

THE GLOBE THEATRE

“All the world’s 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...”
W. Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII

THE GLOBE THEATRE

The Globe Theatre, built in 1599 by Shakespeare’s playing company, the *Lord Chamberlain’s Men*, was open to audiences in the summer, usually from May on, and the performances took place by daylight: because there was no lighting, all performances at the Globe took place, weather permitting, during the day, between 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Days out at the Globe Theatre were an exciting event: outside the Globe Theatre there were lots of people and **stalls** selling merchandise and refreshments (fruit, beer etc.) creating a market day atmosphere.

The theatre’s wooden structure, also called the “*wooden O*”, was octagonal in shape and had a central open space in the roof, to let daylight in.

Because most of the Globe and all of its stage was open, acoustics were poor and the actors were compelled to shout their lines, stress their enunciation, and engage in exaggerated theatrical gestures. There was no proscenium arch, no curtains and changes of scene were indicated explicitly or implicitly in the speeches or narrative situations that Shakespeare wrote into the text of the plays.

The *groundlings* paid 1 penny to stand in the *Yard* of the Globe Theatre. The **gentry** paid to sit in the galleries, often using cushions for comfort. Rich nobles could watch the play from a chair set on the side of the stage itself. Besides nobles, Shakespeare’s audience was composed of **tanners**, butchers, iron-workers, **millers**, seamen from the ships **docked** in the Thames, **glovers**, servants, shopkeepers, **wig-makers**, bakers, and other tradesmen and their families.

The Interior

- The **Pit**, or **yard**, was the area located around the stage: it was the cheapest part of the Globe Theatre where the audience had to stand. The stage structure projected into the yard where the groundlings stood to watch the play around the 3 sides of the stage structure.
- The stage had two primary parts:
 - the **outer stage**, which was a rectangular platform projecting into the courtyard from the back wall. Above it there was a **thatched roof**, but there were no front or side curtains.
 - the **inner stage** was the recess between two projecting wings at the very back of the outer stage. This stage was used by actors who were in a scene but not directly involved in the immediate action of the play, and it was also used when a scene took place in an inner room.
- Underneath the floors of the outer and inner stages there was a large **cellar** called **hell**, used for the dramatic appearance of ghosts.
- Rising from behind the stages was the **tiring-house**, the three-storey section of the playhouse that contained the dressing rooms, the **prop** room, the musician’s gallery, and connecting passageways. The second level of the tiring-house contained a **central balcony stage** in the middle, undoubtedly used multiple times in the production of *Romeo and Juliet* for the famous balcony scene.

- **Galleries:** around the Globe theatre were three tiers of roofed galleries. The galleries had rows of wooden seats, accessed from a back corridor and with a roof offering shelter from inclement weather.
- **Thatched roof:** the material used to make the roof was either straw or reeds. Bundles of straw or reeds were piled on the frame of the roof. The thatched roof was a real fire hazard and in 1613 the original Globe theatre was burnt to the ground, but without any victims. A new Globe theatre was quickly built, but with a tiled roof.

It is important to note that, unlike our modern theatres where seating is limited to the front view, the Elizabethan playhouses were open to the public eye at every turn, and the scenery could not be changed because there was no curtain to drop. If props (e.g.: chairs, tables) were used, they were usually placed at the beginning of the play, and sometimes they became unnecessary as the performance went on but remained on the stage regardless. Due to the lack of props and scenery, the acting troupes relied very heavily on costumes and words.

The Location

The Globe was located on the south side of the Thames River in the Southwark district that was considered the “sporting district” – if not the “red light district” – of Greater London. Although condemned by London authorities, along with cock-fighting, bear-baiting and the bawdy attractions of taverns, the Southwark theatre district operated outside the legal reach of the City’s officials. Considered an illegal profession, acting was a precarious way of life even during the relatively enlightened reigns of Elizabeth and James. Most stage players were vulnerable to arrest on charges of vagrancy if they were not under the protection of a powerful sponsor.

From a disease point of view, Shakespeare lived in one of the worst places and times in history. Shakespeare’s overcrowded, rat-infested, sexually promiscuous London, with raw sewage flowing in the Thames, was the hub for the worst diseases known to mankind. It is little surprise that the plague was the most dreaded disease of Shakespeare’s time. Carried by fleas living on the fur of rats, the plague swept through London in 1563, 1578-79, 1582, 1592-93, and 1603. The outbreaks in 1563 and 1603 were the most ferocious, each wiping out over one quarter of London’s population. During the outbreak of 1592-93, the Crown ordered the complete closure of all theatres in London.

Shakespeare’s acting company employed a regular troupe of around 12 men and four boys, but Shakespeare’s plays typically involved up to twice as many characters. The construction of his plays makes evident that he was always conscious of the solution: doubling, the practice by which a single actor could take on more than one role in the play. At its simplest, all this requires is that the doubled characters do not appear in the same scene, and that there is time between one character’s exit and the actor’s next entrance for any necessary costume changes.

Women were forbidden, by law, to perform in the Elizabethan theatre, therefore there was no actress at the Globe Theatre. The parts of female characters were played by young boys, usually aged between 13 and 19 years of age, when their voices were still high and muscles had not fully developed.

ambient: *di temperatura*
 bawdy: *sconcio*
 bundle: *fascio*
 cellar: *cantina, parte interrata*
 to dock: *attraccare, ormeggiare*
 doubling: *raddoppio*
 dreaded: *temuto*
 gentry: *aristocratici*
 glover: *guantaio*
 hub: *centro, cuore*
 miller: *mugnaio*
 prop: *attrezzature, arredi scenici*

reed: *canna*
 regardless: *senza farci caso*
 shelter: *rifugio, riparo*
 stall: *bancarella*
 stinkard: *puzzolente*
 tanner: *conciatore*
 thatched roof: *tetto di paglia*
 tier: *livello*
 tiring-house: *retropalco*
 vagrancy: *vagabondaggio*
 wig: *parrucca*

Some facts

- Audience Capacity: the Globe theatre could hold 1500 people in the audience and this number expanded to 3000 with the people who crowded outside the theatres.
- Royalty: Queen Elizabeth I loved watching plays, but these were generally performed in indoor playhouses for her pleasure. She would not have attended the plays performed at theatres such as the Globe.
- The Nobles: upper-class nobles asked for the better seats in the Lord's rooms, paying 5p for the privilege.
- The Commoners: the lower classes were called the *Groundlings* or **Stinkards**, they stood in the theatre pit and paid 1p entrance fee: they put 1 penny in a box at the theatre entrance, hence the modern term '*Box Office*'.

COMPREHENSION

1 Answer the questions.

1. When did performances take place at the Globe (time of the day and period of the year)?
2. What shape was the theatre?
3. How was Shakespeare's audience composed?
4. Who were the groundlings?
5. What is doubling? Why did Shakespeare use it?

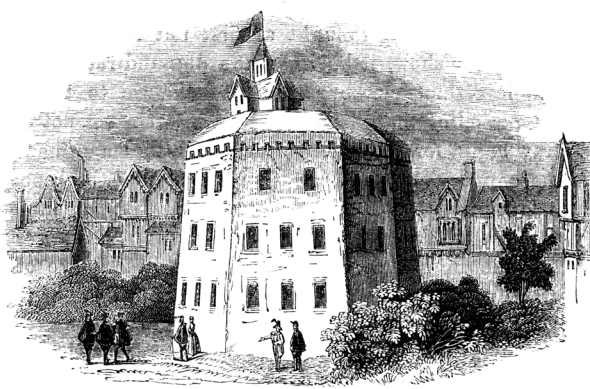
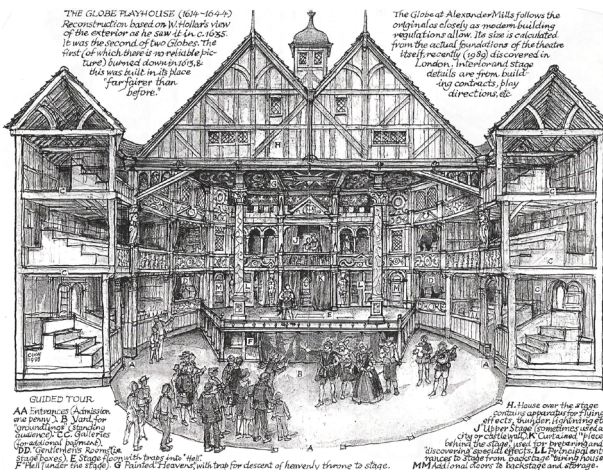
2 Choose the correct answer.

1. In the Globe...
 - a) seating was limited to the front view.
 - b) scenery could be changed.
 - c) there was no curtain to drop.
2. The Globe was located...
 - a) on the north side of the Thames.
 - b) in Southwark.
 - c) inside the legal reach of the city's officials.
3. The pit was...
 - a) the most expensive part of the Globe.
 - b) the large cellar called *hell*.
 - c) the area around the stage.
4. Actors needed the protection of a powerful sponsor because...
 - a) they were considered vagabonds.
 - b) they were enlightened.
 - c) they led a precarious way of life.
5. The role of Juliet was played by...
 - a) a man.
 - b) a woman.
 - c) a male teenager.

ANALYSIS

3 PAIR WORK. Discuss the questions.

1. The groundlings rarely washed either themselves or their clothes and, while watching the play, they stood in the yard. Here they ate (nuts, fruit, eggs and pies) and drank (ale and mead), fought, cheered, hissed and criticised actors. They usually brought an orange with them. Can you imagine why?
2. Consider the Elizabethan theatre and our modern theatre: can you list at least four important differences?



[The Globe Theatre, Bankside.]



ale: birra ad alta fermentazione
mead: idromele

FURTHER ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4 Choose the correct word.

HVAC in our Modern Theatres

Contemporary audiences demand modern **ambient** standards: perfect (1) *comfort/temperature/lighting* control, the right temperature, optimum (2) *soft/relative/hot* humidity and calibrated air re-circulation. All of these aspects are ensured by the choice of systems solutions that optimise the use of (3) *recycling/energy/improvement*.

In theatres, performances can include stage drama production, ballet, modern dance, films, opera, symphony and modern rock concerts. Performances are (4) *often/seldom/frequently* continuous: they are usually separated by several hours and, because of this (5) *intermittent/continuous/constant* usage, theatres experience a peak cooling load for only a few hours.

Air handling units with increased cooling capacity should be (6) *bordered/girdled/zoned* separately for the auditorium, lobby, stage areas, and audience seating areas.

The stage area presents several separate problems. The highly variable stage lighting is a major contributor to the cooling (7) *load/amount/weight*, so the lighting load at stage level can be handled by exhausting air around the lights. Intricate, delicate and varying scenery presents air (8) *shipment/transport/distribution* problems, too. Conditioned air is usually delivered, using numerous supply registers from the low side and backstage with numerous (9) *return/arrival/answer* or exhaust registers at the lights. Low velocities are essential to prevent scenery and curtains from fluttering.

Background (10) *turbulence/noise/eruption* control is also another very important factor to consider. Sound (11) *attenuators/constrictions/amplifiers* should be provided to reduce noise transfer from the AHU room. (12) *Fluctuation/Vibration/Shake* isolators should be used below the AHU and at fan outlets to avoid transfer of vibrations to the (13) *duct/tube/canal* feeding the theatre. It is further recommended to use flexible connections between the main ducts and supply air (14) *restrictions/portholes/diffusers* to eliminate transfer of any vibration or noise.

Most large theatres use a central chilled/hot water system serving air handling units for each zone. As a cooling load can be necessary all year long in many areas, air-cooled chiller (15) *presents/packages/parcels* located outdoors are isolated from the building.

The recommended system for distribution of HVAC in performing spaces is ducted supply through floor (16) *vents/closures/doors* with ducted ceiling return air vents in auditorium and lobby. If air supply is (17) *blasted/discharged/explored* at low velocity below people's seats, supply air temperature below 19° could create discomfort.

Adapted from: http://www.coolair.ie/_fileupload/News/Multiplex%2006-12.pdf - <http://www.scribd.com/doc/67617434/cinema-design-criterion> - <http://c03.apogee.net/contentplayer/?coursetype=ces&utilityid=duquesnelight&id=1019>

5 Discussion.

The first Globe Theatre was built in 1599, then, in 1613, it was burnt down when a cannon was fired during a performance of Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. It was rebuilt and then demolished again by the Puritans in 1644. The "new" Globe Theatre is the third construction built in the same area: excavation of the site began in 1987 and in 1993 construction work started. Like the old Globe, as the structure is an open-air amphitheatre, there is no heating or air conditioning. Those sitting in the galleries are under the protection of a sound roof, but those standing in the yard are at the mercy of the elements, while the show continues regardless.

Surf the net and find out what materials were employed for the new Globe reconstruction. Using this information, could you plan a suitable heating system, to keep a modern audience more comfortable than during the Elizabethan Era? Discuss your solutions with your classmates.