

Globe theatre report



Shakespeare's Globe Theatre was constructed with lumber stolen from another theatre after a lease dispute. William Shakespeare was part owner, actor, and play write for the Globe. The area was surrounded by market stalls offering food, drink, and merchandise surrounded the area. The place had a bawdy festival like atmosphere. Commoners and nobles alike arrived early to enjoy the atmosphere. Actors performed short previews outside on the green.

The theatre held 1500 people while another 1500 could crowd in the courtyard. Above the main entrance of the theatre the words " The Whole World is a Playhouse" are inscribed. There were no bathrooms on site. The 20-sided structure had an open-air central pit, which the 5ft high stage projected into. Part of the stage and the three story tiered seating along the outside edges were protected from the elements under a thatched roof.

Plays were performed in summer months during the day. There were no backdrops, no lighting, few props, and only male actors. Actors had to exaggerate movements and shout lines so the audience could hear them. The audience had to use their imagination.

The pit held about 500 people referred to as groundlings. This was the cheapest part of the theatre with standing room only, no roof, and a ground covered in peanut shells and other garbage. The rowdy pit was filled with commoners watching and loudly applauding the plays. Fights often broke out, along with thievery. The audience must have loved the plays to endure the crowded, smelly, uncomfortable conditions for up to three hours at a time.

Audience members could enter the first tier of gallery seating for another penny. If more comfort was desired and could be afforded, another penny was paid to go into the more exclusive balconies, where one could see and be seen. Often, genteel ladies would wish to see but not to be seen in such a rough place, and would hide their faces behind mask. Rich nobles could pay for a seat on the edge of the stage, getting a very up-close and personal view.