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Elizabethan theatre facts bbc

Thanks to the revamp of the iconic Globe Theatre and the success of blockbusters such as Shakespeare in Love, most people believe that public theatres were commonplace in English cities throughout the Elizabethan period. Related: Shakespeare gets a new home However, according to Dr Tara Hamling from the History Department and Shakespeare Institute at the University of Birmingham, it's just not true. The first commercial public theatre wasn't actually built until 1567 - nearly a decade into Elizabeth's reign, she says. And while these dedicated spaces for performance plays must have offered exciting new recreational opportunities in the capital when it comes to explaining how people across the country experienced drama, performance and entertainment in the 16th century, they are only part of the story. The mystery and wonder of the play formed the bulk of early Elizabethan drama - as they have done for centuries. These plays, which dramatized the Bible and the lives of the saints, were closely related to the calendar of the Catholic Church and were performed at certain times of the year, coinciding with church holidays. Decorated competition wagons have been pulled around the city or city, stopping at key locations to perform in the outer spaces for the public. During the day, players will take the entire Bible, starting in the morning with the creation, and ending in the evening with the last decision. The events were huge social events, accompanied by great spectacle and music, which were passed on to the Scriptures to a wider audience, while allowing merchants to sell their goods. However, the split of Henry VIII from the Catholic Church and the subsequent establishment of the Church of England under Elizabeth I in 1559 marked the beginning of the end for these essentially Catholic performances, which were defined as one of the corruptions of the rejected Roman Catholic religion. Religious reformers did their best to eradicate the genre as a whole throughout Elizabeth's reign, and seem to have more or less succeeded by the end of the 16th century. The virtual disappearance of religious-themed dramas created a vacuum that was soon filled with tragedies, comedies and plays of history that we now associate with Shakespeare and his contemporaries. This new breed of drama was performed by professional actors who toured the country, putting performances wherever they could find work - from taverns and guildhalls, churches and cemeteries, to private families in front of an audience of lords and dignitaries. Plays were often staged in hotels. These important forerunners to permanent theaters, and often featured balconies - overlooking the hotel courtyard - and makeshift gates set up to collect entrance fees. However, not all cities welcomed travel companies, and in an attempt to prevent crowds from crowds and disease, some civic authorities paid touring companies to move on before they were given the chance to speak. The volume of players touring the country during the 16th century makes it highly likely that they would have provided William Shakespeare, born in 1564, with his first taste of theatre in his birthplace of Stratford-upon-Avon. We know, for example, that there were at least 30 visits by travel companies to the city between 1568 and 1597. However, life has become increasingly difficult for these errant troupes of traveling players during Elizabeth's reign after the Royal Proclamation in 1559 called for the licensing of plays for performance. A later act in 1572 limited the movement of touring players further, naming all those not noble patrons as tramps who were to be heavily whipped and burned through the cartilage of the right ear with a hot iron compass inches. Their fears were only increased by the fact that performers could attract a large audience - often in taverns and hotels - which, in turn, were seen as a threat to the kingdom's security. In addition to plays staged by touring companies in hotels, guildhalls and even churches, civil entertainment was held on the streets, often prompted by a royal visit. During his visits to towns and cities across the kingdom - known as royal records - the monarch often stopped along the way to watch contests and plays, and sometimes provided a major role in entertainment. While hotel courtyards and guildhalls continued to be used in the 1560s and 1570s, the proliferation of purpose-built theatres in London was supposed to change the face of drama in the later Elizabethan period. More of a shrewd business venture than an appreciation of art, the first theatre - the Red Lion in Whitechapel, built in 1567 - was the brainchild of a grocer who built forests on the farmhouse grounds. Soon other businessmen followed suit, and nine more specialized theatres appeared on the outskirts of London between 1575 and 1578. Their location in the sowing areas of the city, among bear baiting and brothels, conveniently put them outside the control of the city authorities. Hamling concludes: If we want to know where the Elizabethan drama happened, it is clear that a number of different locations and spaces have been used for performance, some of which can still be visited today. London, where Shakespeare's theatre burned up to The revamped Globe Theatre, located on the south bank of the Thames, in the suburbs of Southwark, is one of London's most famous landmarks and the site most closely associated with Shakespeare's plays. Like most permanent theaters of the time, the Globe was tall, with an open roof, roughly round structure with a lid over part of the stage and a roof around the edge of the building to protect the galleries from the elements. The plays invariably took place in the afternoon with actors performing on the raised stage and spectators standing in the space around the stage or sitting in galleries, according to the class. Shakespeare was one of four globe shareholders, and historians believe that his two plays, Henry V and Julius Caesar, were almost certainly written in 1599, the year the Globe opened. However, the tragedy occurred in 1613, when during the performance of Henry VIII, the gun ignited from the stage with a thatched roof and the theater burned to the ground. The building was rebuilt the following year, this time with a tiled roof. Shakespeare died in 1616, but his company of players, The King's Men, remained at the Globe until 1642, when the English Parliament issued a decree suppressing all stage plays in theaters when civil war broke out across the country. No longer in use, the building was demolished in 1644 to take away space for apartment buildings. Work to restore the structure began in 1993, and the new Globe Theatre, just metres from its original location, reopened to the public three and a half years later. Visitors to the reconstructed globe can enjoy the exhibition, as well as watch Shakespeare's plays performed by modern touring companies. (S 020 7902 1400 www.shakespearesglobe.com) Great Hall, Hampton Court Palace, London, where players performed before the Royal Family Royal Entertainment were not limited to royal entrances and open-air performances while on progress across the country. Monarchs often use the company of players to entertain them at court - and the Great Hall at Hampton Court Palace is a perfect example of the space used for such celebrations. We know that the Shakespearean troupe performed A Midsummer Night's Dream before James VI Day and I on New Year's Eve 1604. The hall was also regularly used as a theatre during the reign of Elizabeth I, and in 1572 a stage with an adjoining camera serving as a dressing room for players was erected on the screen; The Large Clock Room was reportedly used for rehearsals. The Great Hall appeared to continue its role as a part-time theatre and after the creation of permanent theatres, and its final performance recorded as taking place on October 18, 1731, although the stage was not finally cleared until 1798. The Hampton Court Palace itself was built around 1514 for Henry VIII Cardinal Wolsey. In 1529, when Wolsey fell from grace, the king claimed the palace for himself, adding the current Great Hall between 1532 and 1535. The space is often described as the last medieval large hall of the English monarchy, with its magnificent hammer roof and luxurious wall veils. It's open to the public. (S 0844 482 7777 www.hrp.org.uk/hamptoncourtpalace/) The Royal Mile, Edinburgh, where Mary the queen of Scotland made her extravagant royal entrance of Edinburgh's Royal Mile has long been associated with official royal records and has often seen street theatre meet royal performances at the monarch's triumphant celebration. On 2 September 1561, Mary and her royal party set off for the royal entrance to Edinburgh, travelling from Holyrood House along the Royal Mile to the sound of cannon fire. The party was met first by 50 young people at Castle Hill dressed as fantastic blackamoors, a fairly common feature of renaissance contests, symbolizing the exotic forces of disorder that had to be tamed by the power of a Christian ruler. With crowds filling the streets, Mary continued her procession, carrying in the air 16 honest men of the city, followed by a basket containing children of singers and musicians. The party made several stops along the way to witness a particular contest or put tables. At the first stop there was a wooden arch decorated with small flowers where the queen stopped to listen to the singing of certain Byrnes in Maist celestial wisdom. On the landscape cloud, under the arch, was a boy of about six years old who, according to the inner annals of Scotland, went down as it was an angel, and deliver it to her hieness keys to the city, along with ane Bible and ane Psalm-buik jumpsuit with fine purple velvet. Royal recordings across Europe were important public relations opportunities for the Crown, as well as excellent examples of street theatre and other forms of lavish entertainment in which the monarch was to participate. Edinburgh's Royal Mile connects Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood House and is considered the city's oldest street. (www.edinburgh-royalmile.com) The Article Elizabethan Drama was published in partnership with BBC History magazine. Log.

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