

PART II

THEATER

Andrew Gurr, University of Reading, United Kingdom

When Shakespeare arrived in London near the end of the 1580s, he rode the crest of a huge wave of pleasure in playgoing. Through the last decade of the sixteenth century, Shakespeare helped to generate an enthusiasm for seeing and hearing plays that has lasted through all subsequent centuries. Shakespeare's plays, built on the success of those produced by writers such as Christopher Marlowe and Thomas Kyd through the 1580s, developed their appeal to a wide spectrum of London's society, literate and illiterate alike, and to the city's many visitors from overseas. Making plays for the new stages that began to appear on the city's verges in the 1570s quickly became a major commercial enterprise.

In a heavily authoritarian society, acting companies were almost uniquely democratic, organized as equal "sharers." Shakespeare began as a player, and never rose above the rank of sharer in the fortunes of the companies he belonged to. It was with his help, as a writer and a fellow player, that his main company, founded in 1594 under the patronage of Lord Chamberlain and later to run under the king's own name, became the greatest of its time. Theater was an enterprise, in the sense of that term as a bold undertaking as well as a commercial venture. Multiple aspects of theater as an enterprise are the subject of this chapter.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Acting companies
- Playgoing
- Sharers
- The duopoly
- Royal patronage
- Staging
- Innovations
- Timing
- Playing spaces
- Acting
- Acting companies
- Playhouses
- Boy companies
- Peripheral citizen playhouses versus privileged city playhouses
- Audiences
- Performing for the court and at great houses
- Music and jigs
- The downfall of playing in 1642

10. EUROPEAN THEATER SCENE

Franklin J. Hildy, University of Maryland, United States

Shakespeare was born into the century that saw professional theater experience an acceleration in growth that was unparalleled since Hellenistic times. There is no single readily apparent explanation for this development. The suppression of religious theater in Protestant countries, scholarly interest in Roman and Greek theater, the dissemination of information and play texts through print, conspicuous patronage of theaters by secular and religious nobility, and rapid population growth in cities such as London were all factors. No two areas of Europe experienced this confluence of events in quite the same way, yet professional theater seems to have become possible almost everywhere within a few decades of Shakespeare's birth.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Background
- Minstrels
- Theater in the Italian states
- The classical revival
- Commedia dell'arte
- Theater in France
- Theater in Spain
- The professional theater revival

11. PLAYERS AND THE PLAYING BUSINESS

Jerzy Limon, University of Gdańsk, Poland

Between 1590 and 1660, dozens of English actors formed strolling companies, crossed the English Channel, and sought fortune in ducal and royal courts, performing also in public spaces, in city squares, markets, and fairs. Only on rare occasions did they have a public theater at their disposal, as was the case at Nuremberg and Gdańsk, where local fencing schools functioned also as playhouses. The “tragedians of the city,” mentioned in *Hamlet*, paid sporadic visits to the Continent even before 1590, and we have evidence for their presence in Denmark (Elsinore) in the 1580s, in Germany (Dresden and Leipzig), and also in Sweden. These exploratory tours were followed by regular visits that were to develop eventually into a permanent presence of English players on the Continent until well after the Restoration.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Patronage
- Organization of the companies
- Staging arrangements
- Traveling comedians

12. PLAYHOUSES

Gabriel Egan, University of Loughborough, United Kingdom

Drama does not need purpose-built venues. Most of the scripts produced in the 2,500-year history of recorded drama can be performed quite adequately outdoors or within any room large enough to hold the performers and spectators. However, to give large numbers of spectators a reasonable view of the action, and to charge them effectively for the privilege, a custom-built performance space is needed. The Greeks and the Romans erected such spaces, but the European Middle Ages got along without them. It was an event, then, when in 1576 the first purpose-built theater for a thousand years was erected in London. Over the next forty years, eleven other London playhouses were built or retrofitted within existing structures.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- The Theatre
- The Newington Butts playhouse
- The Curtain
- The Rose
- The Swan
- The Boar's Head
- The first Globe
- The Fortune
- The replica Globe
- The Hope
- The Red Bull and the Cockpit
- The Blackfriars

13. AUDIENCES AND PLAYGOING

John H. Astington, University of Toronto, Canada

Going to see and hear plays performed in public playhouses, buildings specifically designed or adapted primarily to serve the needs of actors and audiences, was a relatively new cultural habit, only one generation old, when Shakespeare arrived in London in the late 1580s. The constitution of audiences, and of theaters, changed over time, but for most of his professional life Shakespeare wrote for a large, mixed audience who watched and listened in the theaters we think typical of Elizabethan London, the “wooden Os”: the Globe, the Curtain, and the Theatre. Audiences elsewhere – at court, at the inns of court, at “private” rehearsals by the boys’ companies, at indoor theaters like the Blackfriars – were numerically smaller and socially more select.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Constituencies of the audience
- Playgoers
- Economies, class, and gender
- Other audiences
- “Private” theater audiences
- Pleasures and perils of playgoing
- Polemics, politics, and the plague
- Seeing and hearing plays
- Eyewitnesses

14. PROPERTIES

Fran Teague, University of Georgia, United States

A stage property (“prop”) is an object that generally operates to establish a character, create *mise-en-scène*, or forward action. Such objects are sometimes limited to hand props, a term indicating that an actor can pick them up and carry them, but the category may extend to pieces of stage furniture or even costume pieces such as a crown or handkerchief. When a prop serves more broadly, the term indicates any nonhuman presence onstage that enters the action in some way. Props are things that act. Playwrights did not specify such objects haphazardly, and considering what an actor holds as he moves across a Renaissance stage is crucial to understanding how a play works.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Establishing character
- Other functions
- Where did properties come from?
- Consider the joint stool

15. COSTUMES

Bridget Escolme, Queen Mary College, University of London, United Kingdom

All the evidence suggests that Shakespeare’s actors wore contemporary clothing to perform the theatrical repertoire. To a degree, Shakespeare’s audiences would have been able to read clothing onstage as they would have read it in everyday life. No drama simply reflects social life, however. The plays themselves and the display of clothing in theatrical space would have emphasized and interrogated particular social aspects of clothing in theatrically focused ways. Clothing on the day- or candle-lit stage, with its highly wrought decorative *frons*, its boys who played women, and its legitimized flouting of the sumptuary laws, would have put quotidian display and the construction of social personae through clothing in particularly emphatic theatrical quotation marks.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Henslowe’s diary and Alleyn’s inventory
- The drawing of *Titus* attributed to Henry Peacham
- Hearing and seeing a play

- “Period” dress, social convention
- Madness, gender, and theatricality
- Costume and the iconography of punishment
- Costume and the question of taste
- Understanding Shakespeare’s costumes now
- Costume, dramaturgy, and meta-theater

16. COSMETICS

Farah Karim-Cooper, Shakespeare’s Globe, United Kingdom

Shakespeare’s plays made use of cosmetics not only in a material sense but also metaphorically. The drama of Shakespeare and his contemporaries is replete with cosmetic imagery because the subject of artifice had become central to the contemporary debates about the fashioning of the body and the presentation of the self, as well as to philosophical writings about the relationship between art and nature. So while early modern actors used actual cosmetics on the stage, ignoring the typical moralistic concerns with beautifying the body, playwrights, through their lavish cosmetic spectacles, revalued and celebrated cosmetic artifice even while using them metaphorically to highlight the discrepancies between appearance and reality.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Opposition to cosmetics
- Fear of female painting
- Antivanity arguments
- A protoindustry of cosmetics
- Cosmetics in the playhouse
- Staging makeup from the outdoor to the indoor theater
- Pearled faces

17. PLAYWRITING

John D. Cox, Hope College, United States

As the *Records of Early English Drama* have consistently confirmed, most dramatic performances during roughly the first five centuries of English drama (1100 to 1600) were not written down. Christian and folk rituals (often syncretically blended) were the expression of a largely oral culture, and the rise of written drama is approximately concurrent with the rise of widespread literacy and print culture. With the rise of theater as an enterprise in London in the 1580s and 1590s, that situation changed. Although the majority of scripts for London’s public theaters have not survived, most of those that do exist come with the name of the author or authors. This chapter surveys the variety of circumstances in which authors wrote theater scripts in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Humanist and Reformation playwrights
- Rival and collaborative playwrights
- Playwriting in London commercial theaters
- Collaborative playwriting
- Rival playwrights: Marlowe and Shakespeare
- Playwriting after Shakespeare

18. PRODUCTION PROCESSES

Tiffany Stern, University College, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

Early modern plays did not have as their goal a perfected, finished form. That is because early modern plays never ceased to be in production; indeed, texts that continued to be performed were regularly revised to keep them current. From the

separate plots or scenarios from which they were written to the separate parts given to actors and the separate documents read onstage, an early modern play had fragments and fragmentation at its core, which often led to textual differences. From the company demands about plots to the request that a play be altered in the light of audience criticism, an early modern play also had collaboration at its core, which often also led to textual differences. Separation and collaboration, seeming opposites, combined in plays of Shakespeare's time.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Reading the play
- Rehearsing the play
- Group rehearsal
- Censoring the play
- Performing the play
- Revising the play
- Textual instability

19. STAGE DIRECTIONS AND THE STAGE SPACE

Mariko Ichikawa, Tohoku University, Japan

Stage directions in early modern play texts, as meager as they are in comparison with those of some nineteenth- and twentieth-century dramatists, provide more evidence than one might think about how the plays were originally performed. London's commercial playhouses of the early modern period varied considerably in size, shape, and architectural features. They were, however, similar in the spatial relationship between the stage and the auditorium and in the basic equipment of the stage. This chapter deals with several familiar words and phrases found in Shakespearean and non-Shakespearean stage directions that are regularly linked to entrances, actions, sounds, and other aspects of performance. These simple theatrical terms accommodated the fictional reality of the dramatic world to the physical reality of the theater.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Time allowed for entrances and exits
- The use of stage doors
- The main and the marginal parts of the stage
- Positions behind the stage
- The threshold between "onstage" and "offstage"
- The upper level
- The *heavens* and the *hell*

20. MUSIC

David Lindley, University of Leeds, United Kingdom

Early modern dramatists inherited traditions and practices from medieval and early Tudor theater, where music had been a significant part of the entertainment. Actors were trained to play a variety of instruments and to sing, and audiences expected music of various kinds as part of the afternoon's entertainment. This chapter considers the practicalities of who played and sang, differences between theaters, changes in style over time, the place of music in early modern culture outside the theater, and the complex of attitudes that an audience might bring with it to the theater. Although it is often assumed that music simply "speaks" across cultures and times, its elusive meanings are constituted by and within a network of culturally conditioned expectations and individual memories.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Music and early modern culture
- Music in early modern society
- Music in the theater: practicalities
- Loud music
- Soft music
- Song
- "Performed" song
- "Impromptu" songs

21. THE PREHISTORY OF SHAKESPEAREAN THEATER

Janette Dillon, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom

Permanent playhouse buildings were not a part of the theatrical landscape in England, as far as we know, until the building of the Red Lion and the Theatre in London in 1567 and 1576, respectively. Before that, companies were relatively small, and most players were accustomed to adapting their performance across a range of venues from market squares and open spaces to guildhalls and the halls of great houses and court palaces. The development of playing arrangements from open space to trestle stage to booth stage should not be understood as a simple evolution. Quite sophisticated staging is recorded from a relatively early date, but simple staging always remained (and continues to remain) an available option for companies with slender means or other reasons for preferring simplicity.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- *Locus* and *platea*
- Theater as occasion
- Court playing and influence
- Interludes
- Stage features
- Actors and acting
- Religion and Reformation

22. ENTERTAINMENTS: BAITING, DANCES, CONTESTS

Will West, Northwestern University, United States

The playhouses shared their stages, space, and personnel as well as their audiences with other entertainments; even within their plots, early modern plays found room for a gallimaufry of dance, song, spectacles, and physical contests. In fact, the distinction we are inclined to make between “players acting” and other things to do with your free time might not have been as obvious to them as it is to us. Elizabethan playing was conceptually capacious in ways that our modern definitions of theater are not. For one thing, the idea of a kind of entertainment called *theater* is more ours than theirs; Shakespeare’s contemporaries talked about *plays* and *playing*, categories that are wide enough to include tragedy, pratfalls, strange sights, and swordfights.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Activity
- Song and dance
- Morris dancing
- Jigs
- Strange sights: animals
- Motions
- Contests
- Fencing
- Baiting

23. COURT MASQUES

Jean Macintyre, University of Alberta, Canada

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the elaborate aristocratic entertainments known as “masking” formed part of court festivity all over Europe. Masking was almost always linked to “matters of state,” whether domestic politics, court factions, or external affairs; inviting an ambassador communicated the current state of alliance with or hostility to his nation. “Court masque” especially designates what masking became during the reigns of James I and Charles I. In these quasi-dramatic entertainments, introductory dialogue (spoken by hired actors) prepared for the entry of costumed aristocrats to pay homage to the king. They first danced choreographed dances and then “took out” audience members for “the revels,” court social dances that continued as long as the king pleased.

TOPICS COVERED IN THIS CHAPTER INCLUDE

- Masque texts
- Masque commissions
- Masque form
- Masque costumes
- The masque stage
- Masques, the theater, and beyond