A history of the globe theatre

Entertainment, Theatre

The Globe Theatre, also well-known as Shakespeare’s theater and Elizabeth’s theater, is one of the oldest theaters in Europe. Researchers divide its history in two periods: the old Globe and the modern Globe.

The old Globe was built in 1599. From 1599 to 1608 or 1609 the Globe playhouse was the home of the Chamberlain-King's company and the only theater where it publicly presented its plays in. London.

The Globe was imitated by Henslowe, the Globe magnate, and lauded by Dekker, the playwright. Upon its stage Shakespeare's major tragedies enjoyed their first performances. Located among the stews and marshes of the Bankside, it drew across the Thames its audience, men and women, gentlemen and journeymen, sightseeing foreigners and native playgoers (Adams 2).

Shortly after the 26th of February, 1599, construction of the Globe commenced under the supervision of Peter Streete, the man with whom Philip Henslowe and Edward Alleyn contracted a year later to erect the Fortune theater along the same lines. From Streete's building schedule for the Fortune, we can estimate that the Globe took twenty-eight to thirty weeks to complete, and thus the earliest opening date would have been in late August or early September, 1599 (Adams 2-3).

Yet the playhouse signifies more than a physical structure for the presentation of plays. It has become the symbol of an entire art. Its construction initiated a glorious decade during which the company achieved a level of stability and a quality of productivity rarely matched in the history of the theater.

So rich was the achievement that virtually all interest in the Elizabethan drama radiates from the work of these years. Circumstances attendant on the building of the Globe playhouse were instrumental in developing the distinctiveness of this endeavor.

The new playhouse itself was regarded as the last word in theaters. Alleyn and Henslowe modeled the Fortune upon it. In the design of the theater there were significant changes from former playhouses (Adams 20, 22). It was a theater built by actors for actors.

To subsidize it a new financial system was instituted which more fully than heretofore interrelated theater and actors. Furthermore, young men had recently taken over the entire enterprise, playhouse and company. Until 1597 James Burbage had maintained some connection with the Lord Chamberlain's men (Adams 84). Builder and owner of the

Theatre, lessor of Blackfriars, he had exercised a strong influence on the course the company took. One more significant change occurred at this time. Either a dispute with his fellows or an irrepressible wanderlust led the leading clown, Will Kempe, to break with the company (Binelli 56).

Apparently before the stage of the Globe was painted and the spectators admitted, he severed his connection with the Lord Chamberlain's men, though he had been among the original five who had taken a moiety of the lease on the projected playhouse. After his departure, there followed a period of great stability in the acting company. In the entire decade there were only two replacements, owing to the deaths of actors, and three

additions with an expansion from nine to twelve members in 1603 (Adams 83, 96).

I suppose that until now the discussion of the Globe playhouse has proceeded from dramatic function to theatrical realization. No one really can reconstruct the design of the Globe playhouse.

All hypotheses, some reasonable, some farfetched, lack supportive materials and proofs about construction and design of the theater. Each scholar, selecting for his research certain scraps of evidence, has painted a hypothetical image of the Elizabethan playhouse.

Following John Adams, it was