfield throughout his career as were dispiriting regrets. Warfield's record was marred by only two productions, and his fame rested upon three others while a sixth seemed to fall quietly and unobtrusively into oblivion. A career that held such promise in the late 1890s and early 1900s had somehow seemed to fall out of favor with the critics of the 'teens and early twenties. In a quote above, Walter Pritchard Eaton listed the tasks which Warfield would have to perform in order to

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<sup>95</sup>The Optimist, "Warfield Adds His Bit to Stage History," Chicago Evening American, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; The Amateur, "Warfield Gives Fine Portrayal of Moneylender," San Diego Union, 26 March 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

<sup>96</sup>"Was Shylock Really Hamlet?" Life, 25 January 1923, p. 18; "Mr. Hornblow Goes to the Theatre," Theatre Magazine, February 1923, p. 16; The Romance of the American Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1925), p. 387.

maintain his popularity and to obtain his final decree of dramatic fame.<sup>97</sup> Inherent in this comment was the dependence of dramatic fame upon critical acclaim, and through such commendation rests the final judgement on the actor David Warfield.

If critical acclaim is the standard by which an actor achieves greatness, then David Warfield is a man who had both obtained and lost such stature. As Anton von Barwig in The Music Master, Warfield obtained high critical commendation which elevated him to the stature of greatness, and the comments of his critics attest, year after year, how Warfield's portrayal of this role became the basis for his reputation as a consummate actor. Of Warfield's performance as Shylock, the commentary of his critics reveal how not even the actor's reputation could conceal the obvious limitations of Warfield's abilities in character delineation, and the resulting disfavor he received bears witness to the unfulfillment of Warfield's expressed hope that his Shylock would attain for him a permanent confirmation of greatness. David Warfield remains, then, as one example of a passing player who gave of his talents in pursuit of a theatrical ideal, and in so doing, he proves himself worthy of the title "an actor of yesterday."

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<sup>97</sup>"About 'A Grand Army Man'," RLC, vol. 477, p. 2.

## CHAPTER II

### LEGEND OF THE SWEET TEARS

On September 12, 1904, David Warfield walked onto the stage of Atlantic City's Young's Pier Theatre for the first time in the role of Anton von Barwig in The Music Master. That night initiated a phenomenal legend in theatrical history, a legend which paralleled that of Richard Mansfield in Beau Brummel and Joseph Jefferson in Rip Van Winkle. This legend was based upon a theory popularized by Jefferson and perpetuated by Warfield that people like to cry "sweet tears," and the employment of that theory resulted in the creation of a favored stage portrait which literally lived in the hearts and souls of theatre patrons across the United States. To these people from all classes of society, Anton von Barwig was not David Warfield; David Warfield was Anton von Barwig.

The portrait quickly gained such favor that many drama critics hailed it as a performance which would "always remain a classic in acting" to all persons who had seen it and as a role which would serve the star "to the end of his days and keep his memory green long after the handsome young leading men of his day are completely forgotten." One critic hoped that this great portrait would one day be preserved upon film "instead of living only in memories that must die; in print that can but feebly do the players justice."<sup>1</sup> These critics also

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<sup>1</sup>"Bigger than his Play," Philadelphia Telegram, 9 March 1909, Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks (hereafter designated

compared the portrait of Barwig to other dramatic characters which had achieved success for the actors who had created them. Warfield's fame as Barwig was perennially associated with that of Henry Irving in The Bells, Denman Thompson as Joshua Whitcomb in The Old Homestead, and James O'Neill in The Count of Monte Cristo in addition to Richard Mansfield in Beau Brummel and Joseph Jefferson in Rip Van Winkle. Succinctly stated, critics judged that

. . . just as Jefferson in his Rip and Thompson in his Joshua gave the American stage two figures which . . . in the reminiscences and the history of the stage will be mentioned for long years afterwards, so the Herr von Barwig of Warfield will be recalled and lovingly cherished in memory and in theatric annals.<sup>2</sup>

In the years following this premiere, the public affection for The Music Master was evidenced. In 1909 the Belasco offices were daily flooded by letters from men and women across the country imploring the producer not to withdraw the play until after it had played their city. Some authors of these letters confessed that through self-denial they were saving their money "against the day when David Warfield and 'The Music Master' should travel to their town." Such wide-spread response prompted the observation:

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as RLC), vol. 477, p. 56; Untitled, Green Book, May 1918, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks--The Music Master (hereafter designated as DBC-MM), n.p.; Edward P. Dechert, "Warfield's Art in 'The Music Master'," Philadelphia North American, 16 November 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>"Warfield in 'The Music Master'," Chicago Journal, 24 November 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 49; "An Impression of 'The Grand Army Man' and of Warfield's Work as Bigelow," Unidentified newspaper, n.d., RLC, vol. 477, p. 56; W. L. Hubbard, "The Music Master," Chicago Tribune, 12 March 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 101.

. . . It is to be doubted if Warfield ever makes another success as great as he has made in "The Music Master," or has it in him to create another part that will be at once as artistically perfect and as moving as Von Barwig.<sup>3</sup>

The Anton von Barwig of David Warfield had won distinction with the qualities of simplicity and sincerity--the same two qualities which were cited as the keynote of his art. In 1908 Walter Pritchard Eaton theorized that through the role Warfield was attempting to bring simplicity into acting technique, and to advocate that all actors represent the world as it was, not as other actors or a "school" dictated. Eaton concluded: "The simplicity and clarity and utter naturalness of his methods won all beholders, tired of the bombastic rantings of 'the old school' and finding too few actors of the 'new' who could stir and move them." Ten years later the verity of this statement was still professed.<sup>4</sup>

Warfield apparently convinced his audiences that he was living--not acting--the role. From the actor's first entrance to his last exit, the patron felt he was spending the evening with the animated character. All the emotions projected from behind the footlights were received as though the love, heartbreak, loneliness and subsequent happiness were being experienced by a beloved family member. One critic explained:

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<sup>3</sup>Untitled, Unidentified Pittsburg newspaper, 27 December 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 53; "The Music Master's Sixth Year," Unidentified newspaper, 9 October 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 63; Untitled, Washington Herald, 20 January 1907, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 170 (hereafter designated as DBC 170), p. 77.

<sup>4</sup>"The Rise of David Warfield," American, January 1908, RLC, vol. 477, pp. 21-22; Fred Turner Ranney, "David Warfield in The Music Master," Minneapolis Tribune, 9 April 1918, DBC-MM, n.p.

. . . Mr. Warfield has reached the point, which is the test of genius in emotional acting, at which he seems actually to live the character of Anton von Barwig. Not the breadth of a hair separates this creature of a fine actor's imagination from real life. Even when he first performed it twelve years ago, every trace of the mechanics by which his effects were reached was hidden. Through constant repetition the character has since broadened and mellowed until the superlative attainment of a great artist--art which conceals art--has entered the embodiment. Whether or not Mr. Warfield really feels the emotions he expresses is not a matter of much consequence. . . . The important thing is that Mr. Warfield transmits to his audience with perfection the full sense of von Barwig's joys and sorrows.<sup>5</sup>

"The important thing is that Mr. Warfield transmits to his audience with perfection the full sense of von Barwig's joys and sorrows." Within that statement the key to the success of The Music Master can be found. While "perfection" became a concept as synonymous with the performance as the actor with the role, the belief that the portrayal of the kindly, forlorn and heartbreaking Anton von Barwig was perfect won the affection of the public. The Music Master succeeded only because David Warfield, the actor, was able to give the public what it wanted: a bittersweet, sentimental character who would allow that public to shed "sweet tears."

No one, not even the shrewd David Belasco who specialized in giving the public what it wanted, foresaw the tremendous effect The Music Master would have upon the public, for there was little reason to expect

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<sup>5</sup>"'Music Master' Beautiful Play," Wheeling Intelligencer, 10 March 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; Frank A. Marshall, "Music and the Drama," Kansas City Journal, 23 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 119; Louis V. DeFoe, "Mr. Warfield's Great Acting in a Play that Refuses to Grow Old," New York Herald, 15 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 11.

such a reception. Warfield had become famous playing Jewish characters, and since the public thought of Warfield as an actor of Hebrew roles exclusively, the new character, a German, was an open question.

Billboard in announcing the play wrote:

The new attempt at character building will put Mr. Warfield to a crucial test. He is an actor of pronounced and unique ability, which approaches genius, but all his work heretofore has been restricted to a very narrow range. . . .

Owing to the manner in which he has become identified with impersonations of the Hebrew type, it has been predicted that he would fail, or at least meet with small success in the portrayal of eccentric characters of other races. This year he will be put to the test and upon the results his future will depend.<sup>6</sup>

Early in 1904, Warfield and Belasco agreed that the actor had been too limited in the roles he had portrayed and plans for a new role were initiated. After perusing Warfield's repertoire of dialect stories, they chose to base the character on an upper-class German. Charles Klein, who was hired to write the script, worked with Belasco defining and redefining the shape and scope of both character and play. The central figure, Anton von Barwig, became involved in a complex story of poverty versus wealth in which the love and sacrifice of a father for his daughter becomes paramount.

The rehearsal period yielded no indicator of the vehicle's eventual prosperity. As with all untested scripts, many revisions were incorporated during the few weeks of rehearsal. Originally, for example, the play was entitled The Music Teacher, but the development of the

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<sup>6</sup>"New Play for David Warfield," 20 August 1904, p. 2.

central figure prompted the drama to be rechristened The Music Master. A "dream sequence" had been planned in which Barwig's past was to be enacted, but Belasco subsequently realized that this scene interrupted the flow of the action and cut it. Another major cut was contrived when the star cleverly persuaded Belasco to delete a snowstorm effect in the third act; the actor ended a runthrough of the scene with the comment: "The snowstorm is so realistic it has given me a chill."<sup>7</sup>

Even the initial response to the production after the premiere performance clouded the success which was ahead of the play. Belasco reminisced about the critics who personally advised him to withdraw the production before presenting it in New York; he quoted an elderly female spectator who called the play "a flat fizzle," and he remembered that one gentleman walked out. But he emphasized that his fervent faith in the production proved these out-of-town critics incorrect; after opening in New York, the show played to standing room only for three years, an achievement which prompted Belasco to write in retrospect:

"The Music Master" was such a success that it marked the beginning of Mr. Warfield's fame as a "box-office" favorite. No other actor in the country has played to such enormous receipts. When the run was over, and he went on tour in a new piece, there was a continual demand for "The Music Master" until we played it on certain nights. Rain, snow or blizzard could not keep people away. They stood in line all night so as to be at the box office early in the morning to buy tickets. . . .<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> David Belasco, "How Warfield Became a Master," Unidentified periodical, n.d. (ca. 1915), RLC, vol. 478, pp. 62-64.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

The turn-of-the-century melodrama that thousands queued up to see presents the sentimental story of Anton von Barwig, a renowned Leipsig conductor and composer. In Act I, we find ourselves in Barwig's Houston Street lodging, a boarding house run by the spinsterish Miss Houston. There we meet his friends and fellow lodgers who, like Barwig, are impoverished immigrant musicians. The atmosphere is one of "home." One evening, these friends discover that Barwig is preparing to pawn yet another of his most valuable and cherished possessions. Miss Houston remarks that since he came to America sixteen years ago he has had to pawn many of his possessions in order to support himself.

A tired Barwig returns home, and, after the customary greetings, he informs them that he is being considered as conductor for the Harmonie Society. Amid the excitement, Costello, Barwig's boss from the dime museum (where the music master secretly earns his livelihood playing the piano for cheap variety acts), interrupts. He informs Barwig that one of the performers for whom he plays has complained that the piano music is "queering" the act and asks him to "thump" harder. Swallowing his pride, Barwig consents.

While at dinner, a letter arrives informing Barwig that he has been elected conductor of the Harmonie Society, and he impulsively offers his friends positions. The four musicians promptly resign their respective jobs, but their action is made in haste. A representative from their musicians' union enters and informs the quartet that the union has voted to join a strike in sympathy with the bricklayers' union. This action is a protest against the Harmonie Society's employment of nonunion

masons for the construction of the Society's new concert hall. The four musicians have no choice but to comply.

A depressed Barwig confides to Jenny, a young girl who assists Miss Houston at the boarding house, that he will now return to Leipsig. He tells her his secret: sixteen years ago he came to America to search for his wife who had fled Germany on Christmas night with their daughter, Helene, and his best friend. He remembers that a few days before that Christmas night, Helene had asked her father to mend her favorite doll's broken eye. At that moment, a young woman, Helen Stanton, enters to request Barwig's services as a piano teacher. Barwig is struck by her voice and her resemblance to his wife. He begins to question her, seeking a clue to satisfy his suspicions. Her responses serve to both pique his curiosity and dash his renewed hope. He agrees to give her piano instruction in order that he might meet her father, and the curtain falls upon the solitary Barwig as he prepares to return to work at the detested dime museum.

The second act curtain reveals the private sitting room of Helen Stanton. Henry Stanton, a highly successful businessman of indomitable will, seeks assurance from his butler and his personal secretary that his orders to prevent Barwig from visiting Helen have been carried out. Stanton insists that every measure be taken which will prevent Barwig from visiting Helen, and he silently hopes these measures will protect the secret which threatens his reputation.

The gentlemen are interrupted by Helen's entrance. Stanton gives her a birthday present and then discusses her engagement to the young,

aristocratic Beverly Cruger. Helen uses this discussion to express her feelings toward her father--there is no love or bond between them, she is merely one of his possessions--and her desire to know more about her late mother whose love, understanding and devotion she deeply misses. Stanton evades her queries about her mother and maternal relatives and calls her an ungrateful child after all he has done for and given to her. But the conversation is ended by the announcement of her fiancé and his parents.

The young couple is left alone, and Helen laments that Barwig no longer comes to visit her. The young man replies that he saw Barwig at the door only the day before, and that he believed her music teacher had been refused entrance by the servant. Helen summons the butler and, upon uncovering the deception, informs him that Barwig is to return today and is to be ushered to her sitting room.

When Barwig arrives, Helen apologizes for the cold reception he had received; she insists that it will not happen again. She wonders why Barwig takes such an interest in her in spite of the ill-treatment he has received on her behalf. She shares the events of her recent birthday with him and invites him to view the presents on her old doll cabinet. Barwig asks her where she was born, and her reply of "In Leipsig" rekindles the suspicion that she is his daughter. She refers to her childhood dolls, and he asks to inspect them. Among them he finds the old German doll with the broken eye he had given to his child so many years before. He is then invited to view a portrait of her mother which hangs in the adjacent bedroom. Barwig opens the door and

the sixteen-year quest comes to an end as he gazes upon a portrait of the woman who had been his wife. As memory and emotion sweep across his face, Barwig expresses the wish to meet her "father."

Helen invites him to tour her home while he awaits the return of Stanton. After he leaves the room, Stanton returns to question the girl about her music lesson. Once he is satisfied that she has learned nothing of the truth, Stanton orders her to dismiss Barwig and bars the music master's admittance to the house forever. Helen sends for Barwig and severs their relationship, but as the disheartened Barwig is about to exit, she relents and confesses that her father has ordered his dismissal. Stanton returns, and Barwig finally faces the man who had been his best friend and despoiler of his home.

In this the climactic scene of the play, Barwig attacks Stanton with the pent-up passion of sixteen years. The deceitful friend weakly attempts to explain the actions of the past, of how the wrongs were repented long ago, and of how his subsequent prosperity was used to atone for his misdeeds. Barwig replies that Stanton could always speak sincerely and that in the world a scoundrel was the most respected. Barwig then informs his false friend that he had decided to be content with the role of music teacher to his daughter, but because he has been ordered out of Helen's life, he now intends to expose the truth.

While they await Helen's return, Stanton uses the last weapon at his disposal to protect the secret: Helen's engagement to the respected Beverly Cruger. He implies that the uncovered scandal would bar her admittance into the Cruger family. Barwig vehemently shouts that if

they would no longer want her, he would. As Helen enters with her fiancé and future in-laws, Barwig overhears Mr. Cruger state that though they could not give Helen the wealth Stanton can, they can give her an honored name. Helen inquires if Barwig and her father had managed to settle their differences, and Barwig replies affirmatively. After wishing the betrothed couple unclouded happiness and much affection, he leaves with his secret still undisclosed.

The final act begins in Barwig's garret loft apartment at Miss Houston's boarding house to which he returns after attending the wedding of Helen Stanton and Beverly Cruger. He wistfully describes the nuptials to his friends and singles out the moment when the minister requested who gives the woman in marriage. His friends sense his troubled soul, but he dismisses their concern by stating that he is full of hope, which is the best friend they each have.

Left alone with Jenny, he asks if his trunk has been completely packed. She replies that it has. Miss Houston enters to seek Barwig's advice, and he informs her that he is going home to Leipsig. When Barwig's fellow musicians return with news that the musicians' strike is over, the music master gives them each a prized possession as a parting gesture. His friends withdraw, and Barwig picks up a miniature portrait of his wife. He speaks of his preparation to return home and pensively sits contemplating the conclusion of his quest. Jenny ushers in the newlyweds, and Helen asks her husband to wait downstairs while she talks with the man she now knows to be her father.

Helen explains that she stopped by because she felt that Barwig had meant never to see her again. She outlines her European honeymoon and relates that the first stop is to be her birthplace. Believing that she will discover her true parentage there, Barwig attempts to dissuade her from visiting Leipsig. But Helen remains adamant, telling him that the reason she wishes to go to Leipsig is to seek out her maternal relatives. She explains that Stanton told her about her mother's first marriage and has suggested that she talk with Barwig about her mother. Gripped with fear, Barwig only replies that she should not go to Leipsig.

Helen kneels beside Barwig and notices the miniature of her mother still resting in his lap. "My mother," she says, "how peaceful she looks here in your home." With tears welling in her eyes, the new bride asks what she has done to prevent her father from claiming her. Barwig replies that one does what he thinks best. She begins to press him with the question: "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?", and finally, he breaks down and takes her into his arms crying, "I do!" She tells her father that her husband is waiting downstairs for both of them, that they are taking Barwig home. She leaves to rejoin Beverly, and Barwig gathers his friends about him for a quick, but happy, farewell.<sup>9</sup>

The Music Master, as stated above, received its world premiere on September 12, 1904 at Atlantic City's Young's Pier Theatre. Williamsport

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<sup>9</sup>Charles Klein, The Music Master (New York: Samuel French, Inc., 1935).

and Easton, Pennsylvania and Trenton, New Jersey also viewed the production during the two-week out-of-town tryout before the show moved to New York City. There it opened at the Belasco Theatre on September twenty-sixth where it remained until January 7, 1905 when the company was transferred to the Bijou in order to make room for Belasco's production of Adrea starring Mrs. Leslie Carter. It closed its first season on June 3, 1905 and was hailed to be "the most pronounced hit made in New York last season." After the summer hiatus, the show reopened at the Bijou on September 2, 1905; on March 9, 1906, the 500th consecutive performance was celebrated, and twelve weeks later, The Music Master closed its second season, distinguishing its New York City run by breaking all records for serious drama over a period of twenty-one months.<sup>10</sup>

During the second season, James Brooks, Belasco's old nemesis who was connected with the Syndicate's booking of the road tour for The Auctioneer, attempted to cash in on The Music Master's profits. He filed a lawsuit which claimed that the petitioner's former contract with Belasco was connected with the Belasco-Warfield contract. Judge David Leventritt, who had presided over the original lawsuit and was now a member of the New York state supreme court, denied the petition, ruling that the claim was invalid because the original Belasco-Warfield

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<sup>10</sup> Gary Duane Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1975), pp. 122-23, 134; "Notes of the Stage," Washington Post, 8 January 1905, sec. 3, p. 6; "Notes of the Stage," Washington Post, 11 June 1905, sec. 3, p. 6; Walter K. Hill, "Broadway Topics," Billboard, 2 June 1906, p. 16; "Notes of the Stage," Washington Post, 20 May 1906, sec. 3, p. 3.

contract had expired, and the Brooks-Belasco contract contained no clause pertaining to a renewal of the Belasco-Warfield contract.<sup>11</sup>

Also in this second season, The Music Master became the subject of a popular burlesque, starring Warfield's old boss, Lew Fields. The Fields' skit, written by Joseph Herbert, premiered on September 21, 1905, under the title It Happened in Nordland, and was called as good as anything ever done at the old Weber and Fields' Music Hall. One bit of dialogue between Fields as Herr Barewig and Blanche Ring as the daughter elicited both laughter and tears from the audience, for it was a moment that reproduced Warfield perfectly. It went:

HERR BAREWIG: You love flowers, don't you child?

HELEN CANTING: Yes, and what is your favorite flower, Herr Barewig?

HERR BAREWIG: (after a moment's sad pause) Buckwheat.

And during another moment, Barewig tearfully remarked that "it is a lucky child that isn't put wise to its own father," and chokes with emotion when he declares that "it is hard to lose a wife--yes, in some cases it is almost impossible."<sup>12</sup>

The third season commenced on September 1, 1906 with a four-week run at the Bijou. At the close of this run, on 29 September, Warfield had appeared in the role in New York 635 consecutive times. Following

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<sup>11</sup>William Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2 vols., ed. by Jefferson Winter (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), 2:126-27.

<sup>12</sup>New York Clipper, 30 September 1905, p. 812; William Raymond Sill, "As I Remember Lillian Russell," pt. 6, New York Telegraph, 27 August 1922, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, NWEZ, n.c., 167 (hereafter designaed as DBC 167), n.p.; Franklin Fyles, "Ade's New College Play," Washington Post, 1 October 1905, sec. 3, p. 6.

runs in Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., among other cities, the show returned to New York for another four-week engagement. Then it moved as far west as Chicago and returned to Boston where the 1000th performance occurred on June twenty-fourth and where the season concluded on June 29, 1907. At the close of the second New York engagement of this season, Warfield was presented a silver loving cup from Belasco in honor of the star's last New York appearance in the role, and at the close of this season came the announcement that The Music Master would be retired in favor of a new play. Of this announcement one newspaper published:

"The Music Master" could run another season in New York, he [Warfield] could play with profit several cities already visited, and play for several seasons to come a number of cities not included in the present tour. In the face of past records it seems impossible for a new play to surpass the financial returns of the present vehicle; there are chances of not reaching the present high water mark. Why, then, the risk of a new play when the present is serving so admirably?<sup>13</sup>

Belasco's reason for this emphatic decision was to prevent the actor from falling into the same trap Joseph Jefferson had with Rip Van Winkle and James O'Neill with The Count of Monte Cristo. This decision had been preceded by a challenge to Warfield's artistic ambition. Unless he demanded a new character, it was believed, The Music Master would "become as great and fixed a success with the American public" as Joseph Jefferson's Rip Van Winkle. Yet it was a decision met with a

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<sup>13</sup>"Warfield to Have New Play," Kansas City Post, 16 April 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 106.

certain trepidation among astute theatre critics. One dramatic commentator stated that it was better to go with a sure success and "win a great name in one part than to be only fairly excellent in many," and that:

. . . it does not necessarily follow that his next play, whatever it may be, will bring him the same amount of prosperity. Cases there are, and many too, where an actor has made a signal success and then petered out. I do not think this will happen to Mr. Warfield, but he cannot bank on another "Music Master." Such characters do not come along every day.<sup>14</sup>

This new play bore out this comment; though A Grand Army Man opened to a positive response and critics equated his role to each of Warfield's prior achievements, these sentiments soon waned as did public interest. The show had opened in October 1907, but the declining interest in it coupled with the requests for The Music Master forced Belasco to announce in February 1908 that The Music Master would be revived and would play in repertory with the unpopular Grand Army man.

The comments upon Warfield's return to the favored role reflected the public devotion to the music master. One journalist wrote that The Music Master was not as sound structurally as A Grand Army Man but that it would live longer "because of its deep and sympathetic character type . . . in which Mr. Warfield has transferred his best art." Another noted that Warfield had not been able to secure a new play to successfully succeed The Music Master, "for while The Grand Army Man [sic] was

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<sup>14</sup>"Warfield's Army of Speculators," Unidentified newspaper, n.d., RLC, vol. 476, p. 79; "Warfield's Ovation," Toledo Blade, 10 November 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 85; Untitled, Boston Post, 14 October 1906, DBC 170, p. 17.

a forced success for a while, it was finally shelved as it should have been after the first week." Burr MacIntosh called A Grand Army Man a better play with a stronger role than The Music Master but added:

. . . the public had simply made up its mind that it wanted Warfield in "The Music Master" ad infinitum. So there was nothing for him as a wise man but to give the public what the public wanted.<sup>15</sup>

The 1907-08 season finished with Warfield enacting both roles, and this arrangement was successfully used throughout the following season. As interest in A Grand Army Man had died by June 1909, only The Music Master was performed during the 1909-10 season. This the sixth year of The Music Master opened on 30 September and played Southern, Midwestern and Northwestern cities before ending the five-and-one-half year run in June 1910 at New York's Grand Opera House.<sup>16</sup>

When The Music Master marked or made milestones, the country's newspapermen were on hand to report the statistics. The 200th performance was the first dot on the graph and then the 250th. When the show closed in New York on September 19, 1906, that event was noted as the twenty-fifth month or the 108th week of performance and was accompanied by the prediction that the show could run for another year to capacity business since extra matinees had been scheduled to

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<sup>15</sup>Untitled, Pittsburg Gazette, 3 January 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 54; "Warfield is Back Again," Toledo Blade, 16 January 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 54; Untitled, Unidentified periodical, October 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 63.

<sup>16</sup>"David Warfield: An Analysis," Atlanta Constitution, 10 October 1909, sec. n.p., p. 3.

accommodate the ticket demand. On May 18, 1907, the 893rd recorded performance was marked, and by the season's end on June twenty-ninth, the actor had performed the role 1,007 times since September 12, 1904. Of this millenia, 694 performances were given in New York City alone.<sup>17</sup>

Record breaking statistics from the 1906-07 season were astounding. The ticket sales in Boston, the first city to host the play after its initial New York run, opened on September 24, 1906, and ticket purchasers formed an unbroken line all day long. So heavy was the ticket demand that the box office had to limit purchases to six per patron and to refuse all telephone orders. A notarized statement attested that the huge sales totaled \$72,221.75 for a four-week run, and on the heels of this box office report came the five-week aggregate of \$91,449.50 from the Lyric Theatre in Philadelphia. A similar reception was witnessed in Pittsburg, for on the day that ticket sales opened in that city, 3,000 people were lined up outside the theatre, and in the course of that day's business, \$12,465 was taken in. The four-week return engagement at New York City's Academy of Music totaled \$98,967.50 (an average weekly receipt of \$23,000), and the six-week Chicago run,

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<sup>17</sup>Untitled, New York Commercial, 24 September 1906, DBC 170, p. 2; "Warfield's Long Run Ends," New York Times, 30 September 1906, sec. 1, p. 9; Herman L. Dieck, Untitled, Philadelphia Record, 19 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 141; "'The Music Master' Ends," New York Tribune, 30 June 1907, sec. 1, p. 7; Untitled, Green Book, January 1915, RLC, vol. 478, p. 52.

where all but five houses were full, brought in \$112,769 for forty-eight performances, an average of \$2,385.50 per night at two dollars tops.<sup>18</sup>

The night before tickets to The Music Master went on sale in Kansas City in April 1907, people began waiting in line; at one A.M., the city police distributed numbers to each person in the line and told them to go home and use the numbers to reclaim their place in line the next morning. By nine A.M., over 1,000 men, women and children had re-formed the line which extended "east from the Shubert theatre to Baltimore avenue; and north on Baltimore one-half block to the alley. There it crossed the street and went south to the west entrance of the First National Bank building." The Shubert Theatre did record breaking business on this day, receiving \$10,000. At the end of the week, the receipts totaled \$20,982.50. This figure was compared to the largest week's receipts in New York (\$29,711.25), Washington, D.C. (\$20,894), and Boston (\$20,864). The same phenomenon occurred in Newark, New Jersey where a line extended outside the Shubert Theatre from Washington to Bank Street, and from Bank to Halsey Street.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>"The Warfield Seat Sale," Boston Record, 25 September 1906, DBC 170, p. 2; "'The Music Master' Closes; Nets \$91,449," Philadelphia North American, 9 December 1906, DBC 170, p. 38; Untitled, St. Louis Post-Democrat, 30 December 1906, DBC 170, p. 52; Untitled, New York Press, 17 February 1907, DBC 170, p. 83; Untitled, York (Pa.) Gazette, 3 March 1907, DBC 170, p. 96; "'Music Master' Gets \$1,000,000," The (Milwaukee) Wisconsin, 18 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 115.

<sup>19</sup>"1,000 Wait for Tickets," Kansas City Star, 18 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 115; "Warfield Scalpers Arrested," Kansas City Times, 18 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 115; "Warfield Receipts \$20,982.50," Kansas City Star, 28 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 126; "A Big Demand for Seats for David Warfield's Engagement," Newark News, 23 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 143.

One natural result of the overwhelming desire to purchase tickets for The Music Master--and thereby a measure of the play's popularity--was the practice of ticket scalping. When the show was in Pittsburg, for example, scalpers resold tickets for twice the box office prices (which were two dollars orchestra, one dollar and fifty cents first balcony, seventy-five cents second balcony, and fifty cents gallery). Theatre officials combatted the problem as best they could, and in Pittsburg, efforts led to the arrest of Lewis Weber and William Callahan. Weber and Callahan were cleared of the charges, however, when Magistrate Frank J. Brady was forced to dismiss the case because the prosecution failed to appear in court.<sup>20</sup>

After Belasco began producing The Music Master in repertory with A Grand Army Man in February 1908, the popularity of the former play had not diminished. On March 7, 1908 the Brooklyn Citizen reported that Warfield had been performing in The Music Master to so many capacity houses that Belasco had scheduled extra matinees, indicating that The Music Master had evidently rescued an ailing season. By the end of the 1908-09 season it was reported that over the forty-week, twenty-city tour, the "aggregate box office receipts reached a little over one million dollars, a record heretofore unknown in the history of the American stage."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>"Ticket Sale Has Queer Look," Pittsburg Press, 10 December 1906, DBC 170, p. 41; "Alleged Ticket Scalpers Were Given Freedom," Pittsburg Press, 16 December 1906, DBC 170, p. 45.

<sup>21</sup>Untitled, Unidentified newspaper, n.d., DBC 170, p. 179; "David Warfield Plays to \$1,000,000 a Year," New York Telegraph, 4 July 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 62.

The 1909-10 season was composed of thirty-five-and-one-half weeks in which receipts continued to break records. Seattle grossed \$21,730; a week of one night stands in Ohio netted \$14,464.25, and in New Orleans the aggregate was \$16,534 for eight performances. Other weekly statistics were similar; for the week that Louisville, Paducah, Little Rock and Hot Springs were played, the take was \$14,682 while the receipts from Nashville and Memphis totaled \$14,582. One of the highest weekly totals of the season came from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area where \$20,872.72 was brought in.<sup>22</sup>

After this season, Warfield did not appear in the play for six years. He and Belasco put The Music Master aside, resurrected The Auctioneer and then mounted two new vehicles, The Return of Peter Grimm and Van Der Decken. The latter play proved so disastrous at the box office that manager and star quickly shelved it and returned to their old standby The Music Master. Warfield finished the 1915-16 season with The Music Master, and Belasco launched a full-scale revival of the play in the fall of 1916. This revival lasted for two seasons and was heralded with the comment:

No better fortune could have come to the theatre, no greater treat could have been given to its public, than David Belasco's revival of "The Music Master". . . . At a time so prolific of idealess "plays of ideas," when elaborate and laborious cynicism seems to be the ruling motive of nearly all writers for the stage, this simple, homely drama of sentiment, revealing the tenderest passions and noblest ideals of human

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<sup>22</sup>"Farewell to 'The Music Master'," New York Telegraph, 4 June 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 72.

nature, comes back with a fragrance and beauty that can be expressed only in superlatives.<sup>23</sup>

The Music Master was seen in Wilmington, Delaware and Baltimore, Maryland before opening in New York City on October 16, 1916. This New York run was extended from eight to twenty weeks and ended on February 24, 1917. The show toured Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana before closing the season on May 5, 1917 in upstate New York. On 19 March before a capacity audience at the Hartman Theatre, Warfield played The Music Master for the 4,009th time, a feat which, it was noted, had been achieved without the star becoming a careless performer. The 1917-18 season continued on the road in the major Eastern and Midwestern cities, including an eleven-week engagement in Chicago.<sup>24</sup>

These two seasons, despite the intervening six years (or perhaps because of them), did not diminish the play's capacity to create box office records. It had been thought new records could not be established until Warfield played theatres with larger seating capacities than the current theatres afforded; however, the 1916-18 tours proved that Warfield "had not touched the high water mark" after all. In October 1916 one week of receipts in Kansas City brought \$20,256; one week in St. Louis gained \$20,584; the twenty-week run in New York averaged \$18,000 per week, and in Pittsburg a week's gross was \$23,598. A

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<sup>23</sup>"The Music Master' Wins Audience Anew," New York World, 11 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup>Cook, pp. 250-53; "News of Plays and Players," New York Tribune, 24 January 1917, p. 7; "Plays 'Music Master' Over 4000 Times," Columbus Citizen, 20 March 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

typewritten letter to Robinson Locke from Harry S. Alward, a Belasco representative, stated that the average gross receipts of twenty-four single performances was \$2300 performance, and that everywhere the orchestra pit had to be filled with extra seats. In 1918 Variety estimated that The Music Master could run well into the summer with a weekly average of \$15,000.<sup>25</sup>

The fact that this 1916 revival had been a slightly speculative venture made its success even more dramatic. In 1914 the world had gone to war against Germany, and by 1916, with American involvement in the war to end all wars growing more imminent, all things German had either become the object of discrimination or expressly forbidden in American society. Yet, the German music master was welcomed with open arms. One newspaperman humorously wrote: "How are we going to fight Germans when a play actor makes us fall in love with a character as Teutonic as sauerkraut?" To him, the Warfield characterization did not typify the Germany now at war with the world, but the Germany of music, art and literature. He closed his discussion with the suggestion that Congress pass a law requiring everyone with the price of admission to attend The Music Master to ensure some measure of sanity and sweetness, and to

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<sup>25</sup>Untitled, Boston Globe, 4 November 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "'Music Master' is a Bonanza in Playland," Reading (Pa.) Telegram, 24 February 1917, DBC-MM, p. 45; "Warfield at this Late Date Continues to Break His Records," New York Telegram, 30 October 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; Harry S. Alward to Robinson Locke, 13 April 1917, RLC, vol. 478, p. 100; "Shows in Chicago," 15 February 1918, p. 14.

reaffirm "that in this warring world there is beauty and gentleness, and a great winsomeness."<sup>26</sup>

Yet that "beauty and gentleness" which the play provided also spawned a great, sad longing and bitterness in the face of a very real world crisis, as the following quote illustrates:

But hardest of all to fit into the present day scheme of the play at the Knickerbocker is von Barwig himself as Mr. Warfield has created him. German music, German tenderness, humanity, loyalty, self-sacrifice, German ineptness and harmlessness--the mist of time lies upon the portrait, and not the less heavy because it is not of twelve years, but only of thirty months, since August 1, 1914. With the help of Mr. Warfield's art we can still accept von Barwig as real, but the effort is much greater than it would have been at any revival of the piece up to the midsummer of three years ago. It is still there, I suppose, behind the murk of burning towns and poison-gas clouds--the Germany of Schumann, of evening shadows in the Hartz, of Oberammergau, but one must strongly will to see it now. . . .<sup>27</sup>

While the war effort did not bring The Music Master to a complete halt, it did curtail its box office receipts.<sup>28</sup> When the show reached Chicago in the early part of 1918, box office records there reported the show grossing \$18,000 for the week ending on March first, but a week later ticket sales fell to \$14,000 and continued to sag throughout the rest of the run. Earlier in the season, Variety reported that during the week of November 9, 1917 The Music Master grossed \$13,500 in Boston,

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<sup>26</sup>Russell Gore, "The Music Master," Detroit News, 13 April 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

<sup>27</sup>Simon Strunsky, "Post: Impressions," New York Post, 10 February 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

<sup>28</sup>The box office aggregate for all theatrical productions was negatively affected by the war.

but that by the eve of Warfield's last week in that city, the business had fallen to about one-half of what it usually was, citing the sum of \$7,000 for the week of 23 November and \$8,000 for the week of 30 November. On December 28, 1917 Variety reported: "It was hoped David Warfield in 'The Music Master' might be able to stay here [in Boston] for eight weeks, but business was not of the sort to entirely justify this action."<sup>29</sup>

This Boston reception prompted Henry Taylor Parker to devote a column to the "comparative indifference" Bostonians had accorded the play. He assessed that the reason The Music Master was not drawing well was two-fold. First, it was "a poor piece of theatrical invention" which had become an "out-moded and wholly unpalatable machine of the theatre." Second, Warfield's histrionic power in the role had become mechanical. Parker wrote:

. . . while it has become a little miracle of deft detail and adroit workmanship, the very pains of invention, coordination and meticulous exactness that Mr. Warfield now bestows upon Barwig, have stiffened him out of spontaneous illusion and coated him in rigid and somewhat mannered scales of detail. It is hard now to feel the man, Barwig, through the endlessly minute accretions of ornament and artistry that Mr. Warfield has spun like a web upon him. Yet it is unjust to blame the player. What other . . . occupation could he have in two seasons--and another still to come--of a play that years ago his finer abilities must have exhausted.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>"Shows in Chicago," Variety, 1 March 1918, p. 14; "Shows at the Box Office in New York and Chicago," Variety, 8 March 1918, p. 15; Untitled, New York Dramatic Mirror, 16 April 1918, DBC-MM, n.p.; "Country Wide Flop in Business Shown in Box Office Reports," 16 November 1917, p. 17; "Legit's Bad Business Keeps Up with No Change Now in Sight," 7 December 1917, p. 17; Len Libbey, "Boston Is Hopeful," p. 246.

<sup>30</sup>"The Departing Warfield," Boston Transcript, 7 December 1917, RLC, vol. 478, p. 112.

The effect of the war effort on the economy makes any analysis of the statistics for The Music Master between 1916-18 a hazardous guess at best. These quoted figures alone would tend to indicate that the public had begun to lose interest in the old music master despite the critics' statements to the contrary. Yet, the fluctuating economy and anti-German sentiment that the war caused were also contributing factors to the decline in ticket sales. Nevertheless, The Music Master can still be considered as an historic money-maker.

And indeed, The Music Master enjoyed a most profitable history over a period of fourteen years. During the season of 1904-05, the 350,000 people who witnessed the play throughout the thirty-eight-week run paid a total of \$377,178.40. The following season, the same estimated number of patrons paid \$356,275 over a thirty-nine-week period, and \$726,013 was received during a forty-three-week run from 750,000 theatregoers who attended the performances of the 1906-07 season. A ten-week span beginning in February 1908 yielded \$66,995 from 60,000 spectators, and the 1917-18 tour grossed \$521,444.<sup>31</sup> For any price at any time, the masses evidently wanted to shed "sweet tears."

In an interview, David Warfield discussed the theory of the "sweet tears." He explained that the combination of laughter and tears was for the actor more taxing to produce than any other facet of acting. His

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<sup>31</sup>Compiled from the following: "A Bonanza in Playland is 'The Music Master'," New York World, 12 November 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 90; "'Music Master' Runs Like the Poet's Brook," New York Tribune, 31 March 1918, sec. 4, p. 6.

belief that the achievement of the sweet tears contributed an essential element to a play was founded upon simple logic: drama that portrayed life was composed of joys and sorrows. The joys expressed by laughter, he felt, acted as a tonic, and the tears of sorrow chastened the soul. He illustrated his point with the following lines from Alexander Pope:

To wake the soul by tender strokes of art,  
To raise the genius and to mend the heart,  
To make mankind in conscious virtue bold,  
Live o're each scene and be what they behold;  
For this the tragic muse first trod the stage,  
Commanding tears to stream through every age.<sup>32</sup>

Warfield inherited the sweet tears method from Joseph Jefferson's legacy and followed the same basic sequence of a tear, a laugh and a tear. An audience would be led to the brink of tears, and then with rapid agility a comic detail would alter the lumps in the throat to laughter; after the laughter had broken the tension, with the same rapid agility the original tear would be recalled and finally allowed to fall. Warfield became so adept in producing this effect that it was said he "was personally responsible for more 'sweet tears' and wet handkerchiefs than any other actor of the day."<sup>33</sup>

While Warfield had "only to press the button, as it were, to produce tears," the practice of this theory merely formed the basis of

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<sup>32</sup>Chauncey L. Parsons, "David Warfield Patron of the Arts," New York Dramatic Mirror, 6 December 1911, RLC, vol. 477, p. 100; "Play from Life of Today Demanded, Declares Actor," Los Angeles Examiner, 22 October 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 42.

<sup>33</sup>Cook, p. 126; Craig Timberlake, The Bishop of Broadway (New York: Library Publishers, 1954), p. 231.

his technique. The decisions he made in terms of the usage of the voice, eyes, face and hands were evidently specific choices aimed at blending minute details into a viable character mosaic. Infused into this mosaic was the primary element of emotional acting known as personality, and the personality chosen to animate Barwig gave credence to the belief that the intrinsic Barwig was the intrinsic Warfield. Also employed in this mosaic were said to be observations from real life molded into a work of art so simple in form that all craft had been obscured. Technically, it was like a master musician eliciting the appropriate sound from his instrument or the great painter capturing his subject with accurate fidelity:

. . . The technique, the mastery of the most minute details of acting as an art, the subtle, magnetic charm of the personality of the artist; the vivified impersonation can be mentioned as so many component factors of a perfect whole, but the whole cannot be pictured in words.<sup>34</sup>

Warfield's facial expression was credited as a major factor to his successful interpretation of the role. His countenance was highly mobile and perfectly suited to the display of the kindlier and lovelier aspects of the human mind. As the wide range of emotions the character demanded passed across his face, the audience was moved in sympathy from sorrow to joy. The actor seemed to convey an index of momentary

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<sup>34</sup>T. W., Untitled, Louisville Courier-Journal, 16 November 1909, p. 4; Edward P. Dechart, "Warfield's Art in 'The Music Master'," Philadelphia North American, 16 November 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 86; "Lyceum--'The Music Master'," Rochester (N.Y.) Post-Express, 20 May 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 71; "David Warfield Scores," Nashville American, 13 November 1909, p. 3.

sentiments which were exquisitely defined and often enhanced by the descriptively illuminating "Warfield smile." One observer commented:

Following a moment of demure gravity, or tender reverie, or unembittered grief, it lights up his face with a sweetness and beauty difficult to describe. . . .<sup>35</sup>

Vocal effects were equally revealing. The vibrant inflections expressed changing emotion, and the tone with which Warfield projected those inflections aided in manufacturing "silent sobs or silver smiles." These vocal effects were considered a "marvel" because it was generally agreed that Warfield's vocal instrument was greatly limited in its range and power. Then, too, Warfield kept the audience guessing as to which emotion his voice would reveal first, and sometimes the two emotions would be emitted together, becoming "a jumble of emotion that makes your own face twist up, a tear at the top and a smile at the bottom."<sup>36</sup>

Repression or restraint was another key element, for he filled the play with a wealth of silent seconds to enhance the dramatic value of the production. It was felt that it was not so much what he uttered in a flawlessly intonated voice as what he did not utter that lent power to the performance, for:

Who can describe the eloquence of a dramatic pause?  
Warfield's study of von Barwig is literally filled with them.

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<sup>35</sup>"David Warfield Back with His Play, 'The Music Master'," Boston Herald, 4 June 1907, DBC 170, p. 153; "'The Music Master'," Newark Star, 28 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 147.

<sup>36</sup>"The Nixon," Pittsburg Sun, 23 October 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "Nixon--David Warfield in 'The Music Master'," Pittsburg Post, 23 October 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "'The Music Master'," St. Louis Times, 30 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 128.

He is quiet at least a third of the time, and yet he says more when he is silent than when he is talking.

These silences were timed to allow the situation of the drama to sink in, and thus became "the periods that bring forth the tears . . . of human sympathy, of which no one should be ashamed."<sup>37</sup>

Warfield's display of these intrinsic qualities of technique combined to fashion a compelling portrait of pathos. The degree of pathos was displayed through the shade of each tonal inflection, the quiver of the lower lip, the dry sob in the voice, or a raised eyebrow, and the inner conflict of the man, whose sorrow was hidden by a whimsical, benevolent nature, aroused within the critics the recognition of a gifted actor. While the portrayal was forceful, the suggestion of a strained effect was never detected. Warfield, who could "make tears run into the grooves formed by the laughter he has evoked," was declared the "master of humor and past grandmaster of pathos."<sup>38</sup>

Yet the compelling pathos Warfield aroused was constructed from a limited histrionic ability which displayed a certain commonness that betrayed the mark of a popular actor from that of a classical actor.

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<sup>37</sup>Penelope Smythe Perrill, "David Warfield," Dayton Journal, 13 March 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "People You Pay to Know--David Warfield: 'The Music Master'," National Magazine, February 1918, p. 133 in RLC, vol. 478, p. 114; [Burns Mantle?] "Warfield, 'The Music Master'," Chicago Inter-Ocean, 12 March 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 102; "Warfield in Pathetic Comedy," Buffalo News, 27 February 1907, DBC 170, p. 92.

<sup>38</sup>"David Warfield in 'The Music Master'," Louisville Post, 18 September 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; Untitled, Philadelphia Press, 6 November 1906, DBC 170, p. 27; "Garrick," Unidentified Chicago newspaper, n.d., RLC, vol. 477, p. 46.

He possessed no talent for grand passion, and he could not give color to high comedic moments. While he worked up to the passion required for the denouncement of Barwig's false friend, the majority of the actor's points were made in a quiet manner. In appealing to the heart, he underplayed the moment, gilded it with humor and pathos, and aroused sympathy by exploring that tamer range of emotion common to middle-class soap opera. The result showed the actor to best advantage and displayed a splendid and unusually sincere and sympathetic touch.<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, it was apparently a judicious intertwining of technical elements that achieved for Warfield success in exacting sweet tears. Though some critics may have singled out one component, the apparent skill with which he blended the eyes, voice, face, gestures, etc., never seemed unbalanced or failed to make a witness awestruck. The agility of this technical acumen along with the performance as a whole was described as playing

. . . upon the human emotions as a musician would upon the strings of an Italian harp. And not once was there a tone of jarring discord. With technical ease he would run the gamut of emotions as a player ascends the scales. Now the high treble of the keenest comedy; now the deep rumble of pathos, then the middle ground which is just between a smile and a sigh. . . .

With a voice that is soft, almost caressing; with a smile that is winning and with a stage presence which is most expressive, he at once fills his role so completely that there is scant room for criticism.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>"Comment by the Way," Boston Herald, 9 June 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 109; Untitled, Cincinnati Enquirer, 30 September 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "Warfield Packs the Hall with 'The Music Master'," Albany Argus, 5 May 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

<sup>40</sup>Earnest E. Dallis, "Atlanta Greets David Warfield," Atlanta Constitution, 14 October 1909, p. 9.

And indeed, many chose not to criticize the performance. One author wrote that perfection could not be praised and art could not be translated into cold type. Another reviewer expressed that the creation was "like a poem, or a dainty flower that falls apart when touched by the analytical hand." When the play was revived in the latter half of the 1910s, a consensus proclaimed that words of criticism were futile, for all that could be penned in plaudits and praise had not only been written, but expressed better than it could be at present. One colleague wrote: "Who, through a mist of tears, may even think to criticize? Even to comment seems profane." That Warfield as Barwig was above criticism became to all appearances an accepted fact:

Even the most serious minded and self-complacent of the critics and play reviewers long since have ceased to criticize David Warfield, or even to attempt to. Mr. Warfield is typical of the best in the theatre today, and the English language has been all but exhausted in paying him tribute. The only thing the writers can do is to expand on his new plays when they make an appearance, compare them to his previous offerings, dissect them, etc., . . . but no matter how divided the opinion may be as to the merits of his vehicle, it is solid on one point, and that is that Mr. Warfield is supreme. . . .<sup>41</sup>

The perception of Warfield's performance in The Music Master throughout the years reflected the belief that Warfield was "supreme."

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<sup>41</sup>"David Warfield in 'The Music Master'," Newark Star, 28 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 148; "David Warfield in 'The Music Master'," Knoxville Sentinel, 8 October 1909, p. 6; A. J. Lafaye, "In 'The Music Master' Warfield is Impressive," Pittsburg Dispatch, 15 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 13; "The Playhouses," Albany Times-Union, 5 May 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; Charles Anderson Cook, "New York Letter," Rochester (N.Y.) Post-Express, 10 October 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 86; "David Warfield at English's," Indianapolis Times, 14 March 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

In many ways, these viewpoints were the logical expansion of the initial criticism, and as the appeal of Warfield in the role grew, the notices reflected that appeal. At first, Warfield's performance was compared with his past work and with the work of Joseph Jefferson. For example:

. . . Those who will recall the silent but expressive method by which Jefferson marked his fine points--his eyes and face--will be able to form an idea of Warfield's impressive force. He moves an audience to tears or laughter as he wills. It is no exaggeration to say that there was not a dry eye in the audience that packed the theatre. . . . Considering how recently this comedian was obliged . . . to play upon the interest of the public which patronized the music hall . . . , his transition is not only amazing, but an evidence of uncommon genius. . . .<sup>42</sup>

Warfield's performance seemed to constantly provide the critics with surprise, for after he had played the role without cessation for nearly three years, they noted the absence of any theatrical effect or any hint of mechanical behavior. Warfield was "so temperamentally in sympathy" with Barwig that its lack of noticeable theatrical conventions made the characterization an expression of a real person rather than the accomplishments of an actor. One critic plainly stated he sat in awe of Warfield's marvelous skill which never once lost the high standard of excellence he had first noted in the performance some months earlier. Another critic found Warfield's delineation completely devoid of effort in his most impressive situations; it revealed, rather, a natural

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<sup>42</sup>"Notes of the Stage," Washington Post, 22 January 1905, sec. 3, p. 8.

portrait "more like a personage moving in real life than a mimic scene."<sup>43</sup>

When Warfield used The Music Master in 1908 to boost a mediocre season in which he had debuted in A Grand Army Man, the words written about the returned Barwig conveyed the same message proclaimed in the past: that it was an impersonation of "extraordinary merit." It simply and sincerely revealed a disposition of rare sensitivity, and it still wove together a humor and pathos which revived the mind and melted the heart. Warfield's eccentric spell involuntarily charmed his audience with a sure sympathy that was "guided with a clear purpose and decisive will."<sup>44</sup>

The divestment, however, of Wesley Bigelow, the Grand Army man, in favor of Barwig was not without an expressed regret. Barwig was a character outline which possessed the poetry of life. Bigelow, a more realistically drawn character, was idealized by Warfield into something fine, noble and great which made it akin to poetry, and therefore, equal to Barwig. But because Barwig was innate poetry and Bigelow only idealized into poetry, Barwig was the favored portrait. The differences between the two characters was summed up thusly:

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<sup>43</sup>"Belasco--'The Music Master'," Pittsburg Dispatch, 7 May 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 108; Untitled, Boston Post, 7 October 1906, DBC 170, p. 13; "Warfield Here Last Time in Music Master," Philadelphia North American, 14 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 139.

<sup>44</sup>"Mr. Warfield as the Music Master," New York Tribune, 25 February 1908, p. 7.

It is not that Barwig is unwelcome. It is an interesting and deftly-wrought piece of acting to watch; and a fascinating task to direct it. It is the work of the virtuoso; and anyone who cares for the stage cares for that now and then in the hands of a real artist. But it is that Bigelow is too great, as Mr. Warfield idealized him, to be totally forgotten.<sup>45</sup>

But the public wanted to forget Bigelow. The Grand Army man could not elicit the sweet tears that Barwig could, and it demanded Barwig of Warfield just as it had demanded Rip Van Winkle of Jefferson:

As "Rip" became with Joseph Jefferson, so is Barwig in "The Music Master" becoming to David Warfield. . . . What the play may be matters little to the audience . . . so long as Mr. Warfield's acting compels them to smiling lips or to misty eyes--and sometimes to both at once. . . .<sup>46</sup>

By the eve of The Music Master's retirement in 1910, many critics revered Warfield as a "great" actor, though he had portrayed only three roles in the legitimate theatre. One role, Simon Levi, had been based upon sketches he played during his burlesque days; a second role, Wesley Bigelow, had been cast aside as unable to hold public interest, and the third role, Anton von Barwig, seemed destined to live forever and to become a theatre classic. Yet they were roles which were shallow characterizations made brilliant masterpieces by Warfield's artistry. Some critics, therefore, refused to join their colleagues in hailing Warfield "great":

It is too soon to thrust the title "great" upon Mr. Warfield, much as we may admire his Von Barwig. He has yet to prove his

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<sup>45</sup>"Warfield as Barwig," Boston Transcript, 27 April 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 60.

<sup>46</sup>"The Familiar Plays," Boston Transcript, 1 May 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 60.

right to be so acclaimed. For six seasons he has played this one part, and his other characters . . . have been so like it that one may not judge of his ability. He plays Von Barwig with consummate skill. Can he do as well in any other role? His Music Master will go down to prosperity enshrined in the hearts of his friends even as Jefferson's Rip is cherished by the older playgoers. But there is the great difference between the two actors that the one rounded out a long and varied career with the portrayal of one character, while the other begins his with a creation by which all succeeding efforts are to be judged.<sup>47</sup>

The Music Master, therefore, was put aside for the next six years while Warfield gave the public two new characters by which his mettle as an actor could be judged. Though no different from his other characters, Peter Grimm was a box office success, but Van Der Decken was not because it was far outside the range of the actor's histrionic abilities. The Music Master was again revived to salvage the season, and its reception was cheered as if it had never been retired. The critical plaudits re-echoed the opinions of the past.

Barwig was still considered a masterful portrait, exquisite and incomparable, with an appeal to the audience's sympathy that was as strong as ever. It was said that Warfield's Barwig could touch the heart of "the most-hardened and blase theatre-goer," and that the actor was unrivaled in evoking pathos. The sorrow Warfield portrayed was "never maudlin, never hysterical, never artificial, but always so real" that it was shared painfully by all.

He sits lost in memory, his mouth open, saying nothing--and you feel the lump in your throat. He croons over his recovered

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<sup>47</sup> Rodney Lee, Untitled, Toledo Blade, 23 April 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 67.

child, kisses her over and over again, and words start only to end in a stammer--by this time you are crying frankly into your handkerchief.

He goes down the creaky attic stairs and that is the last of him.

Such, you see, is Warfield's magic.<sup>48</sup>

Critiques again listed Warfield's impersonation as a faithful, consistent and perfect portrait which approached genius. Without displaying the slightest trace of the actor's technique, he continued to live the part with the same spirit and intensity which had marked the initial performance. Warfield's artistry more and more concealed the very nature of that art and evolved with the passing years into a flawless, mature and polychromatic work. In many ways the critiques were simply a collage of past reviews.<sup>49</sup>

While Warfield's career as the music master ended in conjunction with comments such as those discussed above, in the final analysis the performance was still one-keyed. Critics realized that Warfield had sketched the old man in charcoal rather than pastel. Tenderness and sympathy remained the predominant characteristics of Barwig, and every gradation of their spectrums was explored to the extreme. Though Warfield kept Barwig fresh and appealing for both himself and the audience, the monochromatic nature of the role never altered, and

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<sup>48</sup>"Ford's," Baltimore Star, 3 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 4; "Belasco--David Warfield in 'The Music Master'," Washington Post, 17 April 1917, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup>Adlai Saunders, "Amusements," Unidentified Chicago newspaper, n.d. (ca. 25 September 1917), DBC-MM, n.p.

one critic lamented that "you listen in vain for the poignant note that would vitalize the scene."<sup>50</sup>

The above quote was one of the few--the very few--instances where a negative criticism of Warfield's performance was expressed. After the debut of Barwig in 1904, one critic noted that "with the occasional exception of his occasional lapses into Yiddish tones, Mr. Warfield's acting was almost without a blemish," and another critic in 1917 pointed out that many lines were "hardly loud enough to reach the back of the house at best," so conversational in tone was the actor's voice. A more explicit critique from the last tour stated that Warfield now had to strive for effects which he formerly was able to achieve spontaneously; it then indicated that the actor was not to be faulted for showing signs of fatigue in the role because "damnable iteration" had forced him to succumb.<sup>51</sup>

Of those who stated an adverse comment, some delivered a backhanded criticism--a negative comment quickly followed by a positive remark or excuse. It was as if Warfield as Barwig were such an institution that excuses had to be made on the actor's behalf. For example:

. . . This great actor's portrayal Monday evening of the German musician was not as vigorous nor as enthusiastic as on his former visit to this city, but a long season of nearly all "one night stands" has tired the actor and sapped much of his histrionic vitality.

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<sup>50</sup> Carleton W. Miles, "Von Barwig Again Finds His Daughter," Minneapolis Journal, 9 April 1918, DBC-MM, n.p.

<sup>51</sup> Metcalf, "Drama," Life, 6 October 1904, p. 333; "'Music Master' Wins Audience," Nashville Banner, 21 September 1917, p. 4; "Mr. Warfield as Von Barwig," New York Tribune, 12 January 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 54.

However, there was not a flaw in the performance from the standpoint of general excellence. . . .

And the following discussion of how mechanical Warfield had become in the performance of the role was no exception:

Perhaps it is because Mr. Warfield has played this part so long, but it is true, at least, that he is occasionally mechanical. His smile is a very remarkable smile. It comes all at once and it gives place to a sombre countenance quickly. In several of his most pathetic scenes he gives attention to the "business" as to suggest that he is trying to produce effects. Of course he is trying, but the audience should not be made to know it. It would be impossible for Mr. Warfield to make these faults obtrusive, and they are more easily missed than seen.<sup>52</sup>

The one scene in the play which never failed to astound the audiences and critics was the climactic scene of the play which ended the second act. This scene was the one in which Barwig finally faces the despoiler of his home and vents the passion he has harbored for sixteen years. The fact that this scene was full of emotion so caught one's attention that the scene lingered in the memory because it was the only variant tone in the performance. Before--and after--the scene, Warfield played with restraint, but during it, he rose to as much vehemence as he could muster.

Of the performance of this scene, one account read: "All the pent-up agony of sixteen years of hatred and of doubt is concentrated, as it were, in the outburst; yet there is no ranting, no tearing of passion to tatters." Another account stated that Warfield brought

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<sup>52</sup>"Tears and Laughter," Toledo News-Bee, 19 April 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 67; "The First Warfield Night," Kansas City Times, 23 April 1907, DBC 170, p. 119.

Barwig's righteous wrath "to life in his tones, his face, and his gestures . . . only as the gentle Barwig could feel and show." The scene was frenetically appalling and yet remarkably self-restrained. Warfield's face portrayed a terrible and pathetic mixture of fury, grief, hope, longing and fear, and at the same time with apparent effortlessness, the actor never neglected the slightest detail which would complete the scene.<sup>53</sup>

Another report proclaimed that the expression of that outraged soul was not acting but life as it would be under similar circumstances, and that the abrupt change from angry confrontation to sublime self-sacrifice at the end of Act II was mastered as no other actor could. Lastly, Warfield's performance in the scene accorded the actor with perhaps the only review in which he was in any way considered "virile":

When he faces Stanton, the spoiler of his home and his honor, he is the man, and more, he is the male; he stands for the vengeance of Heaven, the furious dignity of the unspeakably injured, who finds retribution at his hand. Greatness? It is difficult to make you understand how great, how overwhelming his art is, for descriptive phrases of this scene can only sound banal, and commonplace, while the mind is still stunned by the persecution of his words. It is so confounding in its intensity, that swear words alone could do it justice.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>"Gems of Pathos and Wit in Warfield Play," Philadelphia North American, 6 November 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 83; "Plays from Last Week," Boston Transcript, 23 October 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 83; Louis J. Hillhouse, "Play is Made by Warfield," Cincinnati Times-Star, 18 December 1906, DBC 170, p. 80.

<sup>54</sup>"Why 'The Music Master' of David Warfield is Great in Every Sense," Binghamton (N.Y.) Herald, 27 February 1907, DBC 170, p. 91; "True Art in New Role of Warfield," Unidentified newspaper, 27 September 1904, RLC, vol. 476, p. 39; Otheman Stevens, "David Warfield in 'Music Master' Holds Vast Audience Under His Magic Spell," Los Angeles Examiner, 13 October 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 41.

As indicated through some of the quoted material above, many critics wrote of Warfield's performance in The Music Master in terms of his art or artistry. It was not uncommon for a critic to describe the performance in this manner, nor was it uncommon for the comments to follow the same patterns. William Winter noted that Warfield as a rule had been photographic, meaning technically sound yet unrefined, but that the role demonstrated that "time, study, thought, and practice--the forces that constitute experience--seem to have tended to ripen his art. . . ." Eleanor Franklin stated that Warfield's performance was:

. . . splendid art impregnated with that subtle power we call dramatic genius, that power which reaches out over the footlights and grasps the hearts of men, making them thrill responsive to sentiments to which no soul is stranger, but toward which so many are estranged. . . .<sup>55</sup>

Boston's revered critic, Henry Taylor Parker called Warfield's Barwig a detailed mosaic minutely and adroitly constructed from close, shrewd and imagined observations. The elements of technique--intonation, inflection, facial play, gestures--that he noted were persuasive, spontaneous and true to the character as written. To Parker, it was a warm, intimate, homely characterization which possessed all the beauty of a great tragic figure, but which was so idealized that it achieved the lofty heights of the tragic without losing the intimacy one felt with Barwig. The result was:

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<sup>55</sup>"Mr. Warfield," New York Daily Tribune, 27 September 1904, p. 7 in RLC, vol. 476, p. 40; Eleanor Franklin, "Notable Success of the Young Actor, Mr. David Warfield," Leslie's Weekly, 12 January 1905, p. 41.

. . . the gradual disclosure of a man in the most interesting and appealing passages of his fate until he becomes alive before us--much more alive than do our actual companions in life. For not only do we live with this Barwig, but in the very moments when that life goes highest or deepest we see into his mind and his heart. . . . It is this impression of a whole and living Barwig that Warfield imparts and thereby he stands in the character upon one of the high planes of the actor's art. . . . To impart this sense is one of the potent and mysterious attributes of acting when it stands among the arts, and those attributes are the crown and the fulness [sic] of Mr. Warfield's acting.<sup>56</sup>

Warfield's art was the reason cited for the actor's long continuance in the role. One had only to glimpse Warfield as Barwig to understand how a "drama of simple emotions" had survived for an extended period "in a blase metropolis." Warfield's art extended into every syllable uttered, every eccentricity of character, every response to fate with the most exquisite taste. Witnessing the performance shed new light on human relationships and brought the witness face to face with love, the secret of life. Even one's whole nature upon leaving the theatre was ennobled with nothing but goodness from the heart. The final analysis of the early Barwig years, i.e., 1904-10, assessed: "If David Warfield is not an artist, then the lexicographers have lately given another meaning to the word."<sup>57</sup>

In 1907 after Warfield had abandoned Barwig for Wesley Bigelow, W. L. Hubbard stated that the actor had immortalized The Music Master

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<sup>56</sup>"Majestic Theatre: David Warfield," Boston Transcript, 2 October 1906, RLC, vol. 476, pp. 80-81.

<sup>57</sup>"Big Audience is in Tears as the Drama Closes," Toledo News, 8 January 1907, DBC 170, p. 61; Charles Quinn, "Warfield's Delightful Art," Toledo Blade, 19 April 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 66.

with his "vitalizing" art and predicted that whenever Warfield reappeared in the role, "it would be glorified by his art and will hold the public spellbound. . . ." The truth of that statement was born out in the criticisms of The Music Master between 1916-18. One view professed that Barwig was so masterfully shaded and artistically conceived that it deserved an entire page of criticism which could not be given to it, for he who had not seen the performance would consider the critique extravagant and he who had would think the adjectives inadequate. Warfield was said to have reached the artistic climax of his career by ennobling the role year after year with his genius and with his more mature, certain and ever growing art. He was thought a wonderful artist who deserved high commendation from his generation. Time had so mellowed his art that his performance was worthy of detailed study by the students of the stage, for:

. . . Seldom is given to an actor the unmistakable authority with which he clothes the part, the potency of his repose, the poignancy of his despair--the smile that means so much. To think of another in this part is nothing short of sacrilegious!<sup>58</sup>

The legendary artistry of Warfield gave him a complete and certain command over an audience. Vivid descriptions pictured the audience sitting with rapt attention every moment the curtain was up, hanging on every word, drinking every expression, quivering at every emotion, and

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<sup>58</sup>"The Music Master," Chicago Tribune, 12 March 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 101; Townsend Walsh, Untitled, Boston Traveler, 3 November 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; H. F., "English's--'The Music Master'," Indianapolis Star, 14 March 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "'Music Master' Still Pleases," Boston Herald-Journal, 30 October 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

brushing tears away even as they smiled. Rounds of applause were accorded the actor after each act--sometimes after a particularly moving scene--yet, while the action transpired, a death-like stillness would evidently pervade the house. It was a situation assimilated to enslavement:

. . . Perhaps we are even "dogs" in the intensity of David Warfield's all magnetic projection of Herr von Barwig, one of the sweetest gentlemen in the history of the modern stage. . . . from mongrel to blue ribbon we are all beaten in the same place by the same whip.

It was a situation also characterized as "a wonderful tribute to the star," for when he stood in Helen's sitting room viewing the portrait of his adulterous wife, the audience sat so completely still that "you could have heard a pin drop, even on the carpeted floors of the Colonial."<sup>59</sup>

Warfield so deftly portrayed the character of Anton von Barwig that his performance was cited as a lesson to anyone who appeared on the stage or would pursue the stage as a career. It was called an example of acting of the highest order and should be studied by every actor. The talent Warfield displayed was considered to be a new American standard by which actors and even the most frequent and hardened theatre patrons could stimulate and educate themselves through a close

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<sup>59</sup>"'Music Master' a Treat for Critical Audience," Patterson (N.J.) Guardian, 27 February 1917, DBC-MM, p. 47; "The Belasco," Pittsburg Press, 7 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 133; "Belasco--'The Music Master'," Pittsburg Chronicle-Telegraph, 7 May 1907, DBC 170, p. 133; Ashton Stevens, Untitled, New York Evening Journal, 27 February 1908, DBC 170, p. 175; "Warfield Return is Triumph," Boston Post, 30 October 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

observation of every detail in the performance. One of the earliest acknowledgements of the educational qualities of Warfield's work read:

. . . Mr. Warfield's work is a character study of such subtlety as is rarely afforded on our stage in these days, and to the student and admirer of good acting it is an education in itself.<sup>60</sup>

But in the final analysis, David Warfield, the actor, as Anton von Barwig was "the thing," and not The Music Master, the play. The recognition of this fact was at first greeted happily because the characterization removed him from the realm of Hebrew delineation to which he had been accustomed. Warfield's skill in interpreting the essential pathos and humor in the play was judged to place the actor so above the play that the shortcomings of the piece passed unnoticed. One reviewer suggested that if a patron exiting the theatre were asked what play he had seen, he would automatically respond "Warfield," and that all the theatre managers had to do to pack the house was to put the single word "Warfield" upon the marquee.<sup>61</sup>

Indeed, Warfield was said to have towered over the play as Mt. Shasta above an ant hill. Another opinion held that the entire

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<sup>60</sup>Untitled, Indianapolis News, 2 February 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 96; "Warfield Triumphs in 'Music Master'," Boston Traveler, 2 October 1906, DBC 170, p. 11; "The Theatre," New York Globe, 11 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 9; "New York City," New York Clipper, 9 September 1905, p. 732.

<sup>61</sup>Unidentified article, RLC, vol. 476, p. 58; Untitled, New York Clipper, 1 October 1904, p. 737; "'The Music Master' in its Third Year," Des Moines Register, 9 September 1906, RLC, vol. 476, p. 78; "David Warfield's Splendid Success," 3 June 1905, RLC, vol. 476, p. 60.

success of The Music Master was due to Warfield without whom "it would be laughed off the boards." In 1917 it was recognized:

It is more obvious now than when "The Music Master" was first produced, that Mr. Warfield is almost wholly responsible for its success. Charles Klein drew the old man to be sure, but not so skillfully as to elude the mischief a poorer actor might have done.

The subject was quite simply dismissed with: "David Warfield is the music master and 'The Music Master' is David Warfield."<sup>62</sup>

The fact that Warfield was the music master, and vice versa, prompted the discussion of whether the actor was wasting his talents by constantly appearing in the role. On this question W. L. Hubbard wrote that Warfield could hardly be blamed for yielding to the popular demand for The Music Master, and that as he had admirably elevated himself from his early beginnings in the theatre, his steady rise showed a maturing art which "would not seem to indicate that the actor is being wasted." Since he was considered a superior actor in America at the time, the belief that he should appear in plays which would test his powers to the limit was circulated:

This may be Mr. Warfield's last year in "The Music Master." It ought to be. There is something melancholy in the spectacle of an artist of his ability putting in six of the

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<sup>62</sup>O. L. Hall, "Warfield is Seen in a Great Role," Chicago Journal, 13 March 1907, DBC 170, p. 103; Russell Wilson, "Warfield's Spell as Von Barwig Still as Potent," Cincinnati Times-Star, 25 September 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "Three Shows Back to Local Theatres," Philadelphia Public Ledger, 25 December 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.; "'The Music Master' Becomes Classic," Indianapolis News, 14 March 1917, DBC-MM, n.p.

best years of his life playing one part--no matter what part. He ought to be filling his gallery with fine portraits.<sup>63</sup>

The confirmation of greatness upon David Warfield was called into question. An extensive, unsigned article compared the actor's talent with that of Richard Mansfield. On the latter, the author wrote that Mansfield was a "wonderfully clever histrionic cartoonist" who always entertained but never convinced. Mansfield always drew attention to himself, the theatre, the role, etc. Of the former actor, he wrote that Warfield was an artist (which was "more than any actor, no matter how brilliant he may be in his cartoon portraits, can ever hope to be") because the witness lost sight of the fact of theatre and actor and sat spellbound by a character transformed into living flesh and blood. The only actor to whom Warfield could be equated, he felt, was Edwin Booth because the two actors shared the same power, though in different lines of work. He criticized Warfield's stagnation in the "financially successful, but artistically dreary plays" of David Belasco which served only as "a frame for some star." He concluded that:

. . . Mr. Warfield has overcome to a degree by . . . his genius. But if he desires to stand forth as the master, which he can do, he must seek not a play made for him, but one made solely because the author has something of marvelous beauty, garbed in the attributes of the highest art, to say to the world.

The question of Warfield's rank as an actor was abandoned with the following statement:

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<sup>63</sup>"The Music Master," Chicago Tribune, 24 November 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 48; Untitled, American, December 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 64.

Just how far Von Barwig is a precipitation of the actor's own self and how far it is an objective creation, is a point on which opinions will differ. But on the decision of this knotty question will depend the final estimate of Mr. Warfield's genius. If he can give us another character, different from but as profoundly moving as that of the old musician, then he will rank high among America's actors. But that is an achievement he has yet to compass.<sup>64</sup>

Criticisms such as these spurred David Warfield to lay aside the beloved music master and embark upon the quest to prove his mettle, first with The Return of Peter Grimm and Van Der Decken and later with The Merchant of Venice in 1922. True, he had amassed enormous sums by playing Anton von Barwig across the country. True, his histrionic abilities recalled the cherished performances given by Richard Mansfield and Joseph Jefferson. True, he made audiences weep copious tears. True, that in the role of Barwig, he was considered a great actor. But it was also true that he, David Warfield, was the major attraction, and not the play:

We have always believed that Mr. Warfield's success in "The Music Master" was due more to Mr. Warfield than it was due to the play itself. When the play was first produced in New York the EVENING TELEGRAM declared that Mr. Warfield's work was remarkable acting, but it has had little praise for the play.

. . . But, after all, "The Music Master" succeeded more because Mr. Warfield was able to evoke tears through his acting than because the play had any lasting merit. Every time that Mr. Warfield appears in "The Music Master" the public will go to see him. The moment that any other actor appears in the play we believe that the play will show up as merely shoddy.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Untitled, Los Angeles Examiner, 25 October 1908, RLC, vol. 477, p. 42; "Lyceum--'The Music Master'," Rochester (N.Y.) Post-Examiner, 20 May 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 71.

<sup>65</sup>"David Warfield's New Role Tearful but Halting," New York Telegram, 17 October 1907, RLC, vol. 477, pp. 114-15.

Warfield's Barwig was evidently "great" by a standard not based upon a mutual creed and understanding of the art of acting, but by a standard based upon popular taste--the most fickle of all standards. What the public wanted from the actor was a lovable, kind-hearted man whose sentimentally bittersweet story would allow them to laugh and cry and at the same time permit them to escape the triviality of their own lives. Therefore, the success of The Music Master with David Warfield as Anton von Barwig was solely due to that actor's ability to respond to the want of public taste.

And so, as to the final judgement of whether or not Warfield's portrayal of Anton von Barwig merits a position in theatrical annals, there is this thought: Warfield was not a "great" actor in the sense that Edwin Booth, Henry Irving or Richard Mansfield are so esteemed, and thus merits little more recognition than he has to date been given by theatre historians. However, in the sense that through one character he could pack the house with thousands of people and reach out across the footlights to move them to one common emotion consistently night after night, year after year, he does deserve acclaim equal to that of James O'Neill in The Count of Monte Cristo if not even Joseph Jefferson in Rip Van Winkle.

In reality, there can be no final estimation of the stage portrait which produced the legend of the sweet tears. All that remains of that legend is its history as set down on paper by those who first made it happen and later by those who witnessed it. When Warfield last appeared in the role in 1918, little did the adoring public realize that Anton

von Barwig had lived for the last time. Thus, there were no epitaphs written for the heart-warming music master who had given so much of himself for others. It was all rather anti-climactic. But then, it had been professed that for all who could remember, Barwig would live forever. And so, the following quote, though extensive, is offered here as the epitaph that was never written, for it illustrates as no analysis could the legend of the "sweet tears":

"People like to cry," said [Warfield as] Barwig, moving toward the door, "provided you let them cry--sweet tears, you understand? What is just depressing, harrowing, has no value in the theatre. Yes--all right [responding to a call for places]. Sit still" [to the interviewer].

He went out. Joles [Pickering Brown] and Cruger [William Boag] and others were awaiting their cues, on the wrong side of that ravishing sunlit interior. He had a grin for each of them, and they were all delighted. He tipped someone's elbow affectionately. Some one patted him. At the entrance he turned to nod and wave to the investigator [the interviewer]. Then he walked on, slowly, the violets to the fore.

Mr. Cruger so far forgot his snobbery to bring a chair for science [referring to the interviewer] and placed it where the prompt box should have been. Little Miss Jane Cooper [who played Helen], very sweet and captivating even from that side, took her place at the white piano, and the horribly criminal music lesson began.

The house--the invisible victims beyond the yellow radiance of the foots--was biting off its laughs at the little jokes, for poor Barwig was beginning to falter and catch at his "baby's" fingers. Somebody sniffled beyond. Sniffles became general. If you want to study an audience ever leave it and go "behind" [i.e., backstage].

Barwig crossed to the cabinet. The cabinet was about three feet from the investigator's nose. He stopped and tensed. His eyes grew round. The doll! . . . The house eased a little, relieved--it was coming out right, somehow--and a hysterical woman began a spatter of applause.

"My little baby!" said Barwig to himself.

Charles Abbott, Stanton, came on and did his nastiest and exit. . . . Helen choked down a sob. Two thousand people, more or less, desired the heart's blood of Mr. Abbott.

There was whisper behind the chair.

"You'd better stay and watch. I'm going on again in a minute." [said Warfield.]

He was, and she [Helen] was trying to give him [Barwig] his conge [i.e., formal permission to leave]--to a human orchestration of sighs and snuffles, with snorts from the double basses. . . .

"I talk too much," said Barwig brokenly. "Gif me anodther chance. I come tomorrow and I don't say a word."

The investigator had meant to use his study of his [Warfield's] facial muscles, but at this point an affliction hampered vision--a germ cold, bad for the eyes and highly contagious in theatres. A streptococcus is believed to cause it.

Then that man Abbott was back there being ugly.

Then of course [Barwig's famous cry]--

"If you don't vant 'er, I-ee vant 'er! If they don't love 'er, I-ee love 'er--." . . .

Curtain.

"As I was saying"--a perfectly cool and collected [Warfield said as he] struck a match--"they like to cry, sweet tears."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>"Everybody Likes to Cry 'Sweet Tears,' Says Warfield," New York Sun, 10 December 1916, DBC-MM, p. 28.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE JEW THAT WARFIELD DREW

There was a certain electricity in the evening air on the twenty-first of December 1922. The "who's who" of New York City were anxiously preparing to attend the current Broadway opening at the Lyceum Theatre. To some, it was just another night at the theatre. To others, that night marked the end of a long-awaited event. To one man, it was the night of nights, for that evening a twenty-year-old journey would conclude either in crowning glory or in bitter defeat.

David Warfield probably felt the gravity of this momentous occasion as he prepared to face his first New York audience in David Belasco's production of The Merchant of Venice. He had traveled all across the country proving that he was unrivaled in the performance of characters like Simon Levi, Anton von Barwig and Peter Grimm. Yet, one question had remained in his mind as well as in his public's: Could he excel in a classical role? This question would be answered that night.

David Warfield's presentation in The Merchant of Venice was a playbill conceived almost immediately following his first critical success with The Auctioneer in 1901. This proposed playbill started as a joke between Warfield and C. M. S. McLellan, a fellow actor in the New York Casino Company during Warfield's tenure there in the mid-1890s. The popularity of Simon Levi prompted the anecdote to be re-told in the theatrical gossip columns, and from there the idea mushroomed into a

life-time ambition. Subsequent interviews were incomplete without the obligatory question: "Are you going to play Shylock?" Warfield solemnly promised that he would play Shylock, and he usually hinted what direction his Shylock would take. In building the character, he stated, he would consult life and human nature to be sure, but more importantly, he would employ the method of restraint which had become synonymous with his art.

When the time comes for active study, I shall approach the part as if it were absolutely new, and the play had never before been produced. I shall be neither guided nor influenced by tradition. If I succeed or fail, I shall accept the responsibility, for I shall not lean on any other actor's conception or interpretation, no matter how firmly these ideas may have taken root in the public mind. It may transpire that my ideas will coincide with others that have gone before; it is possible that they will substantially diverge. (Personally, I think they will diverge--very materially.)<sup>1</sup>

Warfield had chosen the path trod by a long line of epoch-making Shylocks.<sup>2</sup> In 1701, George Granville produced a badly bastardized text of The Merchant of Venice with Thomas Doggett as Shylock. Doggett

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<sup>1</sup> Kenneth MacGowan, "How an Actor Gets Into Your Heart," Collier's, 23 February 1924, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 167 (hereafter designated as DBC 167), n.p.; Percy Hammond, "Warfield as Shylock," Chicago Post, 30 April 1902, Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks (hereafter designated as RLC), vol. 476, p. 26; "Comedy as the Comedian Sees It," Unidentified source, 26 November 1904, RLC, vol. 476, p. 46; "David Warfield Tells of Plays and Pinocchio," New York Telegraph, 10 September 1910, RLC, vol. 477, p. 75; Lawrence Hall, "David Warfield: The Actor and the Man," Arena, March 1909, pp. 256-66.

<sup>2</sup> For lack of evidence prior to 1701, this survey begins with the advent of the eighteenth century and is primarily drawn from the following: Bernard Grebanier, The Truth About Shylock (New York: Random House, Inc., 1962) and Toby Lelyveld, Shylock on the Stage (Cleveland: Western Reserve University, 1960).

apparently portrayed Shylock as a farcical character, for this interpretation, along with Granville's text, dominated the boards for the next forty years. It was then, in 1741, that Charles Macklin rescued and resurrected Shakespeare's play. Macklin made Shylock so venomous and detestable a monster that he did not render the character as a credible human being. However, it did succeed in replacing Doggett's interpretation, and Alexander Pope declared: "This is the Jew / That Shakespeare drew."<sup>3</sup> The Macklin interpretation prevailed for sixty years.

William Hazlitt reported that Edmund Kean's predecessors in the role had portrayed a mentally deformed, malignant, inflexible and vengeful old man. When Kean appeared in the role at Drury Lane on January 26, 1814, he introduced a new tradition: a vigorous and handsome man of intellect, "a persecuted martyr who, through the forces of circumstances, finally became an avenger."<sup>4</sup> At the end of Act IV, his outward appearance seemed to change, and he was able through control of his voice to alter audience response to the character from hatred to pity. His final exit commanded so much dignity that the audience also became sympathetic to him.

In 1823 William Charles Macready revived a harsh Shylock somewhat in the manner of the Macklin predecessor. He was very earnest in his

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<sup>3</sup> Grebanier, p. 328, quoting J. T. Kirkland, Memoirs of the Life of Charles Macklin, 2:427.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

portrayal, but the character was apparently too complex for him to realize. It was reported he had to work himself into an artificial state of agitation prior to his entrances in order to convincingly express Shylock's emotions.

Charles Kean's interpretation of Shylock retained much of the indignant, unsentimentalized Jew rightfully fighting for his revenge which his father, Edmund, had popularized. Unfortunately, the younger Kean inherited his father's unreliable voice and unprepossessing figure, and little of his talent. On stage, Charles lacked facial expression and spontaneity, which undoubtedly led to his intellectual approach to acting and eventually to his concentration on a revolution in stagecraft.

America's first noteworthy Shylock, Junius Brutus Booth, was also credited as the first actor to speak the role with a Yiddish accent. Booth was well versed in Jewish customs and manners, and he apparently relied heavily upon that knowledge. He portrayed Shylock as the representative Hebrew typifying a race as old as the world, a man who hated Antonio because he was a Christian and because he had hindered usurious practices. Booth

. . . drew the character in simple lines of grandeur and filled it with fiery energy. In his hands, it was marked by pride of intellect; by intense pride of race; by a reserved force, as if there centered in him the might of a people whom neither time nor scorn, nor political oppression could subdue.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Lelyveld, p. 19.

Edwin Booth's performance of the role was just one of many which won for him the title of America's greatest actor. The younger Booth's Shylock was "no vulgar Israelite," but a man so disappointed in his avaristic revenge, "that his utterance was choked when he attempted to express these sentiments."<sup>6</sup> For all the high praise the actor received, however, critics were forced to concede that Booth had contributed nothing new to the interpretation of Shylock.

Edwin Forrest's mature portrayal showed an individualization that was associated with all of his roles. Forrest's Shylock was sculpted from a familiarity with the appearance, manners and language of the character and attested to an intense and thorough study of the role. One newspaper reported: ". . . not as a part put on for an hour, but as a being whom we have seen, and whose grievance we commiserated, and in whose revenge we took a part." Forrest was remembered for his fiercely animalistic delineation. The fact that the actor carried, among other things, a whetstone for sharpening his knife in the trial scene clearly shows that the actor "aimed at sensationalism of the grand guignol variety."<sup>7</sup>

The most celebrated of all Shylocks on both sides of the Atlantic was England's Sir Henry Irving. This distinguished actor had no natural endowments, and he compensated accordingly with careful and thoughtful planning. Rather than create a new Shylock, he formed a composite from

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 67-68.

those interpretations he considered the best. The only new dimension he added was a deepening of the audience's sympathy for Shylock. Irving displayed a fierceness reminiscent of Macklin, and his bearing was distinguished by a comparatively quiet, tranquil dignity. His Shylock was an intelligent and refined man of culture, yet he also portrayed the emotions of a noble but long-oppressed race. For example, he evinced complete gall when reminded that Jews were at the bottom of the social scale. As Shylock, Irving moved from usurer to outraged father to vengeful creditor, remaining always in complete harmony with his conception.<sup>8</sup>

In 1898 when Irving was at the zenith of success with his Shylock, William Poel, an actor and historian whose career was built around bringing historical accuracy to the works of Shakespeare, revived the red-wigged, middle-aged Jew of undeniable comic character. Poel's Shylock was meant to be mocked and scorned, but the outbursts of laughter he received reduced Shakespeare's tragedy to travesty and the comedy to slapstick. Critics charged that Poel's buffoonery made of Shylock a crazy Pantaloon rather than a revenge-crazed madman, and the actor received little recognition for his endeavor.<sup>9</sup>

Sir Herbert Beerbohm-Tree's tragic Shylock was the same serious and forceful Jew Irving had created, but he was not as magnificent nor as aristocratic as his more celebrated contemporary. Tree placed heavy

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<sup>8</sup> Grebanier, pp. 332-33.

<sup>9</sup> Lelyveld, pp. 97-98.

emphasis on the Jewish aspects of the character in both performance and staging. In depicting an extremely dangerous character whose animosity was leveled at all Jewish persecutors, he made Shylock intensely and neurotically emotional, and his performance remains indicative of the taste of the early twentieth century audiences.<sup>10</sup>

Richard Mansfield's Jew was largely a harsh and unsympathetic portrayal. When he first began performing the role, he strove "to emphasize every redeeming human quality he could find in the moneylender and to win active sympathy for the despised and persecuted figure." Over the years, however, the performance consistently altered until his Shylock became totally repulsive. Gradually, the Jew lost his sensibilities and became the embodiment of implacable hatred. The persecution Mansfield's Shylock felt became the basis for Shylock's malevolence, and in light of the actor's initial goal, it is quite possible that Mansfield was completely unaware of the direction his Shylock had taken.<sup>11</sup>

The Shylock of E. H. Southern failed to display an unmistakable through-line of character, and the production failed to similarly illuminate the text. Southern's characterization was called the "filthiest figure that has yet to typify the great poetic creation," and it discredited any belief that the elegant Christians would barter with him. This Shylock was so nondescript that the critic for the New York

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-101.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-14.

Times stated it was without merit "as an addition to the calendar of remembered 'Merchant's'." <sup>12</sup>

Critics largely ignored Robert Mantell's Shylock because the production displayed a pretentious showmanship and contributed nothing to the development of Shylock. William Winter, writing for the New York Tribune, flatly stated that comment on the production must be "reserved," but his colleague for the New York Times wrote:

Mantell played the part with a malignant and melodramatic fervor, adhering to what many critics believe must necessarily have been Shakespeare's conception of the role. The audience applauded many of his tirades and seemed to like him none the less for that he was the less to be loved. <sup>13</sup>

Walter Hampden's Shylock was a traditional ghetto Jew who was presented in a consistently unfriendly light, which some theatre patrons claimed would appeal most to anti-Semites. There was a hard, brittle, vindictive quality about Hampden's Shylock which the actor had hoped to be perceived as the keen, stern and unbending character of an archfiend, "but his guttural enunciation, his habit of pawing the scenery and spitting on the other characters made of this Shylock a veritable animal." The character was not taken seriously, and in one considered opinion, he "failed to enlist the concern of the audience for Shylock." <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>"The Shylock of E. H. Southern," New York Times, 5 November 1905, sec. 4, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup>Lelyveld, p. 105; "The Drama," 21 November 1906, p. 7; "Mantell a Novel Shylock," 21 November 1906, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup>Lelyveld, p. 106.

The character David Warfield built had as its basis Warfield's twenty-year study of the role.<sup>15</sup> The actor saw Shylock as a human being first and a Jew second, more sinned against than sinning. To him, Shylock was an aristocrat, an intellectual man who was in many ways superior to his Christian counterparts. Above all, Warfield considered Shylock as an individual rather than a racial character. He insisted that Shakespeare used the label "Jew" as a means of defining the character for an Elizabethan audience, and he strove to present Shylock as a Jew, not the Jew. In all facets of character, Warfield attempted to make of Shylock a sympathetic person, a gentle man of humor goaded by persecution and enmity to a tragic end.

Citing the lines, "Still have I borne it with a patient shrug / For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe," Warfield believed that Shylock was governed by a whimsical, complacent humor. Nothing he read indicated to him that Shylock had any actual designs on Antonio's life, because at the time Shylock entered into the bond with him, there was no likelihood of forfeiture. The phrase "in merry sport" indicated to Warfield that Shylock meant the flesh bond as a kind of joke, and the

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<sup>15</sup> Compiled from the following: "Shylock was no Skinflint . . .," Unidentified source, 2 October 1903, RLC, vol. 476, p. 34; Otheman Stevens, "'Work Main Thing in Life'-- Warfield Says . . .," Los Angeles Examiner, 21 February 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 6; Rabbi Lee J. Levinger, "The 'Shylock' of David Warfield," The American Hebrew, 17 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; John Corbin, "Defends His Interpretation," New York Times, 22 December 1922, p. 13; William G. Stiegler, "Can Never Standardize 'Shylock,' Says Warfield," Cincinnati Star, 27 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; John T. Wallace, "Warfield to Play Different Shylock," Detroit Free Press, 4 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Bartlett Cormack, "Let Critics Rave, Warfield will be Human Shylock," Chicago American, 9 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

actor saw Shylock's willingness to lend to the Christians as a means to prove that Christian and Jew could co-exist amicably.

The turning point in Shylock's development for Warfield came with the elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo. The actor believed Shylock to be a devoted father who warned Jessica to lock herself in the house only because he feared for her safety, not because he wished to isolate her. To Warfield, Jessica's capricious elopement triggered so intense a reaction in her father that Shylock became devoid of reason. Because he could not fathom that her actions were of her own volition, Shylock chose to hold the Christians wholly responsible. Therefore, when he learned that Antonio was unexpectedly unable to repay the loan, the merchant became the scapegoat for "robbing" Shylock of Jessica and his sanity.

Clearly, in attempting to portray Shylock not in the traditionally romantic and heroic style but in his own inimitably repressed, realistic manner, David Warfield had established for himself a high standard, and by his own admission he was taking a big risk. For an actor and a Jew, portraying Shylock, the Jew, was the ultimate risk. It was a highly respected role which had been drawn in large, bold strokes of heroic grand passion. Too, it was a role which had won the reputation of making or breaking an actor. It was a character deeply resented in Jewish circles because of the prejudice they felt it incited. It was also the first and only role Warfield had ever assumed which had not been tailored to his talents.

Yet, Warfield's entire career had been built by taking risks. From the burlesque halls to the legitimate stage, the actor was constantly attempting to prove the versatility of his talent. At every phase of his career, he was met with a measured degree of success and acceptance, yet he apparently felt challenged to achieve something more in order to refute the allegation that he was essentially a "one-part actor." David Warfield intended to make a contribution to the American theatre, and his conception of Shylock was to be that contribution. Therefore, in a perhaps well planned, perhaps somewhat desperate, attempt to prove himself as an actor of unquestionable merit, Warfield turned to The Merchant of Venice in what he hoped would be the crowning glory of his career:

I am hoping that when I undertake the role of Shylock the public will give me some consideration and not sigh for "The Music Master." . . . I would like to do something more in my time upon the stage than portray one or two characters which have as their greatest commendation that they make people tend to tears. Not that I deprecate anything of that sort, nor that I would take anything but satisfaction in what I have done; but I want to do something better, and so I regard the Music Master and Peter Grimm as steps to that better thing. I would like, when I am finished, to have done something worthwhile, something that people will remember.<sup>16</sup>

The realization of Shylock was to be for Warfield the apotheosis of his career, and his contribution to the role was presented in the hope that it would be judged favorably alongside his predecessors in the

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<sup>16</sup>Untitled, Pittsburg Dispatch, 20 April 1911, RLC, vol. 477, p. 88.

role. Yet, the drama critics who were charged with reporting and evaluating the Warfield Shylock responded with diverse opinions. Some praised him for a sincere portrayal etched in the pathos only a Warfield could exude. Others chastised him upon three points: his conception of Shylock as a Jew rather than the Jew; his failure to completely define the complex character, and his histrionics which recalled to memory his previous stage personae. When all was said and done, the Jew that Warfield drew was thought an insignificant albeit human and sympathetic portrait of one man's tragedy which was merely another extension of the Warfield personality.

The fulfillment of David Warfield's dream was a long time in coming. Impatience whetted his ambition, but over the years he had to remain content with his simple characters. In 1907, and again in 1909, 1910 and 1913, the newspapers announced that Warfield would be presented in The Merchant of Venice the following season, but each year the reports were soon denied by Belasco who assured the public that "prevailing conditions" made the venture impossible at present. Belasco promised that he would definitely stage it in the future:

. . . When we are ready, I'll take a modest little company out into the backwoods somewhere, . . . and let Warfield play Shylock for three months or so. Then, when he's found himself and can show what he can really do, if it's no good we'll drop it, and if (as I expect) it turns out great, I'll bring him to New York and give them such a production as they haven't seen since Irving played the piece.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>"Belasco's Plans for Warfield," Chicago Tribune, 27 October 1907, RLC, vol. 477, p. 3; William Winter, The Life of Belasco, 2 vols., ed. by Jefferson Winter (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), 1:139-40.

In 1921 Belasco decided to mount the production and spent the next few months in preparation, sparing neither energy nor expense. He sent buyers all over Europe to purchase cloth for costumes, tapestries for the set and most of the hand and trim props. The Cleveland News reported that \$20,000 was spent on Portia's and Nerissa's costumes alone, and the New York World ran a feature which stated that four countries had contributed to the production: the musical score originated from English airs; the men's costumes were made in London and the women's costumes in Paris; the Renaissance materials came from Venice, and all was assembled in New York. Total production expense was listed at an estimated \$250,000.<sup>18</sup>

Belasco engaged for the production the most impressive cast and crew available. A majority of the actors he hired had worked extensively in London in Shakespearean roles. There were a total of 146 people in the company: seventy-five actors, forty-two stagehands and twenty-nine musicians. There were four weeks of closed rehearsals beginning on October ninth in preparation for the planned pre-New York opening in Wilmington, Delaware on November tenth. This opening was to have initiated a six-week out-of-town tryout, but Belasco felt the play was

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<sup>18</sup> Beauvais Fox, "The Playbill," New York Daily Tribune, 10 September 1922, sec. 5, p. 1; Untitled, Indianapolis Star, 17 September 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Untitled, Cleveland News, 29 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Whole World is a 'Shop' for Belasco," New York World, 28 January 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

not ready for a performance on the tenth, and he used the time for more rehearsals which lasted a reported fourteen hours a day.<sup>19</sup>

Warfield played Shylock for the first time at Ford's Theatre in Baltimore on November 14, 1922. From Baltimore, the production traveled to Pittsburg, then Cleveland, Detroit and Washington, D.C., before it opened at the Lyceum Theatre in New York City on December twenty-first. The run at the Lyceum had initially been scheduled for eight weeks only, but Belasco decided later to extend the run by four weeks. The Merchant of Venice closed on March 10, 1923 after ninety-two consecutive performances, earning the distinction of establishing a record run for this particular play on Broadway. Belasco commemorated the event with the following statement:

When, in 1898, Augustin Daly . . . presented "The Merchant" with the incomparable and ever-lamented Ada Rehan as Portia, he told me that he did not expect to be able to keep the play before the public more than four or five weeks. . . . As things fell out he was able to give fifty-two representations of the comedy.

When planning my presentation . . . I thought that if I could equal Daly's run with the piece . . . I should be indeed fortunate.

My surprise, therefore, is as great as is my gratification that I have been able almost to double Daly's record. . . .<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>"David Belasco's 'Merchant of Venice' to be Prepared for Stage Here," Wilmington Star, 5 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Gary Duane Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1975), pp. 297, 299-300; "David Belasco Cancels Playhouse Engagement," Wilmington News, 10 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>20</sup>Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," pp. 301, 315, 324; Billboard; "Belasco Planning More Shakespeare," Baltimore Sun, 13 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Untitled, New York Journal of Commerce, 1 February 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; David Belasco, "As to David Warfield's Record in 'The Merchant of Venice' in New York," Unidentified periodical, 10 March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

Normally, a short end-of-the-season tour would have been arranged for the production. Belasco chose to retire it for the season instead, because of the costly overhead, and then concentrated upon plans for an extensive coast-to-coast tour. Actually, he did not wish to send The Merchant of Venice on the road because he felt that a national road tour would spell financial ruin. The running costs of the production were an estimated \$17,000 per week, and the box office had barely averaged that sum per week. Belasco had proposed a new vehicle or a revival of The Music Master, but Warfield rejected the idea, arguing that his long-awaited Shylock was a debt owed to his loyal fans across the country. In exchange for producing the road tour, the actor offered to reimburse the producer for the net losses. Belasco agreed, and Warfield purportedly assumed a debt of \$80,000.<sup>21</sup>

In an effort to economize, Belasco reshaped the production for the road. With the exception of Warfield and three other actors, the original cast was replaced by lesser known performers. In addition, more alterations in the text were made in order to minimize transportation costs across the continent. In Baltimore, which had hosted the original production, the critic for the Morning Sun called it an "inferior" production with "colorless actors who bring the work down to the level of a Robert Mantell presentation."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," p. 328; "Inside Stuff on Legit," Variety, 21 May 1924, p. 46.

<sup>22</sup>"Warfield to Tour," New York Clipper, 28 February 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Plans for Warfield," New York Telegraph, 2 March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," p. 325; "'Merchant' Begins Tour," 14 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

The thirty-week, forty-plus city road tour which comprised Warfield's 1923-24 season was unveiled in Wilmington, Delaware on September twenty-eight. The first two months of the tour were spent in New England and the mid-Atlantic states. From there, the show traveled west to Chicago and then on to the major cities of the northern Central states and the Pacific northwest. From Seattle and Spokane, the Warfield company traveled down the Pacific coast, stopping in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, before heading back across the Rockies to Denver. Two more weeks were spent playing Midwestern cities in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio before the tour closed in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania at the Orpheum Theatre on April 26, 1924.<sup>23</sup>

For two decades, critics pondered the direction Warfield's Shylock would take, for as one critic had written, "Warfield, remarkable personality that he is, is always Warfield." Some critics had surmised over the years that his would be an able, brilliant and sympathetic interpretation which would not fall short of being "great." Other critics had expressed the concern that Warfield was not equal to the role and that manager and star were bold in testing the public need for a new Shylock at the expense of an old, but beloved, music master. Yet, they all agreed that Warfield's Shakespearean debut would be a momentous occasion.

David Warfield can be counted on to make a bold attack. Just what line he will take under the direction of so adroit a craftsman as David Belasco isn't easy to predict. As both men

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<sup>23</sup>Billboard.

are Jews, it is likely that they incline toward the sympathetic and yet austere interpretation favored by Henry Irving. Shylock is very different from anything Warfield has ever done. He has been more of a miniaturist than a great portrait painter. Shylock requires some pretty big strokes. Whether Warfield will be able to deliver them is giving some of his admirers concern. If he succeeds in this daring venture he will put himself into another category.<sup>24</sup>

The Warfield portrait of Shakespeare's moneylender was painted in the simple and sincere shades which were the actor's trademark. The realistically natural and modern strokes depicted a humanized and personalized figure immediately recognizable for its gentleness, its pathos and its humor. The comprehensible but insignificant image--a slight, drooping figure with a scrawny beard and long, pinched nose and emaciated hands which gesticulated most expressively--elicited a degree of sympathy but commanded little, if any, dignity. This Shylock illustrated, not the universal Jew shouldering the inequities of a race, but a particular individual trapped by outside forces and finally crushed in utter ruin.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Untitled, Dayton News, 16 September 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Henry Tarleton Wills, "'The Music Master' and David Warfield," Pearson's, April 1905, p. 408 in RLC, vol. 476, p. 56; "Warfield as Shylock," New York Telegraph, 6 February 1907, RLC, vol. 476, p. 97; J. A. Wurzbach, Untitled, Philadelphia Times, 8 March 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 56; "Mr. Warfield's Plans for Next Season," Boston Transcript, 5 May 1909, RLC, vol. 477, p. 60; William Winter, The Wallet of Time, 2 vols. (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1913; reprint ed., Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), 2:179; J. Rankin Towse, "Chief Features of the New Dramatic Season," New York Post, 16 September 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Philander Johnson, Untitled, Washington Star, 2 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; John D. Barry, "Ways of the World," San Francisco Call, 9 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>25</sup>Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," p. 301; Lelyveld, pp. 108-09.

Many critics praised Warfield's portrayal for its modernism which lent a natural ease to the Bard's work and which allowed a greater understanding of the play. It was a Shylock very much like someone "you might meet around the corner," a man contemporaneous with the New York ghetto. However, some critics felt this embellishment threw Shylock out of key. Russell Wilson stated that the interpretation was "easily intelligible to an American audience in the administration of Calvin Coolidge" and had about it the suggestion "of the cutaway of Wall Street [rather] than the gaberdine of Venice." This modern touch, though regretted, was recognized as the actor's attempt to humanize the role:

For this creation of Mr. Warfield is one born of present-day experience and present-day intention. It is the spiritual child of revolt against an age that has given us the pogroms of Europe, the Ku Klux Klan and the postwar Jew-baiting of America. It is an effort, wholly understandable, however fruitless, to redeem the character of Shylock from itself and make of him a human being, the symbol of that dire but pathetic fruitage that is born of racial prejudice and persecution.<sup>26</sup>

The genuine humanity of Warfield's Shylock proved to be its keynote. This stage portrayal was neither stereotypical nor abstract, but a naturally visualized individual. Here was a man, a common man,

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<sup>26</sup>"Warfield Triumphs in Role of Revenge," Brooklyn Standard-Union, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Nixon--'The Merchant of Venice'," Pittsburg Press, 21 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; George C. Warren, "David Warfield in Shylock is Given Welcome," San Francisco Chronicle, 19 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Presents a Modern 'Shylock'," Cincinnati Times-Star, 25 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; C. Pannil Mead, "Warfield Pleases in Shylock Role," Milwaukee Sentinel, 15 April 1924, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 166 (hereafter designated as DBC 166), n.p.; First Nighter, "David Warfield at Davidson," Milwaukee News, 15 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

one of the little people, harassed by enmity into lustful vengeance. Here was a man so vividly portrayed as being of flesh and blood that "Shylock's famous outburst upon Salarino . . . might have been cut from this performance altogether and the questions would have asked themselves in the minds of everyone who had eyes on Warfield."<sup>27</sup>

Warfield had to strike this note of humanity in order to elicit sympathy for Shylock, for without sympathy, true understanding of the interpretation could not be reached. Warfield played Shylock at a time when anti-Semitism ran rife, and he hoped to extinguish some of the prejudice which Shylock's portrayal usually fomented. In spite of the fact that Shakespeare had written an antagonistic character, Warfield was able to evoke compassion from the audience. The bond of sympathy which was established in the early scenes endured throughout because the actor expressed Shylock's vindictiveness as the result of a man driven to near insanity. One critic wrote: "Perhaps we now have a Shylock for the first time, not merely as Shakespeare saw him, but as he actually was." Another wrote: "Warfield makes you feel sorry for Shylock, not

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<sup>27</sup>"David Warfield Plays Shylock," Indianapolis News, 18 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Lewis Hillhouse, "Warfield's Shylock is His Greatest Role," Cincinnati Post, 25 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; A. M. G., "Lyceum," Rochester Times-Union, 23 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Lyceum Theatre," Rochester Democrat-Chronicle, 23 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Ernest Hamlin Abbott, "The Shylock of Shakespeare and Warfield," Outlook, 10 January 1923, p. 64.

because he puts up a good fight, but because he doesn't, poor fellow, seem to be the kind of man who can be expected to fight at all."<sup>28</sup>

The major effect for which Warfield strove was that of pathos. The first moment came when Shylock lists for Antonio the injustices borne by his race; here Warfield skillfully visualized the dignity of a "misunderstood, stupidly despised and ignorantly hated" tribe. The actor's best moment of pathos came when Shylock discovers Jessica's flight; in this scene Warfield became the epitome of paternal concern with a "sob in his soul" that was "echoed in his voice." In Act IV the ultimate wretchedness of the character was made clear by the actor's use of "that curious falsetto . . . which has long been his chief asset." To note Warfield's success in eliciting pathos, one has only to read the following:

We hope, vainly, that some kind of providence will intervene to save him from the fate indicated by Shakespeare's lines. Which, probably, is not the right reaction.<sup>29</sup>

The abounding sentiment of the performance, however, was found disconcerting; it was too human, too self-pitying, too emotional and

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<sup>28</sup> Clarence I. Freed, "Jewish Interpreters of Shylock," The American Hebrew, 16 March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Stage: At the New Detroit," Detroit Saturday Night, 9 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," p. 301; Arthur Pollack, "About the Theatre," Brooklyn Eagle, 31 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>29</sup> "The Merchant of Venice," Oakland Post Enquirer, 4 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Creates a New Shylock," Unidentified Wilmington newspaper, 29 September 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Kenneth MacGowan, "David Belasco Presents David Warfield in 'The Merchant of Venice'," New York Globe, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield's Shylock Warmly Acclaimed," Des Moines Capital, 19 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

too self-serving. In the trial scene, Charles Darnton was surprised to note a nonexistent pathos and decided that the actor must have apparently "felt it too small a thing to consider," with respect to the primary purpose of the interpretation, "even when that purpose failed." Charles Collins reported that Warfield's mastery of pathos failed to put "the note of heartbreak" into Shylock because

. . . he misses the touch that converts technique into inspiration. Just why he misses it . . . is, perhaps, because . . . he lacks the heroic stroke. Routined for years in the bourgeois emotions, he is a trifle rigid when he undertakes the poetic gesture.<sup>30</sup>

The humanity, the sincerity, the sympathy and the pathos of Warfield's Shylock were all means to a specific end: a portrait of Shylock which invited forbearance rather than bigotry. In imparting aristocratic dignity and racial pride, Warfield clothed the role in the gaberdine of "a Jewish merchant prince," an honorable man among his tribe and a shrewd businessman along the Rialto. In manner, gesture and articulation, he suggested the modern-day Jew who had immigrated from Poland or Austria during the first quarter of the twentieth century, "a Potash or a Perlmutter inflamed with implacable animosity and malice." Alexander Woolcott wrote:

. . . We have heard it said of the new Shylock that it was "just a little Jew peddler carrying on because he'd lost his licence." And though we suspect that this capsule criticism

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<sup>30</sup>"Shakespeare Via Belasco and Warfield," Boston Transcript, 23 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "The New Plays: Warfield a True Shylock in Superb Belasco Production," New York Evening World, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "David Warfield's Portrait of the Jew of Venice," Chicago Post, 4 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

was someone's effort to spit on the gaberdine of Mr. Warfield's art, we seize upon it as an unconscious tribute to the chief merit of the performance. . . .<sup>31</sup>

Quite a few critics found cause to "spit on the gaberdine" of David Warfield's Shylock. Robert Garland stated that the interpretation suffered from "too great a humanization," for Warfield was "no more than a much put-upon Jew, stung to madness by repeated and undeserved provocations." A fellow critic, who withheld his review to determine the cause of a "lack of emotional response," wrote: "There was not a single moment during the entire play when our heart went out to him." And another colleague remarked:

. . . For the benefit of our Ku Klux readers who want the straight of it . . . Warfield's Shylock is an artistic conception first to last. Not for one moment does he wobble from the role to any blatant grandstand stuff for the immortal money lender. As a matter of fact we have less sympathy for Shylock after seeing Mr. Warfield portray him than we ever had for any other interpretation. Hence the Ku Kluxers may patronize this play without doing violence to their prejudice.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Gary Duane Cook, "The David Belasco Arrangement and Production of William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice (M.A. thesis, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 1967), p. 147; "At the Play," Town Topics, 28 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; G. H. H., "Plays Revisited: Warfield as Shylock," Brooklyn Life, 30 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; James Craig, "David Warfield as Shylock," New York Mail, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Reviewing Stand," New York Herald, 31 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>32</sup>"David Belasco Presents Warfield in Shylock Role," Baltimore American, 15 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Two Davids Have Given New York a Near Perfect 'Merchant of Venice'," New York Daily Hotel Reporter, 28 February 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; George Looms, "Balm for Ku Kluxers in Warfield 'Shylock'," Denver Express, 4 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

In general, critics had doubted that Warfield's artistry would carry him to success in The Merchant of Venice, and only a few recognized in the performance a consummate art. To those few, Warfield exhibited elusive and subtle qualities which were uncommonly notable; for example, he artfully rendered a malignantly vicious hatred mixed with a quiet smile and soft-spoken word. Said one critic: "David Warfield's capacity for doing the thing in hand and doing it well no longer is a matter for debate."<sup>33</sup>

The major tool of Warfield's artistry had always been his ability to imbue his characters with repressed or restrained emotion, and the use of this tool was not foreign to his Shylock. It lent an air of humility and gentleness to the role, and it allowed the actor to express telling, effective and poignant emotions. This tool was his chief asset, and it provided the standard by which his Shylock could be measured against past Shylocks.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Walter Anthony, "David Warfield Makes 'Shylock' Most Vivid Role," Los Angeles News, 11 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Large Audience Enjoys Shylock," Moline Daily Dispatch, 10 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Edwin M. Steckle, "Warfield Appealing as 'Shylock' Large Audience Pays Tribute," Wheeling Register, 25 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; William Smith Goldenberg, "Amusements: David Warfield," Cincinnati Enquirer, 25 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Norman Clark, "David Warfield Seen as Shylock at Ford's," Baltimore News, 15 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>34</sup> Richard S. Davis, "Warfield Gives Unique Shylock," Milwaukee Journal, 15 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Nicholas Young, "New Shylock in Portrayal by Warfield," Boston American, 30 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Henry Starr Richardson, "David Warfield in a New Shylock," Philadelphia Star, 2 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Presents a Human Shylock in Big Production," Denver Post, 4 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Rabbi Lee J. Levinger, "The 'Shylock' of David Warfield," The American Hebrew, 17 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

In evaluating the Warfield Shylock against those which had preceded it, critics realized that the actor had been somewhat indiscriminant in his choices. Warfield's Shylock was clearly no carbon copy of any one famous performance, yet neither was it an oddly assorted composite. This Shylock, like Edwin Booth's, was an individual figure rather than a racial symbol, and it was an aristocrat like Henry Irving's. On the other hand, it suggested nothing of the hideously vicious and capitalistic merchant that Southern, Mantell and Hampden had played, and one critic, who called it a "masterly" performance, quickly added that it could not "efface the memories of . . . E. L. Davenport, Edwin Booth or Henry Irving." One of the best discussions of this point reads:

Warfield gives him none of the sweeping dignity that marked Irving's Shylock, nor the romantic beauty and sadness of Forbes Robertson's Jew. Neither does he play Shylock as Southern conceived him, scholarly and calculating, nor as Robert Mantell played him, robust, blustering, domineering and wholly paternal; nor even as John Kellard plays him, sniveling and whining in picturesque tatters.<sup>35</sup>

In the reviews of this Warfield production, the actor's artistry was traced through the four key scenes involving the Jew. The first of these, the negotiation of the loan with Antonio and Bassanio, was

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<sup>35</sup>,"The Merchant of Venice' Smashing Hit at National," Unidentified Washington, D.C., newspaper, 12 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; George C. Warren, "Behind the Back Row," San Francisco Chronicle, 27 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Human as Shylock," Buffalo Evening Post, 27 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "New Shylock by Warfield Distinctive," Unidentified newspaper, 22 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Untitled, Philadelphia Bulletin, 6 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield as Shylock," Albany Journal, 20 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Leone Cass Baer, "Warfield Scores in Shylock Role," Portland Oregonian, 15 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

executed with the suave and efficient manner of a shrewd businessman. Within this framework, Warfield's Shylock dissembled humility before a man who had insulted his personage, his livelihood and his religion. At all times, the dual attitude of Shylock as both businessman and spokesman for his race was brilliant and intelligent in its combination of profit and power as a means of venting Shylock's hatred. The very casualness of the encounter electrified the scene with a spontaneity of thought and action which underscored the belief that Shylock was a victim of fate rather than a machinator of revenge.<sup>36</sup>

The second noteworthy scene occurred when Shylock returned home and discovered his daughter's duplicity. Here, Warfield exhibited his legendary best in realistic acting. Initially, suspense was created as Shylock stood outside the door calling to Jessica for admittance. Then, upon discovering the unlocked door, he slowly entered his home. The stage went black for a few seconds, and Shylock was next seen running throughout the house discovering Jessica's treachery. The scene terminated with the actor running out of the house and into the street crying in utter despair over his ducats and his daughter.

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<sup>36</sup>"Warfield Seen as 'Shylock' at Ohio," Cleveland Commercial, 28 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Belasco Offers Warfield as 'Shylock'," Washington Herald, 12 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Burns Mantle, "David Warfield's Shylock Merits Praise of His Critics," Denver Post, 31 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Charles Collins, "David Warfield's Portrait of the Jew," Chicago Post, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Lewis Hillhouse, "Warfield's Shylock is His Greatest Role," Cincinnati Post, 25 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; George C. Warren, "David Warfield in Shylock is Given Welcome," San Francisco Chronicle, 19 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

In this scene, Warfield was "cast entirely upon his ability to act without words." The mounting succession of emotions that played across his face were combined with the graphic gestures of a frantic father in an overwhelming display of the Warfieldian art of pathos. This scene impressed one critic as being too elaborate and "not so convincing as it should be" because the situation was theatric rather than tragic. Another critic called it "a field day for the Warfield conjuring with the breaking voice; a suggestion of Von Barwig with his daughter," that was "deeply human and affecting."<sup>37</sup>

Warfield's next impressive scene contained two heart-stirring moments: the delivery of the "I am a Jew!" speech and the encounter with Tubal. The speech epitomizing the Jewish condition was delivered with a simplicity and an eloquence that rendered it personal and appealing. It was the impassioned expression of a man chafed by torment until all defenses had disintegrated. Percy Hammond admitted that Warfield justified his ambition to play Shylock in this scene and confessed:

. . . we were a little fearful . . . when Mr. Warfield's Shylock began to inquire "Hath not a Jew eyes?" We were apprehensive that that great epitome of the medieval Jews' resentment and disconsolation would be diluted in the

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<sup>37</sup>"Warfield Seen as 'Shylock' at Ohio," Cleveland Commercial, 28 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "David Warfield Supreme in 'Merchant of Venice'," Salt Lake City Telegram, 29 March 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; "David Warfield Sublime in Merchant of Venice," Johnstown (Pa.) Tribune, 26 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Keene Abbott, "Warfield Portrayal is Distinctly Human," Omaha Herald, 16 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; W. H. H., "Warfield Truly Racial Shylock," Albany Knickerbocker Press, 20 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

effectiveness by remembrance of Herr Barwig or the Auctioneer. It was not so, however. On the contrary, we felt that we never had really read those lines ourself or heard them spoken by other actors, so different and more potent did they seem to be in Mr. Warfield's earnest utterance of them. . . .<sup>38</sup>

The emotion incited by Salerio and Salarino provided the foundation for the upcoming mixture of passion in the encounter with Tubal. The disquietude over Jessica's wasteful ways rose to complete mortification with the knowledge that Leah's ring had been exchanged for a monkey. After vehemently pronouncing the curse, "would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!" Warfield released the tension by employing a familiar gesture; he beat his mouth with his hand in repentance for the "evil tongue" which had momentarily gotten the better of him and then rebuilt the emotion required for the last unit of the scene. When Tubal informed him of Antonio's reported losses, Shylock shouted with glee, glorying in an unexpected opportunity for revenge. The scene was a flaming outburst of vengeful passion; Shylock's "fingers writhed before his twisted face, and his voice thinned in high pitch."<sup>39</sup>

To the critics for the New York Review and Billboard, this scene with Tubal was a distinct disappointment. Each critic felt Warfield

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<sup>38</sup>W. H. H., "Warfield Truly Racial Shylock," Albany Knickerbocker Press, 20 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Theatres--Mr. Belasco and Mr. Warfield Give a Satisfactory Representation of 'The Merchant of Venice'," New York Tribune, 22 December 1922, p. 30.

<sup>39</sup>Ludwig Lewisohn, "Shylock of Venice," Nation, 3 January 1923, p. 22; "David Warfield Supreme in 'Merchant of Venice'," Salt Lake City Telegram, 29 March 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; "Nixon--David Warfield, 'The Merchant of Venice'," Unidentified Pittsburg newspaper, 21 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

did not run the gamut of emotion between the report of Jessica's profligacy and Antonio's ruin, and that the scene, which should be a high dramatic moment, fell flat. Patterson James declared:

. . . There is no lightning descent from the ecstasy of jubilation over his enemy's misfortune and the prospective forfeiture of the bond to the exquisite agony of hearing that his hard-saved ducats are being flung to the winds. Here Mr. Warfield is as tardy in making contrasts as he is in the praising of Portia in the trial scene. . . .<sup>40</sup>

Shylock's appearance before the Duke of Venice in Act IV exhibited to some critics the zenith of Warfield's artistry in the role. His calm and resolute demand for the letter of the law coexisted with venomous hatred, boastful animus and lusty greed. As the trial progressed, arrogance sounded in his voice and a deep loathing swept across his face. He steadfastly clutched and flaunted the legal document held in his hand. He insolently kicked away the bag of gold offered in lieu of the bond. He righteously refused to be merciful, and he reveled in whetting his knife upon the sole of his shoe. When the court awarded him his pound of flesh, his eyes gleamed with determination, and he lunged across the room toward the manacled Antonio, his knife poised high over his head.

However, there was yet another high dramatic moment as the lethal hand was stilled by a mere technicality. In an instant, Shylock is crushed, his bragadocio spent. He is completely broken, utterly

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<sup>40</sup>"Warfield's Shylock is Impressive, But Uneven," New York Review, 23 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "New Plays: The Merchant of Venice," Billboard, 6 January 1923, p. 37.

defeated and overwhelmingly lost in despair. The vitality his quest for revenge had given him is gone; left behind is a dazed, fearful old man. He falls in a crumpled heap at the Duke's feet and submissively accepts his fate. His every gesture, his labored breath and his unsteady step re-echoed the chord of Warfieldian pathos.

Regarding this scene, one reviewer wrote: ". . . with nothing left worth living for, the old man straightens, recovers his fighting spirit. He has not been cowed. . . . His exit from the courtroom has a courageous, militant stride." Another critic announced: "It was a marvelous piece of acting, and stamped Warfield as the worthy portrayer of the Christian-hating money-lender evidently intended by Shakespeare." One dissenting reviewer stated what the trial scene displayed most

. . . was the one-sided smile of lip drawn from an intended fang of hate which suggested more a gentle nature diffidently assuming the inhuman, not the sinister visage come at last to its vengeance, not repulsive malice snarling, "I. I have my bond!", not the fiendishness wolfing for his pound of flesh.

And John Corbin's opinion read:

The trial scene brings a climax of inward yet varied and polyphonic passions of revenge. Not all the mightier possibilities were realized. The magnetic volume of high tragedy was lacking. But pathos was there to the last degree, a pathos that rose far above Warfield's accomplishment in his more familiar performances into the clear atmosphere of Shakespearean acting.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>W. H. H., "Warfield Truly Racial Shylock," Albany Knickerbocker Press, 20 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Leo A. Marsh, "Warfield Triumphs as Shylock in Gorgeous 'Merchant of Venice'," New York Telegraph, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Keene Abbott, "Warfield Portrayal is Distinctly Human," Omaha Herald, 16 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Seen as 'Shylock' at Ohio," Cleveland Commercial, 28 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Nixon--David Warfield, 'The Merchant of Venice'," Unidentified Pittsburg newspaper, 21 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Warmly Greeted as Shylock," New York Times, 22 December 1922, p. 13.

The discussion of Warfield's histrionic technique was primarily concerned with the actor's use of voice, diction and gesture; space was otherwise devoted to the balance of the performance covering the actor's variety in and suitability to the role. Warfield received praise for his precise diction, clear line readings and expressive gestures, but on the whole, the performance was thought colorless, monotonous and unassuming.

Warfield's vocal instrument was clear and free from any dialect or affectation. It modulated rhythmically to "melodramatic diapasons," sank "normally into the clumsier tricks of whimsical proceedings or scurrilous ugliness," and the masterful intonation created "a vocal sympathy between the actor and the audience." Warfield's reading of the lines suggested that of "virgin speech" to one critic because he could perceive the mechanics of thought, and the deliberate utterance and use of pause portrayed a wide range of keenly intelligent and dramatic shadings "even if at times he suffers from the vocal peculiarities which carry us back to his less serious creations."<sup>42</sup>

To achieve an unpretentious line delivery, Warfield employed two styles of elocution: the conversational and the declamatory. The

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<sup>42</sup> Amy Leslie, "Warfield's Shylock has Great Depths," Chicago Daily News, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Rev. Roy Campbell, "Comments by--," San Diego Tribune, 15 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; Richard Spamer, "Warfield's Shylock True Interpretation of a Tremendous Role," St. Louis Globe-Democrat, 1 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "National--Warfield Seen as Shylock," Washington Star, 12 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Metcalf, "The Theatre: Money and Shakespeare," Wall Street Journal, 27 December 1922, p. 2.

quiet scenes were delivered in a conversational manner which blended a natural quality with euphonic tones, and the dramatic confrontations were pronounced in the oratorical style of a public speaker well trained in persuasion. In both styles, he exercised a "common scansion" marked by acute accents, plain tones and a contained cadence. Unfortunately, nature did not endow Warfield with a colorful voice, and to some critics this elocutionary method was cumbersome. The lack of depth and power in his voice robbed him of a widely ranging pitch, and as a result, the high passion he stressed in the dramatic declamations often caused his voice to crack.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, the common scansion led to the one outstanding technical element of the Warfield Shylock: an intelligently clear and precise diction. Warfield considered it his obligation to speak with lucidity, deliberateness and emphasis in order to achieve for the auditor a comprehension not usually gleaned from Shakespearean language. Every lingual obstacle from diphthongs to terminal syllables was perfectly mastered, and the measured articulation allowed an auditor to "hear all of the pronouncable letters" in every spoken word. Said one critic, his enunciation was "distinct to a fault."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Windsor P. Daggett, "The Spoken Word," Billboard, 13 January 1923, p. 39; Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," pp. 309-10; O. L. Hall, "Warfield Realizes Hopes of Years and Acts Shylock," Chicago Journal, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "The New Plays," Long Island City, 23 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Carlton Miles, "David Warfield Plays Shylock," Minneapolis Journal, 25 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>44</sup> "Men and Affairs," Patterson (N.J.) Call, 23 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Ashton Stevens, "'Lucid Shylock by Warfield,' says Stevens," Chicago Herald-Examiner, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Giles Cain,

Warfield's talent for physicalization manifested itself in the most economic of means. His use of pantomime was carefully calculated to achieve the highest possible dramatic effect. For example, in the early scenes, Shylock gesticulated with open but reserved hand movements, but by his appearance in court, those eloquent hands had been molded into fists palsied with anger. Each facial expression eloquently delineated minute emotions as a wary circumspection glided into outright malevolence. Especially effective were Warfield's eyes which mirrored a meek and contented soul engulfed by a wave of insurgent retaliation. Warfield's perfect mastery of gesticulation, one critic believed, made elaboration on the subject pointless.<sup>45</sup>

What Warfield gained in vocal prowess he lost in terms of stage presence and command. Neither in physique, authority, personality nor training was the actor suited to the heroic demands of Shakespeare's Jew. Shylock, it was believed, required tremendous mental force, personal authority, torrid and consuming passion and great physical power. In Warfield's hands this great character became an ineffectual

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"Concerning Plays and Players," Kansas City Independent, 12 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Nixon--Mr. Warfield as Shylock," Pittsburg Gazette Times, 21 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>45</sup>Paul Mayo, "Warfield Wins Distinction in Shylock Role," Denver Times, 4 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Richard L. Stokes, "Warfield Shylock Bitter and Venomous," St. Louis Post Dispatch, 2 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; Robert Permar, "Warfield's 'Merchant of Venice' True Shakespearean Performance," Wheeling Intelligencer, 25 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; John Corbin, "Warfield Warmly Greeted as Shylock," New York Times, 22 December 1922, p. 13; "Warfield Shows a Human Shylock in Fine Version," Unidentified Cedar Rapids newspaper, 10 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; F. B. O., "Warfield as Shylock," Montreal Gazette, 23 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

fellow, frantic in his impotence, "a little Jewish peddler frothing at the injustice of the brutal policemen who insist on making him move on." At all times the actor was unmistakably intelligent and expressive but totally helpless. Shakespeare's moneylender is a dominant figure, but Warfield was incapable of striking that chord. The result was a petty cat-and-mouse game replete with a great deal of theatricalism but lacking thespian brilliancy.<sup>46</sup>

The reason for Warfield's lack of command was two-fold. First, the performance was wanting in variety. Although it grew and deepened with the passage of time, the light and shade of characterization expected from the Music Master was absent. It remained too deliberate and monotonous, became lost in the static mood, and the credibility with which the performance began eroded into implausibility. All the Shylock scenes were sadly undynamic, and critics called for an ever-changing pitch, color, and most of all, tempo. The actor's delivery of his lines, for example, provoked one critic to suggest an occasional legato reading to relieve the steady staccato which had the relentless precision of "a stamping machine in a steel mill."<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Burns Mantle, ". . . Shylock Comes to Town . . .," New York News, n.d., DBC 167, n.p.; "Belasco's 'Merchant'," Rhinebeck Gazette, December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Arthur Pollack, "The New Plays: Warfield's Shylock," Brooklyn Eagle, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; S. L., "David Warfield in 'The Merchant of Venice'," Harlemite, 12 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>47</sup> Carlton Miles, "David Warfield Plays Shylock," Minneapolis Journal, 25 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Majestic Theatre," Buffalo Express, 27 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Phillip Becker Goetz, "Comment," Buffalo News, 8 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Frederick Donaghey, "Mr. Warfield Has His Way as Shylock," Chicago Tribune, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

Secondly, Warfield hardly possessed a tragic figure: a short, wiry frame, five-feet, eight-inches tall; an unevenly lined face with a small, straight nose, and an oddly shaped jaw which created the famous Warfield smile. His face was so well-known in the lighter drama that it was inconceivable for one to believe any evil could lurk upon that countenance. Belasco used his star's slight build to best advantage by casting taller actors opposite him; the put-upon Jew thus gained sympathy over the dominating Christians. Warfield also put his shortcomings to best use, but the obvious could not be denied:

Neither in stature nor in physical vitality is he equal to Shylock's volcanic outbursts. In passages requiring a quick, dramatic alternation between contrasting moods . . . one felt a sure artistic intention, realized to the utmost possibility of the means at his command, but seldom or never the intrinsic force of the scene.<sup>48</sup>

One of three important questions critics attempted to answer regarding the Warfield Shylock was whether or not Shakespeare's Jew differed substantially from all his other memorable personations. The critics from Warfield's native San Francisco most enthusiastically declared the performance to be nothing like that of Warfield's previous roles, so completely was it divorced from all of those memorable men. One Los Angeles critic wrote that the public would go to view "the

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<sup>48</sup> Kenneth MacGowan, "How an Actor Gets Into Your Heart," Collier's, 23 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; Idem, "David Belasco Presents David Warfield in 'The Merchant of Venice'," New York Globe, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Linton Martin, "David Warfield Presents an Unconventional, Logical Shylock," Philadelphia North American, 2 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Charles Collins, "David Belasco's Contribution to Shylock Library," Chicago Post, 5 March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Warmly Greeted as Shylock," New York Times, 22 December 1922, p. 13.

Warfield we have seen in other days" but in his place they would find a "Shakespearean Warfield." For these critics, the present character was carved from the text of the play with a true artistic gift tempered with thoughtful consideration.<sup>49</sup> However, for others, the Warfield Shylock was indeed reminiscent of the former roles, and it bore witness that the actor would always be Warfield.

David Warfield was still the performer "everybody loves," but his unusual Shylock remained "a curious compound of the quaint and humorous characters" upon which the actor's fame had heretofore rested. One critic noted that this Shylock was laden with the measured, idiosyncratic gestures and vocal tricks recalled in The Auctioneer, The Music Master and The Return of Peter Grimm, and another critic felt that Levi, Barwig and Grimm were masquerading underneath the guise of Warfield's sympathetic Jew. Robert Tucker believed the actor might have been more successful in venting Shylock's revenge had not the fame of these characters been so overpowering. It became clear that regardless of what Warfield had achieved in his portrayal of Shylock, that achievement was overshadowed by his earlier successes.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>"David Warfield as Shylock in 'The Merchant of Venice'," San Francisco News, 16 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Great as 'Shylock'," San Francisco News, 23 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Wins Big Audience," San Francisco Examiner, 4 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; Guy Price, "The Theatres," Los Angeles Herald, 11 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; Everhardt Armstrong, "Crowd Likes Warfield's Shylock," Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 5 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Shylock Long Considered by Belasco and Warfield," Washington Post, 10 December 1922, sec. 5, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup>Paul R. Martin, "David Warfield is Seen as Shylock," Chicago Journal of Commerce, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "David Warfield's Shylock is New Type," Des Moines News, 19 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.;

Since Warfield was a slight, intellectual man perceived as being somewhat nervous and intense, his Shylock was equally so regarded. Shylock's power, in Warfield's hands, was that of mind and character; his major characteristic was the argumentative power of persuasion. Critics discussed the actor's adaptation of the character to his own personality and technique (which always had placed a heavy emphasis on the pathos of the character), and in the words of Arthur Hornblow:

. . . Mr. Warfield is essentially a Peter Grimm, a Music Master. He is soft, gentle, lovable. He has made a business of being just that for many years of profit. Shylock is not an old Grand Army Man. He is a creature rocked with [violent and terrifying] intensities. . . . Mr. Warfield hates and spits. He recoils and falls down in anguish. But there is no passion in it all because the passion is not inherent in the man. . . .<sup>51</sup>

Although one critic felt that Warfield's Shylock in the fourth act was the same character stung to fury which had been witnessed in the second act of A Grand Army Man, this Venetian Jew was most appropriately compared with the Hester Street Jew, Simon Levi. Many critics had feared that the moneylender would be intoned in the same manner as Warfield's familiar auctioneer, and indeed, the performance confirmed

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Untitled, Smart Set, March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "'The Merchant of Venice'," Pittsburg Dispatch, 21 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Theatre," Indianapolis Star, 18 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Helen Black, "David Warfield Thrills Throng as Shylock on Broadway Stage," Denver Rocky Mountain News, 4 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

<sup>51</sup>Untitled, Pipp's Weekly, n.d., DBC 167, n.p.; "Montauk--Warfield's Shylock," Brooklyn Times, 23 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; William J. McNally, "'The Merchant of Venice' at Metropolitan," Minneapolis Tribune, 25 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Merchant of Venice," The Theatre, February 1923, p. 16.

this fear. Warfield's Shylock was a cousin to Levi, cast in the same mold, replete with the unforgettable tones, cadences and gestures of that pathetic little Jewish peddler. Even Shylock's misery was "very little else" than the misery of the auctioneer.<sup>52</sup>

And were there echoes of Anton von Barwig in Warfield's Shylock also? Some critics thought not, but the majority could not deny that even this characterization had left its imprint on Shylock. Barwig had merely been transported back in time to the sixteenth century. The familiar break in the voice and the tearful tones were always present, and Barwig was most apparent when Shylock discovered Jessica's elopement and in the final moments of the trial. Robert Garland reported that "you felt more than once that your old friend 'The Music Master' was giving a performance of Shakespeare's Jew," and Florence Lawrence admitted that "you may hear the voice of the tender, gentle Music Master intoning the harsh vindictive words of Shylock."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Belasco's 'Merchant'," Rhinebeck Gazette, December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Untitled, Town and Country, 15 February 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Heywood Broun, "The New Play," New York Morning World, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Linton Martin, "David Warfield Presents an Unconventional, Logical Shylock," Philadelphia North American, 2 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Heywood Broun, "Seeing Things at Night," New York World, 4 April 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield Acclaimed," Seattle Times, 5 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Theatre," Wall Street Journal, 15 February 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Shakespeare Via Belasco and Warfield," Boston Transcript, 23 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>53</sup> Arthur B. Waters, "A Gift to Posterity," Philadelphia Public Ledger, 7 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Robert Garland, "David Belasco Presents Warfield in Shylock Role," Baltimore American, 15 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Florence Lawrence, "Warfield Gives a Different but Great Shylock," Los Angeles Examiner, 11 March 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Shakespearean Vogue," New York Clipper, 10 January 1923, DBC 167, n.p.;

But the critics went even further in their discussions of Warfield's Shylock. Harry R. Burke, drama critic for the St. Louis Times, began his review of The Merchant of Venice with the question: Could a man, having committed to memory Michaelangelo's "Delphic Sybil," hire a beautiful woman, pose her in the same fashion as the Delphic Sybil, photograph the subject and successfully promote that photograph as a Michaelangelo original? "That is the parable, it seems to me," he wrote, "of David Warfield's Shylock." Burke's specific point was that Warfield, after thoughtful study and with sincerity, had presented a plagiarized interpretation of Shylock; he had merely rendered a photographic copy of a Jew "whom Shakespeare did not draw."<sup>54</sup>

Upon this point, the critics rallied in unison. David Warfield's Shylock was unquestionably "a" Jew, not "the" Jew; in the words of one critic, he was "simply Isaac H. Shylock, a money lender, of No. 348 Grand Canal Street, Venice, Italy." Shylock was looked upon as a stereotype of a persecuted race, but Warfield chose to play him as an individual. This Shylock was a frail and intensely neurasthenic man who had "nothing in common with Shakespeare's Sephardic magnifico." He was

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Robert Garland, "By the Way: Much Ado About Shylock," Baltimore American, 7 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; F. H. Cushman, "Warfield in New Line of Portrayal," Boston Telegram, 29 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; W. H. H., "Warfield Truly Racial Shylock," Albany Knickerbocker Press, 20 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield at Best in Depicting Jew," Unidentified Albany newspaper, 20 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Fay Templeton Patterson, "Mr. Warfield as Shylock," Pittsburg Leader, 22 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>54</sup>"Warfield's Shylock is Modern Concept," 2 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

racially authentic, but his history had not been written by Shakespeare. His history had been written by the ages of man.<sup>55</sup>

For example, Stark Young described Shakespeare's Shylock as powerful and magnificent, possessing a superb spirit, sensitivity and intellect, and arousing the imagination with elemental force. For these qualities, Warfield had substituted "a tamer range of values" and "the middle-class necessity for approval." The Warfield Jew had only pathos, solitude and suffering. He had "no dignity, . . . no volume of creative life, . . . only pitiful defeat, thwarted mind and purpose, sick wrongs, and dumb, profound unwholesome intensity." The commonness of this Shylock had subverted the artistic quality of the drama because "Shakespeare meant to supply a fight between powers, not a humiliation of humanity."<sup>56</sup>

Young's comments seemed to voice for all critics the question: "If an actor creates a humanized Shylock, rendering him a middle-class villan, can such a performance be classified as 'great'?" In opening this debate, the critic for the Philadelphia Record also pinpointed the difficulty in arriving at a conclusion:

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<sup>55</sup> Heywood Broun, "It Seems to Me," New York Morning World, n.d. [ca. 23 December 1922], DBC 167, n.p.; "David Warfield Seen as Shylock," Boston Globe, 30 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Ludwig Lewisohn, "Shylock of Venice," Nation, 3 January 1923, pp. 21-22; Arthur Hornblow, "The Merchant of Venice," The Theatre, February 1923, p. 16; Percy Hammond, "The Theatres--Mr. Belasco and Mr. Warfield Give a Satisfactory Representation of 'The Merchant of Venice'," New York Tribune, 22 December 1922, p. 30.

<sup>56</sup> "The Passionate Pilgrim," New Republic, 17 January 1923, pp. 202-03.

Shall this Shylock be called truly great? That is not to be lightly decided. Rather would one be content to grant that it is different--unlike any that comes to mind. It may be that he [Warfield] is right and that those who have been stressing the role in other fashion are wrong. After all it is a matter for individual preference. . . .<sup>57</sup>

A number of critics flatly stated David Warfield had crowned his career in the attainment of a life's ambition. The actor had cast off "the pleasantly sentimental cloak" of Barwig for an historic Shylock which would be remembered as one of "the great impersonations of the role." The Chicago Evening American's Optimist concurred: "Never will the great Shylocks of the past or the years to come be up for discussion or debate without the name of Warfield entering therein. . . ." Leo A. Marsh expressed a certain bewilderment; although the Warfield Shylock had been accepted, to his mind, as a vitally real and impressive impersonation with which Warfield had achieved something worthwhile, "just why Mr. Warfield's portrayal of the great role is all the things the character demands of him and yet is not great remains a nebulous mystery that no one has taken the trouble to explain."<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Untitled, 7 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>58</sup>"David Warfield Pleases Large Audience Here," Johnstown (Pa.) Democrat, 26 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Eugene B. Block, "'New' Shylock Role Triumph for David Warfield," San Francisco Call and Post, 19 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; Arthur B. Waters, "A Gift to Posterity," Philadelphia Public Ledger, 7 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; William P. Costello, "Warfield Wins High Praise at Lyceum," Rochester Journal, 23 November 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; The Optimist, "Warfield Adds His Bit to Stage History," Chicago Evening American, 4 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "Afterthoughts," New York Telegraph, 21 January 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

But a few weeks earlier, both Percy Hammond and the critic for Billboard had tackled this point. The latter reviewer reported unanimous agreement on Broadway that Warfield was playing not Shakespeare's Jew, but a humanized version drawn with multitudinal touches of the Orthodox Jew; the fact that Shakespeare knew no Jews personally was an irrelevant argument, he continued, because the fact remained that any actor wishing to play Shylock "must play him according to the spirit as well as the letter of the text." Hammond agreed and added that Warfield dominated the scene, but he did not master it. This eminent critic explained that there must exist

. . . a little splendor in our Shakespearean acting. . . . Shylock must snarl and fawn and curse and suffer himself to be spat upon by cheap Christians in the Rialto. He must have a mean hatred for the sentimental Merchant who cuts rates in money lending. He must scheme a despicable revenge for that and other annoyances. He must be a religious vindictive bigot. His anguish concerning the loss of his ducats must be ridiculous. But over all his sordidness and pettiness we demand a glamour of attitude and utterance not entirely consonant with his questionable soul. Mr. Warfield seems to us to blend the poetic reality with the legitimate buncombe. He does not straddle, though he is on both sides. One idea is that his acting is "great," but that his Shylock is not.<sup>59</sup>

There were, of course, other assessments upon why Warfield's Shylock was not "great." Warfield had not yielded to tradition and thereby had cost himself the laurel wreath he sought. The actor had made an earnestly valiant effort which compelled admiration and touched the emotions, but it was, nevertheless, without inspiration. In fact,

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<sup>59</sup>Untitled, Billboard, 6 January 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Percy Hammond, "Warfield's Acting is Great, Even if His Shylock is Not," New York Tribune, 31 December 1922, sec. 5, p. 1.

the art of the actor had betrayed the man in a disappointingly uneven performance. He could never overcome the major stumbling block from his past: the performance was essentially one by a great actor in a role which displayed but did not enlarge that actor's greatness.

The most biting criticisms to Warfield's ambition were those which recognized that his Shylock would be forgotten and admitted that the public would rather greet Warfield in plays like The Music Master, The Return of Peter Grimm or The Auctioneer:

David Warfield has been an idol of the public for many years. . . . He has always been . . . acclaimed by audiences . . . eager to pay homage to his art, and he has always had a following unequalled by any other actor on the American stage today, so that one cannot help but wonder why Mr. Warfield, . . . should crave the character of Shylock, unless it is the desire to see just how far and how high his popularity may swing, because his Shylock will not add to his already phenomenally established reputation, and it will take a little time for the people who have worshipped his Von Barwig, marvelled at the sweetness . . . of his Peter Grimm, wept and roared with laughter over the ludicrously tender sadness of the Auctioneer, to . . . forget these splendid and worthwhile achievements of their beloved and favorite actor, David Warfield, and accept in his stead Mr. Warfield as Shylock.<sup>60</sup>

Drama critics were by no means the only people to voice their views. The Baltimore News gave to its readers an opportunity to

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<sup>60</sup> Kenneth MacGowan, "Seen on the Stage," Vogue, 15 February 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Ralph Holmes, "Belasco Stages 'Merchant' with Lavish Splendor," Detroit Times, 5 December 1922, p. 10 in DBC 167, n.p.; William F. McDermott, "Belasco Presents David Warfield as Shylock," Cleveland Plain Dealer, 28 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Untitled, Detroit Free Press, 10 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; "Warfield is Acclaimed," Seattle Times, 5 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "The Theatres," Cincinnati Enquirer, 30 December 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Walter D. Hickman, Untitled, Indianapolis Times, 18 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.; Fay Templeton Patterson, "Mr. Warfield as Shylock," Pittsburg Leader, 22 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

critique Warfield and the play. One gentleman said that Warfield's Shylock seemed to him "to be well considered and altogether satisfying," while another argued that he saw "nothing to commend it" and that he found it very disappointing. One woman "found it sympathetic and expressive," and a second stated that it was "so different from the Shylock that we know that we have to get acquainted with it." A third woman did not regard Warfield as a Shakespearean actor because he was not in the same class with Edwin Booth, Henry Irving or E. H. Southern. A fourth expressed her disappointment, believing that Warfield erred by "putting his climax . . . in the scene where he discovers Jessica's elopement instead of building up to the trial scene," and concluded that "the whole play lacked a certain definite interpretation."<sup>61</sup>

The Baltimore American published several letters written in response to drama critic Robert Garland's second look at The Merchant of Venice. Garland had reported: "To our mind, Shakespeare's Jew is not the Jew of Mr. Warfield." One of Garland's readers heartily agreed with him and added that Warfield's Shylock was "at present, no more than 'interesting'." Another reader wrote, "I am glad all the drum beating did not turn your critical head," and a third respondent came to the conclusion that Warfield's Shylock was better and more believable because the actor had "taken a figure of straw and made of him a human being." Another gentleman rather defensively responded: "Neither is

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<sup>61</sup>"Charm of Shakespeare Shows No Sign of Waning," 18 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

it the Jew of Walter Hampden, William Winter nor Robert Garland, and Mr. Warfield is entitled to the same serious consideration as anyone else."<sup>62</sup>

The most active debate, however, was held on the pages of the New York Times, and it all began with drama critic John Corbin's article, "How Comic was Shylock?" In that article, Corbin quoted several of David Belasco's comments contained in the preface to the printed edition of Belasco's text. The producer thereupon responded with a lengthy letter. Belasco made it perfectly clear that his opinions had been misrepresented and seized the opportunity to further dispute the tragic versus comic qualities of Shylock in defense of his production. Belasco's letter was rebutted with another article, "Slavic Realism and Shakespeare." There, Corbin argued that Belasco was ignoring the known facts of the Elizabethan stage and dramaturgy to pursue his own "flight of fancy," that he had hacked away at Shakespeare's play in the interest of suiting the needs of the play to the demands of his scenery, and that he still conceitedly asserted that Shakespeare would heartily approve "the improvements." Arthur Hobson Quinn, then professor at the University of Pennsylvania, provided the final rebuttal when he wrote:

. . . Of course we all have our opinions as to the manner of producing Shakespeare, but when we come down to the basic facts, is not the function of any artistic product to do just two things--produce truth and exhibit beauty? . . .

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Garland, "By the Way: Much Ado About Shylock," 17 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Idem, "By the Way: Much More Ado About Shylock," 18 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

The same voice that praises to the skies, and rightly, the magnificent production which was given by the Moscow Art Theatre this week criticizes Mr. Belasco for doing just the same thing in America. Is it not time that we had the critical courage to appreciate our own theatre, at least as well as the exotic product?<sup>63</sup>

Another group which hotly discussed Warfield's Shylock was the Jewish community. Belasco and Warfield were aware from the outset that the reaction by Jews in general would be negative. The first World War had given rise to a new wave of anti-Semitism, and Shylock, a traditionally malignant and rapacious character, was not considered to be a choice ambassador of good will, and both men undoubtedly knew that the Jewish community had had the play removed from the curricula of many schools across the country. An appeal not to produce this play in deference to the Jews went out, but Warfield and Belasco remained resolute in their attempt to create a new Shylock which would be acceptable as an ambassador of good will.<sup>64</sup>

Rabbi Lee J. Levinger defended the Belasco-Warfield Merchant of Venice, calling it a "sympathetically beautiful" production whose Shylock was inoffensive because it portrayed the Jew of neither the past nor present. An editorial in the Jewish Tribune proclaimed that the Jew who was offended by the play did not understand that Shylock was a necessary

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<sup>63</sup> New York Times, 7 January 1923, sec. 7, p. 1; "In the Mailbag," New York Times, 21 January 1923, sec. 7, p. 2; New York Times, 21 January 1923, sec. 7, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Elma Ehrlich Levinger, "David Belasco Presents--," The (Philadelphia) Jewish Exponent, 1 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Untitled, Detroit Jewish Chronicle, 26 May 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

prototype in a story which did not need a literal impersonation. That said Jew, the article continued, was the type who would write protesting letters to the editor which revealed his own ignorance. As this author did not see Shakespeare as an instrument of ethnology, the Bard's intention with regard to Shylock did not matter: "What does matter is that the Merchant of Venice [sic] as a play is one of our few consolations in a world of movie stars, baseball fans, and chewing gum advertisements."<sup>65</sup>

However, the Warfield Shylock did not alter Jewish sentiment toward the play or the role. The Jewish community could not accept Shylock as being anything other than an instigator of prejudice. Charles H. Joseph had a lengthy discussion with Warfield on the subject of Shylock, and although he found Warfield's argument to be sound, Joseph left the interview unconvinced that the Warfield Shylock was "healthful propaganda." Joseph believed that Warfield's appearance as Shylock undermined the successful efforts of those who had fought to eliminate the play from public access. He further believed the only way to nullify the unfavorable impression of Shylock was to "kill" him, for no matter the interpretation, Shakespeare's lines remained. Joseph firmly believed that Warfield was sincere and honest in his effort to help the

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<sup>65</sup>"Shylock Not a Jew, Rabbi Says," Unidentified newspaper, n.d., DBC 167, n.p.; "On the Other Hand," (New York) Jewish Tribune, 21 October 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

plight of the Jews, but he could not suppress the wish "that instead of trying to improve Shylock he [Warfield] will eliminate him."<sup>66</sup>

The Belasco-Warfield Merchant of Venice also was the source for many lectures and sermons by noted rabbis and Jewish leaders. Typical of this critical form was a sermon entitled, "Mr. David Warfield and Mr. William Shakespeare," delivered by Rabbi Tarshish at the Temple Israel in Columbus, Ohio. Tarshish stated he had attended a performance with the hope of seeing a sympathetic Shylock, a Shylock who would help foment friendly relations between Christian and Jew, but that he had left sadly disappointed.

"What was in the actor's mind?" Rabbi Tarshish ejaculated. "He did everything but create sympathy. Once, when he called Jessica after she ran away, one felt sympathy, but that was lost shortly when the Jew bewailed the loss of his ducats and jewels."

He discussed the play in terms of its merits and demerits and criticized Warfield upon the same points the drama critics had touched. He averred that Shakespeare's model for Shylock was based on hearsay and challenged anyone to show him a revengeful Jew or the relationship between father and daughter like that between Shylock and Jessica. He lamented that Warfield had done more harm than good because the Warfield portrait humiliated the Jew.

"The Merchant of Venice," the rabbi concluded, probably has done more damage in keeping apart friendly relations between

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<sup>66</sup> Charles H. Joseph, Untitled, Detroit Jewish Chronicle, 1 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Idem, "Talking It Over with David Warfield," Unidentified periodical [Detroit Jewish Chronicle?], 23 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

Jews and Christians than any other work, except the story of the crucifixion.

"What we want," he added, "is for the Christian and the Jew to feel all of us are human and created by God, and that it is the duty of all to lessen misery, create happiness and bring all nearer to the kingdom of God."<sup>67</sup>

Public response to the production was reflected at the box office.

Variety reported on November 24, 1922 that with three dollars as the highest price per seat, The Merchant of Venice grossed \$24,000 over five days of performances. When sales opened in New York, all the tickets were sold within minutes, and scalpers were selling front row seats for seventy-five dollars. Toward the end of the New York run, it was reported that the show averaged \$17,000 to \$18,000 per week at four dollars top. However, after the road company began its tour, the weekly financial statements began to show a sharp decline. A week's gross in Newark early in the 1923-24 season was reported to be \$7,000, and in December, a three-week run in Chicago netted \$10,000, \$9,500 and \$8,000 for each respective week. Near the end of the tour, on March 19, 1924, Variety reported that in Los Angeles Warfield grossed \$19,000 at the Madison Theatre while Sally (a popular musical extravaganza produced by Florenz Ziegfield) netted in its second week \$33,000.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>"Warfield Wrong in His Interpretation, Tarshish Declares," Columbus Journal, 27 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

<sup>68</sup>"Shylock Did \$24,000," DBC 167, n.p.; Cook, "The David Belasco Arrangement and Production of William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice," p. 89; Idem, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," p. 315; "Shows in New York and Comment," Variety, 8 March 1923, p. 16; Unidentified article, n.d., DBC 167, n.p.; Variety, 13 December 1923, p. 14; Variety, 20 December 1923, p. 14; Variety, 27 December 1923, p. 14; "Warfield's \$19,000," p. 15.

David Warfield had been used to playing to full houses throughout his career, and suddenly, the size of the audience reflected lean days at the box office. Opening nights were usually played to full houses--which in some cases were reportedly padded--, but on the whole, the throngs who had flocked to see The Music Master did not swarm to view The Merchant of Venice. The following capsule statements illustrate this point:

"Why Pittsburg does not accept our present production with greater warmth I cannot understand." (Quoting Belasco)

David Warfield didn't do any wonders at the Montawk last week either.

Warfield's "Merchant" . . . fell considerably below the mark and failed to get anything like deserving business. . . .

Warfield's "Merchant of Venice," a sincere and impressive effort, failed to awaken the anticipated enthusiasm.<sup>69</sup>

Belasco had had high hopes for this his first--and only--Shakespearean production, and he modestly had expressed his aim:

. . . Thus it will, I trust, be found that . . . I have neither cumbered the stage with superfluous and hampering embellishments nor disregarded anything valuable in the traditions with which . . . this great play has become encrusted.

Yet, the divided reception of David Warfield and his Shylock was in all probability the fault of David Belasco. John Mason Brown contended

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<sup>69</sup>"Warfield-Belasco's 'Merchant' Comes A-Cropper in Philly," Variety, 11 October 1923, p. 17; "David Belasco Hurt in Fall of Spotlight," New York Sun, 23 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Arthur J. Busch, Variety, 1 November 1923, p. 46; Sidney Burton, "Buffalo," Variety, 6 December 1923, p. 41; William G. Stiegler, Untitled, Cincinnati Times-Star, 26 April 1924, DBC 166, n.p.

that Belasco made his scenery "not the background, but the authority" for the action of a play, and this production of The Merchant of Venice was certainly no exception. Warfield's Shylock seemed to drown in sentimentalism and scenery. It was pure theatrical hokum typical of The Girl of the Golden West or Tiger Rose, and the scenery, for all its impressiveness, took focus, was rather ordinary, not well painted and stylistically out-dated.<sup>70</sup>

The rewards of rearranging the scenes to accommodate the scenery were not thought worth the price. Sublimity and poetry were distressingly absent; spontaneity was thwarted by too conscious an effort, and Shakespeare's intent was never in sympathy with Belasco's. The supporting cast in the road company was considered out of place and not worthy of more than a passing thought, and Belasco was charged with slaughtering Shakespeare's play in order to emphasize Warfield's portrayal. Linton Martin wrote: "It is not the play that is the thing, but the part, and after the part, the production."<sup>71</sup>

As early as 1907, the noted producer had promised that in producing Shakespeare he would spend his money on actors and not the scenic

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<sup>70</sup> David Belasco, A Souvenir of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice" (New York: Privately printed, 1923), p. 32; Upstage (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1969), p. 183; Robert Garland, "By the Way: Much Ado About Shylock," Baltimore American, 17 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Kenneth MacGowan, "Broadway's Melting Pot," Shadowland, March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Idem, "David Belasco Presents David Warfield in 'The Merchant of Venice'," New York Globe, 22 December 1922, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>71</sup> John D. Barry, "Ways of the World," San Francisco Call, 25 February 1924, DBC 167, n.p.; "Taking Shakespeare's Time by the Shylock," Philadelphia North American, 7 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

accessories suggested by the playwright's poetic local color. In point of fact, when The Merchant of Venice was being mounted, he did just the opposite. As mentioned earlier, his representatives spent much time and energy--to say nothing of money--on the continent in search of minutiae. For example, Belasco had penned this notation on one of the costume renderings: "The necklace has yellow stone pendant--yellow diamonds; do not alter in any way with theatrical ornamentation."<sup>72</sup>

Belasco's scenic investiture was typical of the nineteenth-century tradition--attractive visually yet aesthetically massive and ornately adorned. The Venetian streets were architecturally and somewhat pictorially striking, and designer Ernest Gros, who had made an extensive study of Italian form, received special commendation. The Belmont sets were lavishly decorated with Venetian antiques, and the backdrop of the Belmont interior depicted a breathtaking Italian landscape. The costumes were of lustrous fabrics, florid in texture and simple in line, and Belasco made expert use of lighting techniques, most rewardingly visualized in the fifth act. The effect was somewhat reminiscent of an Italian Renaissance painting, but the incomparable and irrepressible Dorothy Parker quipped that in comparison with Robert

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<sup>72</sup>"Belasco's Plans for Warfield," Chicago Tribune, 27 October 1907, RLC, vol. 477, p. 3; Gladys Inez Forde, "David Belasco: An Evaluation of the Man and His Contributions to American Theatre History (Ph.D. dissertation, Western Reserve University, 1954), pp. 183-84, 191-92.

Edmund Jones' simple scenery, these Belasco settings "shape up rather like so many Victorian drawing rooms."<sup>73</sup>

While Belasco was spending his money on the visual elements of the production, he devoted his energies to rearranging the text of Shakespeare's play in order to accommodate his massive sets and keep the running time under three hours. In compiling his arrangement, Belasco sought to utilize "the best" of several acting versions; primarily he used that of the Reverend Alexander Dyce, but he also found inspiration in the acting versions of Edmund Kean, Edwin Booth and Henry Irving. The producer claimed that his text allowed an adequate, satisfactory and unencumbered performance, which was the epitome of decency and good taste. In the words of Toby Lelyveld, however, this was a "mangled version" that revealed

. . . a script that is little short of ludicrous. Shakespeare's text is wantonly slashed; scenes are interpolated; lines are transplanted and invented. . . . No other modern Shakespearean production has suffered such textual maltreatment.<sup>74</sup>

Belasco rearranged The Merchant of Venice by regrouping Shakespeare's second and third act scenes; the sombre Shylock scenes

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<sup>73</sup>Kenneth MacGowan, "And Again Repertory," Theatre Arts Magazine, April 1923, p. 103; John Corbin, "Warfield Warmly Greeted as Shylock," New York Times, 22 December 1922, p. 13; Henry Taylor Parker, "Let Down for the Road," Boston Transcript, 30 October 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; "In Broadway Playhouses," Unidentified periodical [Aimslee's?], March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>74</sup>David Belasco, A Souvenir of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice", pp. 14, 28; Shylock on the Stage, p. 108.

became Belasco's second act, and the lighter Belmont scenes became his third. Shakespeare's first act suffered drastic cuts; a speech of Solanio's was given to Salarino, and two lines ("Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause; / But since I am a dog, beware my fangs!") were transposed from III-iii to the end of I-iii in order to give Shylock the curtain. The Prince of Arragon's casket scene was cut (as were the scenes with Morocco when the show was prepared for the road tour), and a scene (III-v) between Launcelot, Jessica and Lorenzo was omitted in order that Jews would not be portrayed unsympathetically. Only nineteen lines were excised from the court scene, while the second scene of that fourth act was deleted in its entirety. The fifth act also had major cuts throughout.

These omissions made room for several additions to the play which were regarded as "improvements." In addition to the regrouping of scenes to minimize set changes, Belasco featured two actors. The character of Chus, only mentioned by Jessica in the original, was paired with Tubal in the street scenes in order to underscore the Jewish atmosphere of the production. A jester was added to Portia's entourage, and he was given "It Was a Lover and His Lass" from As You Like It to sing at the beginning of the fifth act. The invented scene wherein Shylock is seen inside his house and then running hysterically through the streets was the most blatant "improvement"; it provided the best moment of Warfield's performance but it totally disregarded Shakespeare.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Belasco, A Souvenir of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice"; Cook, "The David Belasco Arrangement and Production of William

To Belasco, The Merchant of Venice was a fairy tale, a figment of the imagination, requiring a romantic, colorful and picturesque backdrop. And to that end he placed the action during the first quarter of the sixteenth century. This was the time of Venice's Golden Age, the zenith of her cultural achievement, and a time in which Jews, especially the wealthy and influential ones, were permitted to live outside the ghetto. As for Shylock, Belasco saw him as the incorporation of punitive, uncontrolled and self-destructive hatred from which a monstrous desire for revenge resulted in utter and pathetic ruin. There was little if anything comic in the role, for he felt that the character possessed much of the "afflictingly tragic."<sup>76</sup>

What Belasco achieved with his interpretation, massive scenery and rearranged text was a production at cross-purposes with the star it set out to showcase. Numerous quarrels between actor and director centered on their differing concepts. One case in point concerned the time frame for the play. Warfield had adopted the theory of Harris J. Griston, a Philadelphia attorney whose avocation was a study of the legal aspects of the play. Griston's theory favored a setting in the fourth century when the Twelve Tables of Roman Law sanctioned flesh bonds. The actor argued that such a setting would put the law on Shylock's side and

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Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice," pp. 52, 62-63; Richard L. Stokes, "Warfield's Shylock Bitter and Venomous," St. Louis Post Dispatch, 2 January 1924, DBC 167, n.p.

<sup>76</sup> Belasco, A Souvenir of Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice", pp. 12-13, 35.

thereby gain audience sympathy. Belasco ignored the argument and retained his sixteenth century design.<sup>77</sup>

The tenor of the producer's rearranged text totally negated the actor's interpretation of Shylock. Warfield saw the Jew as a warm, amiable man who possessed minute touches of humor; Belasco's arrangement constantly reflected his own interpretation, one which curtailed those warm, humorous touches by highlighting hatred and enmity in Shylock's scenes. Furthermore, Warfield thought of Jessica as an excessive, wanton and frivolous girl who sought only self-gratification and whose only appeal to Lorenzo and his friends was her money. By deleting III-v, Belasco removed the one scene which would illustrate the actor's point and heighten audience sympathy for the abandoned father. Most damaging of all was the transference of the "Thou call'dst me dog" speech to the end of I-iii; Warfield had professed for twenty years that the flesh bond had been proposed in mere jest, but Belasco's text irrevokably established a revenge motive from the out-set.

The rearrangement of the scenes may have facilitated set changes, but it also created two serious problems. First, Warfield was central to the cohesion of the production, and his hour-long absence from the stage, caused by Belasco regrouping the Belmont scenes into one act, was keenly felt. Second, the massive scenery which had necessitated the reorder of the scenes completely dwarfed Warfield; to quote one critic,

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<sup>77</sup> Cook, "David Warfield: A Theatrical Biography," pp. 291-93; Harris Jay Griston, Shaking the Dust from Shakespeare (New York: Cosmopolis Press, 1924), pp. 1-8.

"it was as if Belasco were trying constantly to demonstrate the insignificance of any human tragedy in the vastness of the universe."<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the smooth, poetic flow of Shakespeare's forward action was obliterated.

The Merchant of Venice had been heralded as the apotheosis of David Belasco's career; in the end, it was regarded with great disappointment. The producer had invested the stage with nineteenth century tradition to the point of tedium. He had butchered Shakespeare's play unmercifully. He had not tested his talent by foraging virgin territory. Worst of all, he had seemingly undermined on every point the star he professed to be showcasing.

In spite of Belasco, David Warfield managed to realize most of what he wished to do with the role. As he had promised, his Shylock was unquestionably sincere, rich in repressed emotion, full of pathos, and his characterization won a degree of understanding and sympathy for Shylock never before known. But that achievement was overpowered; Warfield's limitations as an actor once again denied his character credibility. His thin voice lacked vibrancy, and his small frame reduced Shylock's noble dignity to plebian servility. This Shylock was too closely related to Simon Levi, the auctioneer; his pathos was too much like that of Anton von Barwig, the music master. In the final analysis, Warfield's Shylock was commendable, but it was hardly memorable.

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<sup>78</sup>T. M. C., "Belasco Presents David Warfield's Shylock at Ford's," Baltimore Sun, 15 November 1922, DBC 167, n.p.; Dorothy Parker, "In Broadway Playhouses," Unidentified periodical [Aimslee's?], March 1923, DBC 167, n.p.; Lelyveld, p. 108.

For David Warfield, it had been a long journey from Hester Street to the Rialto, and the judgement of his Shylock was expected to determine the actor's standing in the theatrical hall of fame. Throughout his career, Warfield had striven for a measure of critical acclaim. He had held popular opinion in his hands for years, and he had garnered much praise from the drama critics. But he had never sufficiently moved his critics with his talent. In order to receive a permanent niche in that hall of fame, he offered his Shylock with the hope that this characterization would earn him that niche. When the reviews came in, however, that hope, the dream of a lifetime, had been crushed by cordially lukewarm audiences and thoughtfully sober critics.

After twenty years of expectation, the Jew that Warfield drew was regarded as little more than an histrionic novelty, and in the years which followed, that novelty faded into obscurity. It had been a sincere, honest and intelligent effort by the actor, but played in Warfield's repressed, realistic manner, it had lost depth and scope and eloquence. David Warfield failed, not because he was a vain, untalented actor, but because the artistic genius he possessed was limited to that body of "whitesouled old men" with which he had become famous. His ambitious Shylock did not elevate him from the stigma of being a one-part actor, and the "something worthwhile" that people remembered was his beloved, kind-hearted music master.

From Macklin to Irving and from Booth to Hampden, each of these venerable Shylocks had been so honored for some spark, however momentary, of brilliance which their art gave to the role. By essaying

the role of Shylock, David Warfield had petitioned his judges to inscribe his name among those revered predecessors. Warfield's judges eagerly heard the argument, but they were forced to deny the suit on grounds of insufficient evidence.

David Warfield had had his day in court, as had Shylock, and like his literary counterpart, Warfield had lost decisively. The actor had promised that he alone would be responsible for the Shylock he portrayed, and true to his word, he accepted that judgement with an honor and dignity befitting his dream. Though he retired from the stage soon after his final performance as Shylock, he took solace in the fact that his dream had been realized, never once losing faith in the Jew that Warfield drew.

## CHAPTER IV

### EPILOGUE: AN ACTOR OF YESTERDAY

At the age of fifty-eight, David Warfield stood at a crossroads in his career. He was at the height of his artistic genius, and he had to choose the next path in that career from several options. He had ambitions to assume other Shakespearean roles, but as the public had not been too receptive to his Shylock, he thought it best not to travel that path. He could revive any one of his former roles, or he could mount an entirely different character in the same genre. To choose either of those options would assuredly mean admission that he was a one-part actor. What to decide?

If he were to revive one of his former roles, he might be successful for a time, but as he had severed his ties with Belasco, he probably could not secure the rights to them, and frankly, to choose that path would be a major step backward in his career. If he were to create a new whitesouled old man, there would be no guarantee of success, and failure would mean irreparable damage to his reputation. He reflected:

If it were not for the law of compensation which an all wise Providence has made a rule of life, one would say that acting is the most thankless of all the arts. An actor is famous today, and forgotten tomorrow. He spends his life in a great effort to make living pictures for a public that forgets him when he's dead. What have they left behind them, the actors of yesterday? Nothing but a memory--a standard for other players in the days to come!

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<sup>1</sup>Untitled, Toledo Blade, 19 March 1915, Robinson Locke Collection of Dramatic Scrapbooks (hereafter designated as RLC), vol. 478, p. 50.

There was only one other alternative he could take. It would mean certain abolishment of his standing in the American theatre; however, it would not mar his admirable record. It would not be a regression in his career, and it would not mean additional ridicule in a classical role. David Warfield decided upon this last option and quietly retired.

To all who remembered Simon Levi peddling his wares on Hester Street, or Anton von Barwig vehemently fighting Stanton for his daughter, or Peter Grimm struggling to protect his loved ones from further injustices, a dear friend was going away. Warfield promised to return to the stage if the right vehicle came along, but it did not, nor did he actively seek it. He was content to become an actor of yesterday, to let his contribution as a passing player fade into the recesses of recorded time.

Warfield could have changed mediums and become an actor in the burgeoning movie industry in Hollywood, but when he rejected the offer of a million dollars to film The Music Master, he explained that the medium was not for him. The venerable actor perceived no art in the experience of a film actor, nor could he feel the magnetism from the screen that one would in the theatre. He felt that his personal acting style would be lost in a series of pictures which contained no drama, and as the cinema represented a bastardization of character acting, defecting to it would have meant betrayal to the art form he had loved and professed for nearly half a century.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Tamar Lane, "Warfield Tells Record Readers Why He Keeps Out of Movies," Boston Record, 1 December 1917, David Belasco Collection of

Warfield spent the last twenty-seven years of his life in semi-seclusion at his Central Park West home. There he reflected upon many memories of his life in the theatre. He could boast that he had played to standing room only all across the country. He could say that he had been able to realize a life-long dream. He would not forget to remember the days and weeks of disappointment and doubts he had known along the way. But when it was finished, and the greasepaint had been put aside forever, he could look back upon those years without regret.

Hard work had characterized David Warfield's career. He always endeavored to make the role he was playing better, ever alert lest the audience was cheated of a good performance. Warfield approached his work very seriously, never considering it to be a joke or child's play, and his "whole heart and soul and bodily strength" were devoted to the most trivial detail. He worked in this manner because he believed there was always something new which could be found in a role, something which could be improved. David Warfield always pushed himself to the limit.<sup>3</sup>

The actor claimed that he never really planned his performances, that he merely acted on impulse. A particular detail would happen

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Press Scrapbooks--The Music Master (hereafter designated as DBC-MM), n.p.; "Behind the Screens," New York World, 20 June 1926, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 166 (hereafter designated as DBC 166), n.p.

<sup>3</sup>"Work and Sincerity Make Actor, Says Warfield," Baltimore American, 1 October 1916, DBC-MM, p. 5; Pierrette, "A Moment or Two with David Warfield," Unidentified Chicago newspaper, 14 January 1916, RLC, vol. 478, p. 37.

spontaneously, and everyone would generally agree that it worked. He was a firm believer that an actor should follow his intuition, for that gave him poise, and Warfield professed that an actor must take his life experience "into the theatre with him" because that was the source of his naturalness, his believability and his inspiration.<sup>4</sup>

In a business where few are rewarded, David Warfield was one actor who had been able to accomplish a great deal. With a philosophy as simple and sincere as his performances and through hard, dedicated work, he had made of himself a living legend. He managed to work his way through side-street variety halls and first-class burlesque houses to become a respected character actor on the legitimate stage. After Richard Mansfield and Joseph Jefferson, he was considered to be America's foremost actor. His contemporaries were confident that he would receive prominence in theatrical annals, and every accolade possible was bestowed upon him.

Yet the history Warfield had helped to write chose not to make him an immortal legend. From the time history was made to the time historians recorded it, something happened. Standards changed, memories failed, and achievements seemed no longer significant. Warfield's friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm paled against the dawn of a new era

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<sup>4</sup> Arthur Edwin Krows, "David Warfield Prefers to Talk Shop," New York Dramatic Mirror, 16 November 1913, RLC, vol. 478, p. 27; Pierrette, "A Moment or Two with The Auctioneer," Unidentified Chicago newspaper, 11 January 1914, RLC, vol. 478, pp. 36-37; David Warfield as told to Justus Dickinson, "How I Became an Actor," Green Book, December 1915, RLC, vol. 478, p. 71.

in playwrighting, and his uncelebrated Shylock vanished amid the characterizations of a new generation of actors.

Any actor would have been disappointed, but David Warfield would certainly not have been surprised that history forgot him. He had been in the business long enough to know how soon memories fade. So he had seized the moment and cherished it for all it was worth. He would make that night's performance, that night's audience count most, and as early as 1907, he would say, "I just always want to do all that's in me. Never to disappoint my audience."<sup>5</sup>

There can be little doubt that a Warfield audience was never disappointed. The actor's performance in Van Der Decken may have made them dubious of the venture, and his Shylock may not have been all that had been promised or was expected. To that audience, however, Warfield was always Warfield, and they loved him for it. He let them shed a tear and then made them laugh, and sometimes to their perplexed delight, he would cause them to do both at once. His simple, homespun methods would transport them for a couple of hours, free them from a mundane or turmoiled existence, and send them home with cleansed souls and uplifted spirits. No one could resist such charisma:

. . . His hold on public affection is of the theatre's phenomena. Only Jefferson, perhaps, was popular as Warfield is,--and never, of course, to like degree. No other actor I have seen in a minor lifetime of major theatre-going has possessed a capacity like Warfield's for "taking" an audience;

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<sup>5</sup>"Warfield's Views and a View of Warfield," New York Times, 3 November 1907, sec. 5, p. 5.

the response to him is ever immediate, warm, explicit, and free.<sup>6</sup>

David Warfield belonged to that school of acting which historians call the "personality school," a method which was quite compatible with Warfield's "if-you-can,-you-can;-if-you-can't,-you-can't" philosophy. The performer of this school merely portrayed characters which fit his personality so that the real and the fictional were practically identical, or the actor would substitute his personality for dramatic character and rely upon his popularity to carry him to success. In either situation, the result was the same: a showcase for the star at the expense of the drama.<sup>7</sup>

The vogue of an actor presenting his own personal emotions as a surrogate for the character was, in Stark Young's opinion, a "deadly principle." The theory implied sincerity, naturalness, etc., yet the critic felt its application to the whole spectrum of acting provided a disservice to the public. He wrote:

. . . In naturalistic roles an actor if he has the talent can go far on this basis of putting himself in the character's place and then expressing the emotion he feels in a given situation. Mr. David Warfield, for example, in The Music Master could by his imagination and dramatic sympathy, put himself in the old man's place, could feel what he felt, and by his admirable craft could create all this for us. But when he tried Shylock that was another matter; his Shylock was a Ghetto father, with all the simplicity, intensity, fanaticism

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<sup>6</sup>Frederick Donaghey, "Warfield's Venture in a Vexing Part," Chicago Tribune, 9 December 1923, David Belasco Collection of Press Scrapbooks, MWEZ n.c. 167, n.p.

<sup>7</sup>Garff B. Wilson, Three Hundred Years of American Drama and Theatre (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1973), p. 269.

and pathos of his type. Mr. Warfield could give us what he felt in Shylock's place and what he gave us was genuine and moving emotion. But the point is that he could not put himself in Shylock's place. He gave us what he felt as Shylock, but could not feel the Shylock of Shakespeare. . . . The trouble, obviously, with this theory is in its first term. Mere sincerity of intention does not necessarily put an actor into the character's place; nor does mere genuineness of emotion on the actor's part give us the right emotion for the character. After all, what we are interested in is the role, not the actor's feeling.<sup>8</sup>

Be that as it may, the public evidently did not feel David Warfield had done it a disservice. During the years he appeared on the stage, that public revered him as they did no other player of his day. People stood in line for hours, sometimes overnight, just to purchase tickets. They braved all sorts of weather, traveled countless miles, to witness a performance he headlined. They invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in him, ever confident that the return would be the greater dividend. Warfield was considered by them to be America's First Actor, and after his retirement no one offered to name a successor. Percy Hammond stated:

. . . Nominees have been numerous since Mr. Warfield discarded sovereignty. . . . But they seem to lack the stature essential to a popular institution, the voice with which to call the multitude to worship. I have been a subject of the Drama under four dynasties--Joseph Jefferson in my babyhood, Richard Mansfield in my youth, David Warfield in my middle age and John Drew in all of them. Players better than they performed roles more artistically, but these were the Big Shots, the fixed stars, the High Priests in the Drama's mosques. . . .<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>The Theatre (New York: George H. Doran and Company, 1927), pp. 103-04.

<sup>9</sup>"The Theatres," Unidentified newspaper [New York Herald-Tribune?], 3 November 1929, DBC 166, n.p.

Whenever David Warfield walked onstage, the audience response was instantaneous; it was as if the actor had opened his arms to embrace a long-lost, but dearly beloved relative. Once onstage, he kept himself open to them, emoting faithfully and directly, and deftly led them through the gamut of emotions required by the situation. He seemed to intuitively know every emotion that passed over an audience at every moment of the performance, and he never failed to capitalize upon it. Bert Levy testified:

I have seen Warfield in the remotest of the cities of this country conquer an unwilling audience by the pure magic of his voice and the beauty of his acting. . . . Many times, while on the road, I have slipped away from the vaudeville house where I was appearing to sit in the darkened auditorium over at Warfield's show to watch his marvelous sway over prosaic business people with his beautiful character study of the old Music Master. Men and women far removed from the glamour of Broadway whose lives are seldom brightened by a good show came to scoff at Warfield (as they do at most so-called stars) but remained to pray.<sup>10</sup>

Every critic attempted to define the art of David Warfield, to name that brilliant and elusive quality which distinguished him from his contemporaries. Was it the sheer beauty of his simple and sincere acting? Was it perhaps the genius of his fidelity to life and human nature? And to what extent did his expressive countenance and meaningful gestures influence his work? Might it be his cleverness for exacting the appropriate detail at any given moment, or could it simply be that he seemed to listen to his audiences? What secret knowledge had taught him how to conceal every trace of his craftsmanship?

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<sup>10</sup>"Here, There and Everywhere," New York Telegraph, 27 March 1926, DBC 166, n.p.

Each of these elements comprised David Warfield's art, to be sure, but the secrets of his style were hardly as abstruse as his critics believed. A keen observer of his fellow man, Warfield possessed a native ability to analyze human nature and to translate it into stage action. Remember, he had been considered a born mimic in his childhood, and the years he spent on the burlesque stage provided rudimentary training and public exposure. Moreover, he developed an acute awareness of his audience, and from this mixture his acting style evolved.

By fusing reproduced action with audience sympathy, Warfield learned to manipulate the theatre patrons, to literally play upon the heart-strings of an audience. He relied heavily upon rhythm, and he carefully calculated his crescendos and decrescendos. The visual image had to be truthful, and he knew just how bold to make the stroke. Vocal inflections were like music to him; in copying them he had only to open his mouth and sing. Truly, he had no more to do than clothe himself with the outer shell of a humble character, apply the formula and await the tears, laughter and applause.

The formula was so simple that a new character could have been assumed every year or so. Yet, because he was unable to find plays with suitable characters and because of the market for the characters he did assume, Warfield only applied it six times during his legitimate career. For Simon Levi, Anton von Barwig and Peter Grimm, the formula proved foolproof and won for the actor immediate or increased artistic recognition. It worked for Wesley Bigelow, too, and added another measure to the Warfield fame, but the public was too preoccupied with

Barwig to place that Grand Army man on par with the three former gentlemen. At the other end of the spectrum, the formula could not encompass the grand heroics of Van Der Decken, nor could it accommodate the romantic nature of the sea captain. When the formula was applied to Shylock, the character became far removed from the world for which he had been created and thereby destroyed much of the poetry and artistry of a great role. These last two roles were cast in so different a mold from their four predecessors that they clearly demonstrated the limitations of the formula and bore witness to the folly of an actor's ambitions.

Shylock was to be the apotheosis of his career, and had Warfield played the role ten years or so earlier, it might have been. However, by the early 1920s, the American theatre was beginning to undergo a radical change. There was a new wave in playwrighting and stagecraft sweeping through the theatre, and suddenly the world of David Warfield was being supplanted by a different prototype. Elmer Rice's and Eugene O'Neill's provocatively realistic and socially conscious plays were usurping Clyde Fitch's and Bronson Howard's sentimentally sweet and intellectually shallow sagas. Robert Edmund Jones' and Norman Bel Geddes' frugal and symbolic set designs ushered in the New Stagecraft, replacing the oppressively ornate and pseudo-historically accurate scenic conventions of nineteenth-century dictates. For Warfield to have continued acting sentimental drama in the face of this new wave would have meant certain discredit in an outdated tradition.

So David Warfield decided to leave the passing show in the hands of younger actors, preferring the role of Actor Emeritus to any of his whitesouled old men. He could have played Levi, Barwig or Grimm for a number of years to come, but for a man who aspired to play classical roles, a return to the music masters or the auctioneers of his genre would have been the ultimate ignomy. He chose, rather, to slip out of the theatre as quietly as he had slipped into it so many years ago at the Bush Street Theatre in San Francisco.<sup>11</sup>

David Warfield was an actor popular for a time, but not for all time. His Anton von Barwig stands as a theatrical monument to his excellence in roles where sweetness is dominant, where good easily triumphs over evil, and the legend of the sweet tears attests that Warfield's immediate popularity could never be diminished by his long association with that kind, gentle and lovable old man. Warfield's Shylock, on the other hand, represents his attempt to portray a role with an intellectual appeal, to display the dark side of human nature and to express the dignity of the mind as well as the heart--the tasks which Walter Pritchard Eaton had charged him to perform in 1907. The critics' indifference to the Jew that Warfield drew graphically punctuates the actor's failure to realize those tasks, and their final award of dramatic fame for David Warfield eternally brands him with the inglorious stigma of being a one-part actor.

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<sup>11</sup> Able Green and Joe Laurie, Jr., Showbiz from Vaude to Video (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1951), p. 293.

But there is another point to be made here. David Warfield was typical of his generation in that he was not the only passing player history forgot. Many actors of his day enjoyed a similar popularity and suffered the same fate--Ben Greet, Jeanne Eagles, Fritzie Scheff, Guy Bates Post, Elsie Janis, Chauncey Olcott, Cecelia Loftus and Jefferson de Angelis to name a few. David Belasco promoted numerous stars in addition to Warfield, yet who remembers Leonore Ulric? Ned Harrington and Tony Hart and Sol Smith Russell were popular comedians in the tradition of Warfield's Jewish peddler; Marie Bates appeared in every performance with Warfield from 1901 to 1922, and George Arliss seemed most likely to succeed Warfield as America's most gifted actor. And yet, of these actors of yesterday, nothing is left--not a "standard for players in the days to come," not even a memory.

David Warfield may not have been the brightest star on Broadway, but neither was he one of its lesser lights. For nearly twenty-five years, his common artistry held the stage with a fervor rarely shown in the theatre. His acting style displayed a natural honesty seldom seen on the stage, and it was regarded as a standard for students of the theatre to revere and emulate. His characterizations made indelible impressions on all witnesses, and his command over public opinion was invincible.

The story of David Warfield, then, is the drama of one man's accomplishments in creating "living pictures" for a public which neglected to honor his efforts in history. The narrative describes his triumphs and his defeats; it touches upon his hopes and his dreams.

Warfield's life story commands respect for the diligent toil which comprised that life and admiration for the unfailing dignity which characterized it. His experiences represent a microcosm of the American theatre during the first quarter of the twentieth century, and they serve to remind us of a rich heritage too soon forgotten.

When the press reported David Warfield's death on June 28, 1951, theatre patrons all across America vaguely remembered the wonderful years of tears and laughter this actor of yesterday had so faithfully provided. As they tried to recall the sweet tears they had long ceased to shed, they read the eulogy with which the press paid final homage to the life and career of a forgotten favorite:

Millions of people who know the intimate life histories of Hollywood's passing stars had never heard of David Warfield, and many of those who had seen him upon the stage in a bygone era hardly knew he was still alive. . . . But to many who had seen him in "The Merchant of Venice" or "The Music Master" he remained a vivid figure, an actor of sentimentality and kindness who symbolized his times as few other theatrical figures have done.

Perhaps Mr. Warfield himself realized the unique nature of his talents, for he limited his roles to those he believed in, and he . . . never seemed to regret that he closed his career when he did. His school was that of burlesque houses and corner saloons; his art was that of the interpreter who knows that the stuff of life is compounded from both laughter and tears and mixes an expert blend. When he felt he had done his work, he stepped aside for others, knowing that the tradition in which he stood would go on after him, as it had before. And before he died, he could know too that he had become a legend.<sup>12</sup>

But it was a new day. Simon Levi shambling down Hester Street, Anton von Barwig at last embracing his long-lost daughter, and Peter

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<sup>12</sup>"David Warfield," New York Herald-Tribune, 29 June 1951, p. 14.

Grimm carrying little Willem into the Great Beyond were now only faint echoes from a bygone era, echoes which could no longer stir the heartstrings. David Warfield's legend had passed on before him, and the legacy he left was the forgotten contribution of an actor of yesterday.

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## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

### CAST LIST FOR THE MUSIC MASTER

| <u>Role</u>           | <u>Actor</u>                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Herr Anton von Barwig | David Warfield (1904, 1908, 1915)*                                                                                                          |
| Signor Tagliafico     | W. G. Riccardi (1904)<br>Augousto Aramini (1908, 1915)                                                                                      |
| Monsieur Louis Pinac  | Louis P. Verande (1904, 1908)<br>Francis Gailard (1909, 1915)                                                                               |
| Herr August Poons     | Leon Kohlmar (1904)<br>Taylor Holmes (1908)<br>Bernhardt Niemeyer (1909)<br>Edward Moller (1915)                                            |
| Henry A. Stanton      | Campbell Gollar (1904)<br>Charles Abbott (1905)<br>Reuben Fox (1908)<br>Oscar Eagle (1909)<br>Charles Abbott (1915)<br>Charles Mason (1917) |
| Andrew Cruger         | William Boag (1904, 1908, 1915)                                                                                                             |
| Beverly Cruger        | J. Carrington Yates (1904)<br>Ralph Kellard (1907)<br>William Elliott (1908)<br>George Wellington (1909, 1915)<br>Griffith Lusk (1917)      |
| Mr. Schwarz           | Alfred Hudson (1904)<br>Edward Locke (1905)<br>Alfred Hudson (1906)<br>George Woodward (1908)<br>William H. Barwald (1915)                  |
| Mr. Ryan              | Tony Bevan (1904, 1908, 1915)                                                                                                               |

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\*Date indicates Actor's first appearance in the role.

| <u>Role</u>        | <u>Actor</u>                                                                                                                              |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Al Costello        | Louis Hendricks (1904)<br>James Lackaye (1908)<br>Thomas H. Wilson (1909)<br>Louis Hendricks (1915)                                       |
| Joles              | Harold Mead (1904, 1908)<br>Carlton Rivers (1909)<br>Pickering Brown (1915)                                                               |
| Ditson             | H. G. Carlton (1904)<br>Irving Williams (1905)<br>Harold Howard (1906)<br>Howard Hall (1908)<br>H. G. Carlton (1915)                      |
| Danny              | Master Richard Kessler (1904, 1908)<br>Master Willie Battista (1915)                                                                      |
| A Collector        | Downing Clarke (1904)<br>Frederick Hawthorne (1905)<br>Thomas Gilbert (1906, 1908, 1915)                                                  |
| Mrs. Andrew Cruger | Isabelle Waldron (1904, 1908)<br>Marie Davis (1909)<br>Eleanor Barry (1915)                                                               |
| Helen Stanton      | Minnie Dupree (1904)<br>Antoinette Perry (1906, 1908)<br>Janet Dunbar (1909)<br>Jane Cooper (1915)<br>Hazel Lowery (1917)                 |
| Miss Houston       | Marie Bates (1904, 1908, 1915)                                                                                                            |
| Jenny              | Antoinette Walker (1904, 1908)<br>Helen Weer (1915)                                                                                       |
| Charlotte          | Sybil Klein (1904)<br>Ethel Conroy (1906, 1908)<br>Bertha Johnson (1909)<br>Rose Saitonstall (1915)                                       |
| Octavie            | Jane Cowl (1904)<br>Veda MacEvers (1906)<br>Jane Cowl (1908)<br>Margery Taylor (1909)<br>Gertrude Valentine (1915)<br>Shirley Ward (1917) |

## APPENDIX B

### CAST LIST FOR THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

| <u>Role</u>         | <u>Actor</u>                                    |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Duke of Venice      | A. E. Anson (1922)*<br>Fuller Mellish (1923)    |
| Prince of Morocco** | Herbert Grimwood (1922)                         |
| Antonio             | Ian MacLaren (1922)<br>Edwin Brandt (1923)      |
| Bassanio            | Phillip Merivale (1922)<br>Jerome Lawler (1923) |
| Gratiano            | W. I. Percival (1922)<br>Herbert Ranson (1923)  |
| Lorenzo             | Horace Braham (1922)<br>Marc Loebell (1923)     |
| Salarino            | Herbert Ransom (1922)<br>Harry Joyner (1923)    |
| Solanio             | Reginald Goode (1922)<br>George Kendell (1923)  |
| Shylock             | David Warfield (1922, 1923)                     |
| Tubal               | Albert Bruning (1922)<br>Aston Tonge (1923)     |
| Chus                | Morris Strassberg (1922)<br>Kraft Walton (1923) |
| Launcelot Gobbo     | Percival Vivian (1922, 1923)                    |

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\*Date indicates Actor's first appearance in the role.

\*\*Indicates Role was deleted from the playing version used 1923-24.

| <u>Role</u>       | <u>Actor</u>                                       |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Old Gobbo         | Fuller Mellish (1922, 1923)                        |
| Balthazar         | Charles Harbury (1922)<br>William Bang (1923)      |
| Stephano          | E. H. Weaver (1922)<br>Irving J. White (1923)      |
| Leonardo          | Edward Crandall (1922)<br>St. Julian Fowlks (1923) |
| Jester at Belmont | Warde de Wolfe (1922)<br>Percival Vivian (1923)    |
| Clerk of Court    | Nick Long (1922)<br>William Bang (1923)            |
| Ducal Messenger   | H. Brown (1922)<br>John Jackman (1923)             |
| Portia            | Mary Servoss (1922, 1923)                          |
| Nerissa           | Mary Ellis (1922)<br>Betty Murray (1923)           |
| Jessica           | Julia Adler (1922)<br>Helen Stryker (1923)         |

## APPENDIX C

### COMMEMORATING THE SILVER ANNIVERSARY OF THE MUSIC MASTER

Many of the kerchiefs used to hide the tears have long since passed, or are yellowed . . . since that night of September 26, 1904 when David Warfield started the . . . flow that was not checked until three years later. And Broadway would celebrate the silver jubilee of "The Music Master" this week were it not so busy, or better still, perhaps, if it did not lack a memory.

To the average theatregoer of today "The Music Master," although it has had revivals, one as late as 1916, is just one of the plays David Belasco used to make Warfield famous, but to those who know the theatre it stands but as one of the great milestones of the American stage. To David Warfield it cannot help but be one of his most cherished memories, for he essayed the role of Herr Anton von Barwig exactly 1,007 times, and history shows that the box office receipts exceeded \$1,000,000.

It was the play, too, that marked the turning point in Warfield's career. True, he had achieved marked success in "The Auctioneer," his first starring vehicle, but that comedy did little more than give Warfield a little more latitude to display his characterization of an east side Jew, a line of work he had followed for years and in which he had risen to the dignity of becoming a member of the Weber and Fields company at their famous Music Hall at Broadway and 29th Street. And it was from that company that Belasco lifted Warfield to stardom in "The Auctioneer."

Broadway had known Warfield, as had the rest of the country, as a character comedian, and, while there was a touch of pathos in "The Auctioneer," the throng that filled the Belasco Theatre at the opening of "The Music Master" a quarter of a century ago this week, in the main, went to laugh. But the funny glide, the trick whiskers, the hooked nose, the flat derby all were missing when Warfield stepped out on the stage. Before many minutes the house realized another Warfield was playing. It suddenly became aware that another great actor had been born[,] that from the ugly cocoon of the east side Jew a magnificent moth had emerged and as it spread its wings each moment soared to greater heights. September 26, 1904, saw the erstwhile gabbing and babbling low comedian transformed into one of the real players of the day. And twenty-five years ago that was something.

Will F. Clarke, "Twenty-Five Years Ago,"  
New York World, 29 September 1929

## APPENDIX D

### EYEWITNESS IMPRESSION OF WARFIELD'S SHYLOCK

I saw David Warfield in "The Merchant of Venice" in Philadelphia in 1923. I was then a junior in high school and a very unsophisticated play-goer. In fact, "The Merchant of Venice" was not only the first Shakespearean play I had ever seen but actually the first serious play I had gone to. Fortunately, I was quite familiar with it, having studied it exhaustively in a class conducted by my favorite English teacher (even now, I can quote whole passages from the play).

However, my studies had not given me any interpretation but the conventional one; that Shylock was an inhuman monster who would gladly have cut a pound of living flesh from his enemy.

Warfield played the part with such skill and feeling that I realized that there was something to be said in his [Shylock's] defense. He had been treated certainly with less than Christian charity by Antonio and the rest; he had been tricked and robbed by his own daughter (Jessica surely had a right to live her own life, but did she have a right to steal?).

The beauty of Warfield's interpretation of the part is that it reveals to us the subtlety of Shakespeare in showing both sides of a subject that could still be called controversial today. Shakespeare never gives a hard-and-fast answer to any question: he presents the evidence and allows you to judge for yourself.

(Signed)

Sara B. Allen

Handwritten response to questionnaire, not dated. Personal Collection of the Author.

## APPENDIX E

### EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF A REHEARSAL OF THE MERCHANT OF VENICE,

NOVEMBER 10, 1922

The Thursday night dress rehearsal lasted until after daybreak on Friday morning, and Mr. Belasco, most painstaking of managers, decided that more rehearsals were necessary, hence his announcement [to cancel the three scheduled performances in Wilmington].

Last night at the hour when the first performance was to have been given David Belasco sat in the front row of the orchestra conducting with indefatigable zeal a dress rehearsal of the trial scene. The present writer watched him for an hour and left manager and actors deep in their work. "They'll keep this up until five o'clock in the morning," said the man at the door.

In the course of that hour, carefully going over the texts and the business of the play again and again, the company had progressed from line 256 in the trial scene to line 356. In other words, nearly two pages of the Dowden edition had been covered.

The most interesting feature of the performance was the white haired figure in the front row conducting a dramatic rehearsal in a manner that recalled Toscanini at an orchestra rehearsal.

No detail of the stage escaped him. He seemed to group his players as Toscanini grouped his instruments. Each in turn had his general effect in the scene, and Mr. Belasco brought their efforts together in effects that can only be called symphonic.

He cajoled, he admonished, and he inspired. A number of actors who were slow in getting a group effect were nursed to energy by his cry, "Use your instinct, your intuition, your intelligence."

The rehearsal stopped for a moment while an electrician was questioned about a touch of light. Presently, the light fell just where it should, accentuating a dramatic point, and the rehearsal went on. Miss Mary Servoss, as Portia, stopped to ask about a certain action.

"Do what you feel, Mary," said Mr. Belasco, "and if I think it is not right I will tell you." . . .

Back of the orchestra a row of sewing machines and a group of modistes make an impromptu wardrobe room, and here costly stuffs are

undergoing final changes. In shadowy corners of the Playhouse sit actors who are not "on" in the trial scene, but are breathless with interest. . . .

Everybody is terribly earnest. Consequently there is a moment of relief when Mr. Warfield, finishing a vehement moment, comes to his knees with a bang on the bare floor, and lifting his gaberdine, looks ruefully at a bruised shin.

Everybody smiles. Then the voice of the silver-toned Belasco breaks in again like the imperious tap of Toscanini's baton, and everybody is at it once more.

From "Mr. Belasco Postpones--," in an unidentified Wilmington, Delaware newspaper, dated November 11, 1922

APPENDIX F

LETTER TO THE DRAMATIC EDITOR

To the Dramatic Editor:

Are you good at conundrums?

Here's one for you:

Why does a successful Jewish comedian hanker after the glories of Shakespeare?

And why are "Shakespeare" and "Shylock" synonymous in the mind of the aforesaid s. J. c.?

First Warfield and now Barney Barnard.

I'm wagering with the members of my group of serious thinkers that Warfield's going to find Shylock's gaberdine as elusive as the cloak of the Flying Dutchman. . . .

(Signed)

Jacob Levitan

New York, June 16, 1922

In the New York Times, 16 July 1922,  
sec. 6, p. 1.

## APPENDIX G

### WARFIELDIAN QUOTES

#### 1. On Actors:

. . . all actors are sensitive, since all are vain. . . .

From "My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm,"  
American Magazine, December 1913

#### 2. On Acting:

. . . Acting is the art of reproduction. It is something which can never be absolutely perfect. The greatest characterization the stage ever saw was only approximately correct. All art is only an effort to realize an ideal which will never be quite realized. And this is especially true of acting. Therefore, the actor can never play a role too long, if he is right in it, and he is never through with it.

To Colgate Baker in "David Warfield: An  
Appreciation," New York Review, 6 January 1917

#### 3. On Playing Roles on a Long Term Basis:

. . . There is no such thing playing a part too long. The mellowing process should never cease, but if it does, if spontaneity fails, if the actor feels that he is becoming at all mechanical in the part, he should abandon it at once--for his own salvation.

The surest danger signal is half-hearted applause. From this the actor knows that he has lost an essential quality of the character, and the tragedy of it is he cannot tell what that quality is or how he lost it. An actor may tell a joke a thousand times and provoke laughter, but suddenly it fails of response. That's the time for him to stop.

From "My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm,"  
American Magazine, December 1913

## 4. On Building a Character:

I never study in the sense in which that word is conventionally used. I told you I wasn't an intellectual actor. My way is very simple. I read a complete play four or five times. Then I read my part over and over until it gets into my system. The things which move me most in the first reading become the most effective scenes in the play, and, if I am not stirred from the very first, no amount of building up, no subterfuge, enables me to increase the value of the scene. I don't know how or where the knowledge of what I am to do comes to me. I simply seem to feel it. It is a sort of intuition.

To Hartley Davis in "From Einstein to Peter Grimm," in The Outlook, 26 October 1912

## 5. On Audiences:

But you can trust the public to render a fair verdict. . . . I have no patience with actors and managers who blame the public for their own failures. Nine times out of ten when a play fails the star and the manager declare that it went over the heads of the audience. They say that it was too subtle for them or make some other excuse. That's all rot. Audiences are composed of representatives of every walk of life, persons of different nationalities, creeds and beliefs, and when they agree that a play will not do, then the fault is with the play.

To J. A. Fitzgerald in "David Warfield as Peter Grimm's Spirit," Des Moines Register, 5 November 1911

## 6. On Applause Interrupting a Scene:

That is one of the things that really makes me very angry. . . . I can't stop while the applause is going on, I wouldn't anyway, but the interruption affects the tempo of the speech, tends to spoil the general effect and practically ruins the scene. I would much prefer to have people remain silent, [and] if they care to, let them applaud at the end of the act. . . . We have done everything to stop it, even making a request to that effect. If people but stopped to think a moment they would, I am sure, realize that they will derive much more pleasure from the work of actors if they refrain from spoiling a big speech by what can be called nothing less than senseless applause.

From the Pittsburg Post, 9 May 1907

## 7. On Acting Traditions:

. . . And why should there be "traditions?" Why should an actor in playing a role copy any other actor? Do any two humans respond in the same way? Is any emotion expressed identically by any two persons? One man may lose consciousness, another shriek, another remain quite calm in the face of a terrible shock. Who knows what Shakespeare intended [with regard to Shylock]? Why should an actor, in portraying a character for the first time, follow in the footsteps of some one who has gone before? Why should he not read into an author's lines what he himself finds there? How can he entirely obliterate his own personality and play a part as he has been taught that some other actor played it so many years ago that he was not alive to see it? I cannot do it, and still I believe I have been criticized for not making the Jew majestic and taller--especially taller. I am not tall!

To "H. U." in "Why David Warfield Makes Shylock So Very Human," New York Tribune,  
14 January 1923

## 8. On Theatre and Drama:

I believe that people go to the theatre primarily to be entertained. . . . There are institutions for the teaching of the human family, if it wants to know about disease and social conditions. I don't consider the theatre the proper place for any such attempt to teach. Give theatregoers something clean, something wholesome and natural, and they will be pleased. These plays are having an effect, however, because they are teaching people to inquire something about the play they know nothing of before they attend the theatre. They are helping the business of attractions that stand for what is best in theatreland. And probably the life of indecent plays will not be long. They may be a fad with a certain class of people, but fads fade away. What is good always remains.

To Archie Bell in "Warfield Chats of Texas,"  
Cleveland Plain Dealer, 2 January 1914

## 9. On Censorship in the Theatre:

That [enforced censorship of the stage] should never be necessary. . . . It is the public instead that should be trained to prefer good things. Enlightened public opinion constitutes a safe and sound censorship. Playwrights, producers and actors as a majority are overwhelmingly in favor of ridding the stage of salacious and other objectionable plays and can be trusted to institute of their own volition thorough, practical and effective censorship.

The stage can clean its own house better than it can be cleaned by uplifters and reformers and committees appointed by political influence. Some time ago I read of a small town in Kansas where the board of censors told Pavlowa, the incomparable, that her dancers must put on their shoes and stockings. That is merely one instance of how censorship in political hands can hamper expressions of art and strike at the very heart of an art that demands freedom. Next they will be putting a kimono on the Venus of Milo.

From "David Warfield Holds Censorship  
Unnecessary," Salt Lake City Weekly Citizen,  
22 March 1924

## 10. On Belasco:

. . . I was sustained by my faith in Belasco. Belasco is a wonderful stage director. He knows more about the drama, I think, than any other man connected with the theatre in the world. But, above all, you are convinced that he knows absolutely what he is doing, and you feel, you even realize, that when he says, "Go ahead, that's all right," that it is all right.

From "My Friends Levi, Barwig and Peter Grimm,"  
American Magazine, December 1913

## 11. On Success:

Success, if one strives for it for itself alone, is hollow. I do not gloat over what I have been able to do, and I do not feel that I have reached a point where I have no further to go. An elusive will-of-the-wisp urges me on. My ambition is to do different things, always something bigger.

From "Warfield's Triumphant Western Tour,"  
Belasco News, 5 September 1908

## VITA

Chris Alan Deatherage is a native Tennessean. He was graduated from the Roane County High School in 1973 and went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts degree in Speech and Theatre from The University of Tennessee-Knoxville in 1976. As an undergraduate, he was awarded first place in Prose Interpretation by the Tennessee Intercollegiate Forensics Association in 1975 and second place, also in Prose Interpretation, at the Kentucky Bluegrass Festival that same year.

A professional actor and stage manager, Mr. Deatherage is a member of Actors' Equity Association, the American Theatre Association, the Theatre Communications Group and the Southeastern Theatre Conference. He has worked extensively with the Clarence Brown Company, the professional wing of the UT-K theatre program, and was instrumental in reorganizing the Community Children's Theatre of Kingston, Tennessee in 1976.

His hobbies include art, literature and classical music.