

The Dramatic Lives Of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, And Their Remarkable Families



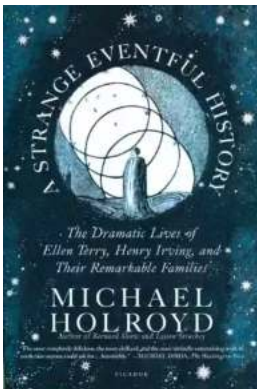
Image: Ellen Terry and Henry Irving

The Beginning of a Legendary Journey

The 19th century witnessed the rise of two extraordinary individuals who etched their names in the annals of British theater history. Ellen Terry and Henry Irving, with their undeniable talent and charisma, captivated audiences across Europe and America, leaving an indelible mark on the world of drama. Their exceptional lives were intertwined with a network of remarkable family members who also contributed significantly to the arts.

The Life of Ellen Terry

Ellen Terry, born in 1847, was a renowned British actress known for her sublime stage presence and ability to embody diverse characters. Her talent was enhanced by her family's artistic background, with her parents being noted actors as well. As a child, Terry found herself immersed in the world of theater, making her debut at the tender age of eight. Her innate talent quickly propelled her career, and she became a leading lady of the Victorian stage.



A Strange Eventful History: The Dramatic Lives of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, and Their Remarkable Families

by Michael Holroyd (Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2538 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 664 pages



The Rise of Henry Irving

Henry Irving, born John Henry Brodribb in 1838, rose to fame as one of the greatest actors of his time. Known for his powerful voice and commanding stage presence, Irving revolutionized the art of acting. Throughout his career, he worked tirelessly to elevate the status of actors and theater in society. His unmatched talent and dedication earned him the position of the first actor to be knighted, further solidifying his status as a theatrical legend.

Blossoming Romance

Ellen Terry and Henry Irving crossed paths during their work at the Lyceum Theatre in London. Irving recognized Terry's extraordinary talent and offered her a position as leading lady. The two developed a close collaboration, both on and off-stage, forming a deep bond that lasted throughout their lives. Despite their undeniable chemistry, they never pursued a romantic relationship as Irving was already married. Nevertheless, their professional partnership flourished, leading to some of the most memorable performances in theater history.

The Terry Family Legacy

The Terry family, beyond Ellen's immense talent, boasted a lineage filled with artistic brilliance. Her sister, Kate Terry, achieved considerable success as an actress, while her son, Edward Gordon Craig, became a renowned theater director and scenic designer. Ellen Terry's descendants continued to contribute to the world of theater, showcasing the enduring impact of her remarkable family on the dramatic arts.

The Irving Dynasty

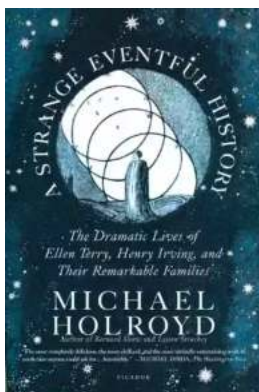
Henry Irving's influence extended beyond his own talent. His children also pursued careers in the theater. His son, Harry Brodribb Irving, achieved recognition as an actor and playwright. H. B. Irving, as he was known, became a notable figure in the British stage, carrying on his father's legacy. The Irving

family's contributions to drama exemplify the profound impact they had on the theatrical landscape, solidifying their place in history.

A Lasting Legacy

Ellen Terry and Henry Irving left an indelible mark on the world of theater and continue to inspire performers to this day. Their remarkable lives, filled with extraordinary talent and constant dedication to their craft, serve as a reminder of the power of the dramatic arts. The Terry and Irving families' contributions to the theatrical world underscore the importance of heritage, passion, and perseverance in shaping the future of theater.

The dramatic lives of Ellen Terry, Henry Irving, and their remarkable families are testimonies to the transformative power of the stage. Their talents not only entertained audiences but also pushed the boundaries of artistic expression, forever changing the theatrical landscape. The legacies they built and the art they created continue to resonate, reminding us of the profound impact of the dramatic arts on humanity.



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Deemed "a prodigy among biographers" by The New York Times Book Review, Michael Holroyd transformed biography into an art. Now he turns his keen observation, humane insight, and epic scope on an ensemble cast, a remarkable dynasty that presided over the golden age of theater.

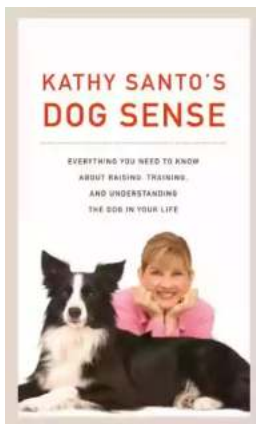
Ellen Terry was an ethereal beauty, the child bride of a Pre-Raphaelite painter who made her the face of the age. George Bernard Shaw was so besotted by her gifts that he could not bear to meet her, lest the spell she cast from the stage be broken. Henry Irving was an ambitious, harsh-voiced merchant's clerk, but once he painted his face and spoke the lines of Shakespeare, his stammer fell away to reveal a magnetic presence. He would become one of the greatest actor-managers in the history of the theater. Together, Terry and Irving created a powerhouse of the arts in London's Lyceum Theatre, with Bram Stoker—who would go on to write *Dracula*—as manager. Celebrities whose scandalous private lives commanded global attention, they took America by storm in wildly popular national tours.

Their all-consuming professional lives left little room for their brilliant but troubled children. Henry's boys followed their father into the theater but could not escape the shadow of his fame. Ellen's feminist daughter, Edy, founded an avant-garde theater and a largely lesbian community at her mother's country home. But it was Edy's son, the revolutionary theatrical designer Edward Gordon Craig, who possessed the most remarkable gifts and the most perplexing inability to realize them. A now forgotten modernist visionary, he collaborated with the Russian director Stanislavski on a production of *Hamlet* that forever changed the way theater was staged. Maddeningly self-absorbed, he inherited his mother's potent

charm and fathered thirteen children by eight women, including a daughter with the dancer Isadora Duncan.

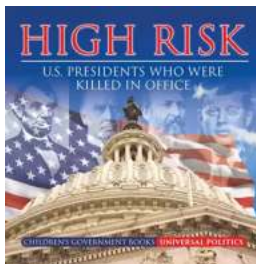
An epic story spanning a century of cultural change, *A Strange Eventful History* finds space for the intimate moments of daily existence as well as the bewitching fantasies played out by its subjects. Bursting with charismatic life, it is an incisive portrait of two families who defied the strictures of their time. It will be swiftly recognized as a classic.

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