

Chapter 1 : Emptying the stage: experimenting with Shakespeare | The Shakespeare blog

In Shakespeare's time, a stage wasn't just one type of space; plays had to be versatile. The same play might be produced in an outdoor playhouse, an indoor theater, a royal palace—or, for a company on tour, the courtyard of an inn.

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Chapter 2 : Shakespeare's stage :: Life and Times :: Internet Shakespeare Editions

Shakespeare's Stage. This book examines the development of theaters and stages from medieval drama to Shakespeare's time. More information about many of these topics will be found in the chapter that deals with the drama as literature.

A two-storey facade at the rear of the stage hid the tiring house and, through windows near the top of the facade, opportunities for balcony scenes such as the one in *Romeo and Juliet*. Doors at the bottom of the facade may have been used for discovery scenes like that at the end of *The Tempest*. A trap door in the stage itself could be used for stage business, like some of that involving the ghost in *Hamlet*. This trapdoor area was called "hell", as the canopy above was called "heaven" Less is known about other features of staging and production. Stage props seem to have been minimal, although costuming was as elaborate as was feasible. Though it is not known how seriously companies took such injunctions, it seems likely either that plays were performed at near-breakneck speed or that the play-texts now extant were cut for performance, or both. After , the troupe performed at the indoor Blackfriars Theatre during the winter and the Globe during the summer. In *Cymbeline*, for example, Jupiter descends "in thunder and lightning, sitting upon an eagle: The ghosts fall on their knees. A theatrical cannon, set off during the performance, misfired, igniting the wooden beams and thatching. According to one of the few surviving documents of the event, no one was hurt except a man who put out his burning breeches with a bottle of ale. Sir Henry Wotton recorded that the play "was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and ceremony". Critics praised the best actors for their naturalness. Scorn was heaped on ranters and on those who "tore a passion to tatters", as *Hamlet* has it. Also with *Hamlet*, playwrights complain of clowns who improvise on stage modern critics often blame Kemp in particular in this regard. In the older tradition of comedy which reached its apex with Richard Tarlton , clowns, often the main draw of a troupe, were responsible for creating comic by-play. By the Jacobean era, that type of humor had been supplanted by verbal wit. Interregnum and Restoration performances[edit] Frontispiece to *The Wits* , showing theatrical drolls , with Falstaff in the lower left corner. While denied the use of the stage, costumes and scenery, actors still managed to ply their trade by performing " drolls " or short pieces of larger plays that usually ended with some type of jig. Shakespeare was among the many playwrights whose works were plundered for these scenes. The licensing system prevailed for two centuries; from to , only two main companies regularly presented Shakespeare in London. Davenant, who had known early-Stuart actors such as John Lowin and Joseph Taylor , was the main figure establishing some continuity with earlier traditions; his advice to his actors is thus of interest as possible reflections of original practices. On the whole, though, innovation was the order of the day for Restoration companies. Restoration actors performed on proscenium stages, often in the evening, between six and nine. Set-design and props became more elaborate and variable. Perhaps most noticeably, boy players were replaced by actresses. The audiences of comparatively expensive indoor theaters were richer, better educated, and more homogeneous than the diverse, often unruly crowds at the Globe. Patrons of both companies expected fare quite different from what had pleased Elizabethans. For tragedy, their tastes ran to heroic drama ; for comedy, to the comedy of manners. Though they liked Shakespeare, they seem to have wished his plays to conform to these preferences. The result is a snapshot of Restoration comic tastes. The play ends with three marriages: A final feature of Restoration stagecraft impacted productions of Shakespeare. The taste for opera that the exiles had developed in France made its mark on Shakespeare as well. Davenant and John Dryden worked *The Tempest* into an opera, *The Tempest, or The Enchanted Island* ; their work featured a sister for Miranda, a man, Hippolito, who has never seen a woman, and another paired marriage at the end. It also featured many songs, a spectacular shipwreck scene, and a masque of flying cupids. The dramatists approached Shakespeare not as bardolators , but as theater professionals. Yet almost universally, they saw him as worth updating. In England, the development of the star system transformed both acting and production; at the end of the century, the Romantic revolution touched acting as it touched all the arts. By William Hogarth , Tent scene before the Battle of Bosworth: Richard is haunted by the ghosts of those he has murdered. In the 18th century,

Shakespeare dominated the London stage, while Shakespeare productions turned increasingly into the creation of star turns for star actors. After the Licensing Act of 1662, one fourth of the plays performed were by Shakespeare, and on at least two occasions rival London playhouses staged the very same Shakespeare play at the same time *Romeo and Juliet* in 1663 and *King Lear* the next year and still commanded audiences. This occasion was a striking example of the growing prominence of Shakespeare stars in the theatrical culture, the big attraction being the competition and rivalry between the male leads at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, Spranger Barry and David Garrick. Goethe organised a Shakespeare jubilee in Frankfurt in 1786, stating that the dramatist had shown that the Aristotelian unities were "as oppressive as a prison" and were "burdensome fetters on our imagination". The platform stage is gone and the orchestra pit divides the actors from the audience. Theatres and theatrical scenery became ever more elaborate in the 19th century, and the acting editions used were progressively cut and restructured to emphasize more and more the soliloquies and the stars, at the expense of pace and action. The platform, or apron, stage, on which actors of the 17th century would come forward for audience contact, was gone, and the actors stayed permanently behind the fourth wall or proscenium arch, further separated from the audience by the orchestra see image at right. Victorian productions of Shakespeare often sought pictorial effects in "authentic" historical costumes and sets. The staging of the reported sea fights and barge scene in *Antony and Cleopatra* was one spectacular example. Towards the end of the century, William Poel led a reaction against this heavy style. In a series of "Elizabethan" productions on a thrust stage, he paid fresh attention to the structure of the drama. To be a star of the legitimate drama came to mean being first and foremost a "great Shakespeare actor", with a famous interpretation of, for men, *Hamlet*, and for women, *Lady Macbeth*, and especially with a striking delivery of the great soliloquies. The acme of spectacle, star, and soliloquy of Shakespeare performance came with the reign of actor-manager Henry Irving and his co-star Ellen Terry in their elaborately staged productions, often with orchestral incidental music, at the Lyceum Theatre, London from 1878 to 1902. Both approaches have influenced the variety of Shakespearean production styles seen today. Craig defined space with simple flats: Though the construction of these flats was not original, its application to Shakespeare was completely new. The flats could be aligned in many configurations and provided a technique of simulating architectural or abstract lithic structures out of supplies and methods common to any theater in Europe or the Americas. This production was groundbreaking because it reintroduced the idea of modern dress back into Shakespeare. It was not the first modern-dress production since there were a few minor examples before World War I, but *Cymbeline* was the first to call attention to the device in a blatant way. Iachimo was costumed in evening dress for the wager, the court was in military uniforms, and the disguised Imogen in knickerbockers and cap. It was for this production that critics invented the catch phrase "Shakespeare in plus-fours". Ayliff, two years later staged *Hamlet* in modern dress. These productions paved the way for the modern-dress Shakespearean productions that we are familiar with today. The production became known as the *Voodoo Macbeth*, as Welles changed the setting to a 19th-century Haiti run by an evil king thoroughly controlled by African magic. Even after press coverage, some audience members still fled from the performance, thinking they were witnessing a real assault.

Chapter 3 : All The World's A Stage Poem by William Shakespeare - Poem Hunter

English Renaissance theatre—also known as *Renaissance English theatre* and *Elizabethan theatre*—refers to the theatre of England between and This is the style of the plays of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson.

We cross the Thames by London Bridge with its lines of crowded booths and shops and throngs of bustling tradesmen; or if it is fine weather we take a small boat and are rowed over the river to the southern shores. Here on the Bankside, in the part of London now called Southwark, beyond the end of the bridge, and in the open fields near the Bear Garden, stands a roundish, three-story wooden building, so high for its size that it looks more like a clumsy, squatty tower than a theatre. As we draw nearer we see that it is not exactly round after all, but is somewhat hexagonal in shape. The walls seem to slant a little inward, giving it the appearance of a huge thimble, or cocked hat, with six flattened sides instead of a circular surface. There are but few small windows and two low shabby entrances. The whole structure is so dingy and unattractive that we stand before it in wonder. Our amazement on stepping inside is even greater. The first thing that astonishes us is the blue sky over our heads. The building has no roof except a narrow strip around the edge and a covering at the rear over the back part of the stage. The front of the stage and the whole center of the theatre is open to the air. Now we see how the interior is lighted, though with the sunshine must often come rain and sleet and London fog. Looking up and out at the clouds floating by, we notice that a flag is flying from a short pole on the roof over the stage. This is most important, for it is announcing to the city across the river that this afternoon there is to be a play. It is bill-board, newspaper notice, and advertisement in one: When the performance begins the flag will be lowered to proclaim to all that "the play is on. Before us on the ground level is a large open space, which corresponds to the orchestra circle on the floor of a modern play-house. But here there is only the flat bare earth, trodden down hard, with rushes and in the straw scattered over it. There is not a sign of a seat! This is the "yard," or, as it is sometimes called, "the pit," where, by paying a penny or two, London apprentices, sailors, laborers, and the mixed crowd from the streets may stand jostling together. Some of the more enterprising ones may possibly sit on boxes and stools which they bring into the building with them. Among these "groundlings" there will surely be bustling confusion, noisy wrangling, and plenty of danger from pickpockets; so we look about us to find a more comfortable place from which to watch the performance. On three sides of us, and extending well around the stage, are three tiers of narrow balconies. In some places these are divided into compartments, or boxes. The prices here are higher, varying from a few pennies to half a crown, according to the location. By putting our money into a box held out to us, -- there are no tickets, -- we are allowed to climb the crooked wooden stairs to one of these compartments. Here we find rough benches and chairs, and above all a little seclusion from the throng of men and boys below. Along the edge of the stage we observe that there are stools, but these places, elevated and facing the audience, seem rather conspicuous, and besides the prices are high. They will be taken by the young gallants and men of fashion of London, in brave and brilliant clothes, with light swords at their belts, wide ruffled collars about their necks, and gay plunies in their hats. It will be amusing to see them show off their fine apparel, and display their wit at the expense of the groundlings in the pit, and even of the actors themselves. We are safer, however, and much more comfortable here in the balcony among the more sober, quiet gentlemen of London, who with mechanics, tradesmen, nobles, and shop-keepers have come to see the play. The moment we entered the theatre we were impressed by the size of the stage. Looking down upon it from the balcony, it seems even larger and very near us. If it is like the stage of the Fortune it is square Here in the Globe it is probably narrower at the front than at the back, tapering from the rear wall almost to a point. Whatever its shape, it is only a roughly-built, high platform, open on three sides, and extending halfway into the "yard. At each side of the rear we can see a door that leads to the "tiring-rooms" where the actors dress, and from which they make their entrances. These are the "green-rooms" and wings of our theatre today. Between the doors is a curtain that now before the play begins is drawn together. Later when it is pulled aside, -- not upward as curtains usually are now, -- we shall see a shallow recess or alcove which serves as a secondary, or inner stage. Over this extends a narrow balcony

covered by a roof which is supported at the front corners by two columns that stand well out from the wall. Still higher up, over the inner stage, is a sort of tower, sometimes called the "hut," and from a pole on this the flag is flying which summons the London populace from across the Thames. Rushes are strewn over the floor; there are no drops or wings or walls of painted scenery. In its simplicity and bareness it reminds us of the rude stage of the strolling players. Indeed, the whole interior of the building seems to be but an adaptation of the tavern-yard and village-green. How, we wonder, can a play like "Julius Caesar" or "The Merchant of Venice" be staged on such a crude affair as this! What are the various parts of it for? Practically all acting is done, we shall see, on the front of the platform well out among the crowd in the pit, with the audience on three sides of the performers. All out-of-door scenes will be acted here, from a conversation in the streets of Venice or a dialogue in a garden, to a battle, a procession, or a banquet in the Forest of Arden. Here, too, with but the slightest alteration, or even with no change at all, interior scenes will be presented. With the "groundlings" crowded close up to its edges, and with young gallants sitting on its sides, this outer stage comes close to the people. On it will be all the main action of the drama: The inner stage, or alcove beyond the curtain, is used in many ways. It may serve for any room somewhat removed from the scene of action, such as a passage-way or a study. It often is made to represent a cave, a shop, or a prison. But the most important use is to give the effect of a change of scene. By drawing apart and closing the curtain, with a few simple changes of properties in this inner compartment, a different background is possible. By such a slight variation of setting at the rear, the platform in the pit is transformed, by the quick imagination of the spectators, from a field or a street to a castle hall or a wood. Thus, the whole stage becomes the Forest of Arden by the use of a little greenery in the distance. Similarly, a few trees and shrubs at the rear of the inner stage, when the curtain is thrown aside, will change the setting from the court-room in the fourth act of "The Merchant of Venice," to the scene in the garden at Belmont which immediately follows. The balcony over the inner stage serves an important purpose, too. With the windows, which are often just over the doors leading to the tiring-rooms, it gives the effect of an upper story of a house, of walls in a castle, a tower, or any elevated over the position. This is the place, of course, where Juliet comes to greet Romeo who is in the garden below. And tell me what thou notest about the field," the soldier undoubtedly climbs to the balcony, for a moment later, looking abroad over the field of battle, he reports to Cassius what he sees from his elevation. Besides these simple devices, if we look closely enough we shall see a trap-door, or perhaps two, in the platform. These are for the entrance of apparitions and demons. They correspond, in a way, to the balcony by giving the effect of a place lower than the stage level. Thus in the first scene of "The Tempest," which takes place in a storm at sea, the notion of a ship may be suggested to the audience by sailors entering from the trap-door, as they might come up a hatchway to a deck. If it is a play with gods and goddesses and spirits, we may be startled to see them appear and disappear through the air. Evidently there is machinery of some sort in the hut over the balcony which can be used for lowering and raising deities and creatures that live above the earth. On each side of the stage is a flight of steps leading to the balcony. These are often covered Here sit councils, senates, and princes with their courts. Macbeth uses them to give the impression of ascending to an upper chamber when he goes to kill the king, and down them he rushes to his wife after he has committed the fearful murder. What astonishes us most, however, is the absence of scenery. To be sure, some slight attempt has been made to create scenic illusion. There are, perhaps, a few trees and boulders, a table, a chair or two, and pasteboard dishes of food. But there is little more. In the only drawing of the interior of an Elizabethan theatre that has been preserved, -- a sketch of the Swan made in , -- the stage has absolutely no furniture except one plain bench on which one of the actors is sitting. Here before us in the Globe the walls may be covered with loose tapestries, black if the play is to be a tragedy, blue if a comedy; but it is quite possible that they are entirely bare. A placard on one of the pillars announces that the stage is now a street in Venice, now a courtroom, now the hall of a stately mansion. It may be that the Prologue, or even the actors themselves, will tell us at the opening of an act just where the scene is laid and what we are to imagine the platform to represent. In "Henry V," for instance, the Prologue at the beginning not only explains the setting of the play, but asks forgiveness of the audience for attempting to put on the stage armies and battles and the "vasty fields of France. Can this cockpit hold The vasty fields of France? Suppose within the girdle of these walls Are now confined two mighty monarchies, Whose

high-upreared and abutting fronts The perilous, narrow ocean parts asunder. Piece out our imperfections with your thoughts; Into a thousand parts divide one man, And make imaginary puissance. Turning the accomplishment of many years Into an hour-glass. In the first sentence which the banished Duke speaks, he says, "Are not these woods more free from peril than the envious court? By means of them, without the illusion of scenery, the bare wooden stage will become a ship, a garden, a palace, a London tavern. Whole armies will enter and retire by a single door. Battles will rage, royal processions pass in and out, graves will be dug, lovers will woo, -- and all with hardly an important alteration of the setting. Lack of scenery does not limit the type of scenes that can be presented. On the contrary, it gives almost unlimited opportunities to the dramatist, for the spectators, in the force and freshness of their imagination, are children who willingly "play" that the stage is anything the author suggests. Their youthful enthusiasm, their simple tastes, above all their lack of knowledge of anything different, give them the enviable power of imagining the grandest, most beautiful, and most varied scenes on the same bare, unadorned boards. Among the motley crowd of men and boys in the yard there is no longer room for another box or stool. They are evidently growing impatient and jostle together in noisy confusion. Suddenly three long blasts on a trumpet sound. The mutterings in the pit subside, and all eyes turn toward the stage. First an actor, clothed in a black mantle and wearing a laurel wreath on his head, comes from behind the curtain and recites the prologue. From it we learn something of the story of the play to follow, and possibly a little about the scene of action.

Chapter 4 : Shakespeare's Globe | Stage | The Guardian

Shakespeare Stage is producing The Complete History of America (abridged). We are so excited to be able to bring you this hilarious, poignant, ridiculous show, but we need your help! Making theatre comes with many costs, and we are looking for your help.

Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school. And then the justice, In fair round belly with good capon lined, With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws and modern instances; And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts Into the lean and slippered pantaloone, With spectacles on nose and pouch on side; His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, Turning again toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. As a baby, a man acquires no accomplishments. In fact, he does little more than "mewl" and "puke" in the arms of a nurse. By stating that the infant is cared for by a "nurse," the character reveals his level of aristocracy. A lower-class infant would be cared for by his mother. Educated Against His Will Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school. After infancy, this anyman passes into the stage of a "whining schoolboy. This lousy little school kid bops off to school against his will. The boy possesses a shiny face, scrubbed clean by his nurse, of course—or mother if he happens to be lower-class. The boy creeps toward the school "like a snail," no doubt hating every step, wishing he were going anywhere else. At this stage, the man becomes full of himself, as he goes in search of a reputation, even though it may be one that bursts as easily as a bubble. The man then takes "strange oaths," while wearing his facial hair "like a pard. Only Playing a Part And then the justice, In fair round belly with good capon lined, With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws and modern instances; And so he plays his part. By the fifth age, the man is accumulating body flesh as he undergoes the unpleasant increase often called "middle-age spread. The Return of the Schoolboy The sixth age shifts Into the lean and slippered pantaloone, With spectacles on nose and pouch on side; His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice, Turning again toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound. As chronological age has moved the man forward, he lands on the stage where he has difficulty even maintaining his earlier activities. He no longer fits into his clothes because he has become thin, losing that round belly from before. The man at this advanced stage sports glasses to assist his failing vision. With his shrinking body, even his voice is undergoing a transformation from its "manly" huskiness to that of a childish whine, reminiscent of the schoolboy. The "Sans" Man Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, Is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. Jaques, who is after all French, then calls the last stage one wherein the man is "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything. The Sonnet Sequence Scholars and critics of Elizabethan literature have determined that the sequence of Shakespeare sonnets may be classified into three thematic categories: It is likely that the young man is Henry Wriothesley, the third earl of Southampton, who is being urged to marry Elizabeth de Vere, the oldest daughter of Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. Many scholars and critics now argue persuasively that Edward de Vere is the writer of the works attributed to the nom de plume, "William Shakespeare. For more information regarding Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford, as the real writer of the Shakespearean canon, please visit The De Vere Society , an organization that is "dedicated to the proposition that the works of Shakespeare were written by Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford. In some sonnets, the speaker addresses his muse, in others he addresses himself, and in others he even addresses the poem itself. Even though many scholars and critics have traditionally categorized this group of sonnets as the "Fair Youth Sonnets," there is no "fair youth," that is "young man," in these sonnets. There is no person at all in this sequence, with exception of the two problematic sonnets, and The themes of sonnets and would better categorize with the "Marriage Sonnets" because they do address a "young man. While most scholars and critics tend to categorize the sonnets into the three-themed schema, others combine the "Marriage Sonnets" and the "Fair Youth Sonnets" into one group of "Young Man Sonnets. Sonnet 99 might be considered

somewhat problematic: The rest of the sonnet follows the regular rime, rhythm, and function of the traditional sonnet. The Two Final Sonnets Sonnets and are also somewhat problematic. They are classified with the Dark Lady Sonnets, but they function quite differently from the bulk of those poems. Sonnet is a paraphrase of Sonnet ; thus, they carry the same message. The two final sonnets dramatize the same theme, a complaint of unrequited love, while outfitting the complaint with the dress of mythological allusion. The speaker employs the services of the Roman god Cupid and the goddess Diana. In the bulk of the "dark lady" sonnets, the speaker has a been addressing the woman directly, or making it clear that what he is saying is intended for her ears. In the final two sonnets, the speaker is not directly addressing the mistress. He does mention her, but he is speaking now about her instead of directly to her. He is now making it quite clear that he is withdrawing from the drama with her.

Chapter 5 : Shakespeare & Elizabethan Stage Sets

There were certain design aspects of the Elizabethan stage that offered some realism as well. The upper gallery could be a tower, a battlement, a bedroom window, a hilltop or, most famously in Romeo and Juliet, a balcony.

Posted on April 17, by Diana W. With the opening earlier this month of the Steven S. Koblak Education and Visitor Center, The Huntington has gained an elegant, comfortable new space for lectures, conferences, and performances. Called Rothenberg Hall, it features the seat Robert C. Ritchie Auditorium, which has exceptional acoustics and superb audiovisual capabilities. Keck Foundation Director of Research, Steve Hindle, is excited to host his first conference in the new digs. Rothenberg Hall features the seat Robert C. Photograph by Jamie Pham. First up on the conference slate is a two-day exploration of the Bard himself. The Bard is also the focus of three other events taking place at The Huntington: The Independent Shakespeare Co. The program will include interactive workshops and craft activities that explore Shakespeare and his world. Then on Thursday, May 7, artists from L. Opera join actors from the Independent Shakespeare Co. An Evening of Words and Music. The fantastic story includes shipwrecks, pirates, an abandoned baby, a long-lost wife, and a knight in rusted armor fighting for love. By turns lyrical and rough, the sprawling play was wildly popular in Renaissance England. Shakespeare was baptized April 26, , and scholars have long believed that he was born three days earlier on April Ironically, he died on the same date 52 years later, in Last April 23 was the th anniversary of his birth, and that date next year marks the th anniversary of his death. The performance of Pericles on June 6 at 7 p. Tickets are available through brownpapertickets. Thompson is senior writer for the office of communications and marketing at The Huntington.

Chapter 6 : best To the Stage images on Pinterest in | Shakespeare plays, Stage and Summary

Stage directions are simply directions to the company performing a play as to what's happening around the drama, who's on the stage and who isn't, when they arrive, when they leave, where they are on the stage, when music should be played, bugles sounded, and so on.

Introduction Few have done more to celebrate and popularise the work of Shakespeare than actor and director Kenneth Branagh, born in Belfast in December. His remarkable and prolific career has seen Branagh breathe new life into Shakespeare on stage and screen, and open up the work of the Bard to a global audience. Branagh undertook extensive research to help his development of the character, even securing a meeting with Prince Charles to better understand the responsibilities and isolation associated with royal life. Branagh won critical acclaim for his depiction of Henry V as a complex, doubting character and for his clarity in speaking the Shakespearean verse. Kenneth Branagh in Henry V Contrary to expectation, shooting of the film was finished in seven weeks and under budget. Henry V was released in autumn. Henry V also won critical acclaim, particularly in the U. He therefore showed his versatility in acting in a Shakespearean comedy, tragedy and history play. Branagh did not return to the company until when he performed as Hamlet, a part he revisited many times during his career. The production utilised a fuller version of the play giving it a running time of over four hours and transported the action to an Edwardian setting. Amazingly, the entire six month run of the play was sold out before the first performance. Box office success was mirrored by the critical reception of the play; in particular, Branagh impressed with his clarity and naturalistic performance. Joanne Pearce and Kenneth Branagh in Hamlet A fundamental principle underpinning Renaissance was that actors would be directed by fellow actors, promoting a sense of camaraderie and lack of hierarchy within the company. A further aim was to improve the reach and accessibility of Shakespeare. Alongside two contemporary plays, Twelfth Night opened the inaugural season of the company. The production featuring a fine cast including Anton Lesser, Frances Barber and Richard Briers earned rave reviews and established the credentials of the Renaissance Theatre Company. The season featured three Shakespeare plays, each directed by an esteemed actor making his or her directorial debut. Finally, Derek Jacobi directed Hamlet with Branagh in the leading role. The national reach of the touring season and the use of actors as directors fulfilled two of the key principles of the company. After a three month run at Birmingham Repertory Studio, the touring season travelled to venues across the U. The tour also included a two week run in Denmark, at Kronborg Castle at Elsinore, the famous setting of Hamlet. By the time the tour reached London for a three month run at the Phoenix Theatre, hype about the Shakespeare season was at a peak. Branagh built upon this wave of popularity for Shakespeare by beginning filming Henry V just two days after the end of the nine month touring season. In , to celebrate the fifth anniversary of Renaissance, the company performed Coriolanus at the Chichester Festival. He also assembled an international cast including Keanu Reeves and Denzel Washington that helped make Shakespeare globally marketable. As ever, the emphasis was on a naturalistic style of acting, with the American actors speaking in their own accents. Laurence Fishburne and Kenneth Branagh in Othello With a running time of over four hours, the film was radical for both Shakespeare on screen and cinema in general. Branagh wrote the screenplay, directed and starred in the film, drawing on his previous theatrical performances of Hamlet to bring the title character to life on screen. Branagh converted the play into a musical, incorporating classic songs into the screenplay, and set the action in the late s. Kenneth Branagh and Julie Christie in Hamlet Directed by Michael Grandage, the play utilised a stripped down set within Sheffield Crucible Theatre. Harking back to the values of the Renaissance Theatre Company, emphasis was placed on lucid speaking of verse and the accessibility of the play.

Chapter 7 : Shakespeare in performance - Wikipedia

"All the world's a stage," declares Jaques in William Shakespeare's play As You Like It. blog.quintoapp.com that may be true, there's something to be said for an auditorium with a beautiful stage, state-of-the-art acoustics, raked seating, and clear sight lines.

It will usually have a proscenium arch that frames the it like a painting so the action presents itself to you as a moving picture. Modern audiences have a taste for realism so the sets represent the kind of scenes we are used to in our real world life. A scene may take place in a dining room, for example, and will be set up and decorated as a dining room, with chairs, table, real food and so on. The next scene may take place in a forest, and there may be trees, and lights representing the sun filtering through leaves. Perhaps the next scene takes place in a bedroom and it will be a recognisable bedroom. At the end of a scene there will usually be a blackout, during which the actors can leave silently and the set can be changed. The playwright " and all the other Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights " wrote in a way that encouraged the audience to imagine the sets. Sets used in the modern way I have described makes the stage inflexible, whereas the Elizabethan stage was completely flexible. The empty space, that was extended out into the audience and could be viewed from three sides, could be a small prison cell, a battlefield, a royal court, a crowded city street, an ocean, and any other place, in rapid succession, without changing a thing. There were some concessions to realism in Elizabethan plays, though, and we can see how Shakespeare had some practical staging considerations in mind as he wrote his plays. For example, when Hal kills Hotspur and goes off, leaving the body on the ground, Shakespeare has Falstaff find it and decide to claim that he has killed him. Falstaff carries the body off the stage. When Hamlet kills Polonius, he drags the body off, allowing the next scene to take place somewhere else, without the dead Polonius lying in the wrong place. In the modern version the dead body just gets up and walks away during the blackout. There were certain design aspects of the Elizabethan stage that offered some realism as well. The upper gallery could be a tower, a battlement, a bedroom window, a hilltop or, most famously in Romeo and Juliet , a balcony. But it was just a gallery, always the same: It was occasionally necessary to have a piece of furniture in a scene " for example, the very important bed on which Othello murders Desdemona. In that case the bed would be on the rear stage, concealed by a curtain until the time came to act out the scene. The rear stage could also be used to do such things as reveal a surprise, both to the audience and one or more of the characters. Some of the festival productions will have a modern staging, others something more like the Elizabethan model, and there will be some that will be different from both. No matter what any theatre group does with the sets, though, our friend, William Shakespeare, will shine through the production.

Chapter 8 : The Shakespearean Stage, - Andrew Gurr - Google Books

For almost forty years The Shakespearean Stage has been considered the liveliest, most reliable and most entertaining overview of Shakespearean theatre in its own time. It is the only authoritative book that describes all the main features of the original staging of Shakespearean drama in one volume: the acting companies and their practices.

Masque Establishment of playhouses[edit] The first permanent English theatre, the Red Lion , opened in [25] but it was a short-lived failure. The first successful theatres, such as The Theatre , opened in The establishment of large and profitable public theatres was an essential enabling factor in the success of English Renaissance drama. Once they were in operation, drama could become a fixed and permanent, rather than transitory, phenomenon. Their construction was prompted when the Mayor and Corporation of London first banned plays in as a measure against the plague, and then formally expelled all players from the city in Usually polygonal in plan to give an overall rounded effect, although the Red Bull and the first Fortune were square. The three levels of inward-facing galleries overlooked the open centre, into which jutted the stage: The rear side was restricted for the entrances and exits of the actors and seating for the musicians. The upper level behind the stage could be used as a balcony , as in Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra , or as a position from which an actor could harangue a crowd, as in Julius Caesar. Individual theatre descriptions give additional information about their construction, such as flint stones being used to build the Swan. Theatres were also constructed to be able to hold a large number of people. It resembled a modern theatre in ways that its predecessors did not. Other small enclosed theatres followed, notably the Whitefriars and the Cockpit With the building of the Salisbury Court Theatre in near the site of the defunct Whitefriars, the London audience had six theatres to choose from: The cost of admission was based on where in the theatre a person wished to be situated, or based on what a person could afford. If people wanted a better view of the stage or to be more separate from the crowd, they would pay more for their entrance. Due to inflation that occurred during this time period, admission increased in some theatres from a penny to a sixpence or even higher. They never played the same play two days in a row, and rarely the same play twice in a week. One distinctive feature of the companies was that they included only males. Some companies were composed entirely of boy players. Plays contained little to no scenery as the scenery was described by the actors or indicated by costume through the course of the play. The first point is that during the Elizabethan era, women were not allowed to act on stage. The actors were all male; in fact, most were boys. For plays written that had male and female parts, the female parts were played by the youngest boy players. They traveled around England as drama was the most entertaining art at the time. As a boy player, many skills had to be implemented such as voice and athleticism fencing was one. These actors were getting paid within these troupes so for their job, they would constantly learn new plays as they toured different cities in England. In these plays, there were bookkeepers that acted as the narrators of these plays and they would introduce the actors and the different roles they played. Formal acting is objective and traditional, natural acting attempts to create an illusion for the audience by remaining in character and imitating the fictional circumstances. The formal actor symbolizes while the natural actor interprets. The natural actor impersonates while the formal actor represents the role. Natural and formal are opposites of each other, where natural acting is subjective. Overall, the use of these acting styles and the doubled roles dramatic device made Elizabethan plays very popular. It created a visual effect for the audience, and it was an integral part of the overall performance. Colours symbolized social hierarchy, and costumes were made to reflect that. For example, if a character was royalty, their costume would include purple. The colours, as well as the different fabrics of the costumes, allowed the audience to know the status of each character when they first appeared on stage. Instead, they would be selected out of the stock that theatre companies would keep. A theatre company reused costumes when possible and would rarely get new costumes made. Costumes themselves were expensive, so usually players wore contemporary clothing regardless of the time period of the play. The most expensive pieces were given to higher class characters because costuming was used to identify social status on stage. The fabrics within a playhouse would indicate the wealth of the company itself. The fabrics used the most were: Actors also left clothes in their will for

following actors to use. There was a discrimination of status within the classes. Higher classes flaunted their wealth and power through the appearance of clothing, however, actors were the only exception. If actors belonged to a licensed acting company, they were allowed to dress above their standing in society for specific roles in a production. Although most of the plays written for the Elizabethan stage have been lost, over remain. The people who wrote these plays were primarily self-made men from modest backgrounds. Although William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were actors, the majority do not seem to have been performers, and no major author who came on to the scene after is known to have supplemented his income by acting. Their lives were subject to the same levels of danger and earlier mortality as all who lived during the early modern period: Christopher Marlowe was killed in an apparent tavern brawl, while Ben Jonson killed an actor in a duel. Several were probably soldiers. However, they had no ownership of the plays they wrote. Once a play was sold to a company, the company owned it, and the playwright had no control over casting, performance, revision, or publication. The profession of dramatist was challenging and far from lucrative. This was probably at the low end of the range, though even the best writers could not demand too much more. A playwright, working alone, could generally produce two plays a year at most. In the s Richard Brome signed a contract with the Salisbury Court Theatre to supply three plays a year, but found himself unable to meet the workload. Shakespeare produced fewer than 40 solo plays in a career that spanned more than two decades: Ben Jonson achieved success as a purveyor of Court masques , and was talented at playing the patronage game that was an important part of the social and economic life of the era. Those who were purely playwrights fared far less well: Playwrights dealt with the natural limitation on their productivity by combining into teams of two, three, four, and even five to generate play texts. The majority of plays written in this era were collaborations, and the solo artists who generally eschewed collaborative efforts, like Jonson and Shakespeare, were the exceptions to the rule. Dividing the work, of course, meant dividing the income; but the arrangement seems to have functioned well enough to have made it worthwhile. Of the plus known works in the canon of Thomas Dekker , roughly 50 are collaborations.

Chapter 9 : Shakespeare's Stage Directions: How To Read & Understand

All The World's A Stage by William blog.quintoapp.com the worlds a stage And all the men and women merely players They have their exits and their entrances And one man in his time plays many parts His.