

# Theatre revival in europe



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The Renaissance was the reformation and return of secular theatre. The Renaissance was an extraordinary period in European history. In many ways it was a time of rebellion and rebirth. During the middle ages, the overwhelming concerns were god redemption and life after death. In contrast, the foremost concerns of the renaissance were human kind, ancient wisdom, and life in the present. Renaissance values of individualism and creativity led to the emerge of great artists such as Leonardo Davinchi and Michael Angelo. In the theatre liturgical (religious) drama of the Middle Ages declined, and secular theatre once again became popular.

The mystery, miracle, and morality plays that defined drama in the Middle Ages began to cause conflict because of the difference depending on which domination produced them. Declamatory acting, an oratorical (speaking) evolutionary method, also became popular. In this style actors delivered their lines directly to the audience in a rhetorical manner, typified by order, harmony, and decorum. When Elizabeth became Queen of England in 1558, there wasn't a single professional theatre in London. By her death in 1603, London had been transformed into one of the theatre capitals on the world.

The Puritans got their name from their zeal, determination to purify the church. The only way to escape the fires of hell, according to the Puritans, was through hard work, abstinence of all profane amusements, and sexual pleasures, and careful observance of religious right. By 1600 every Londoner was within two miles of a theatre of some kind. The most famous theatre was Shakespeare's Globe located 97 paces (steps) away from the Rose theatre. Performances at the Globe and other outdoor theatres began at

about two in the afternoon. When daylight flooded the stage and lasted until about five.

The Puritans, in attempt to close all theatres in London, managed to get all laws passed that forbade anyone from advertising a production. Because of this, theatre owners found other ways to publicize their production. One method was with flags. A black flag meant tragedy; the white flag meant comedy; and the red flag meant history. Men who acted were often labeled masterless, meaning jobless, rogues and vagabonds. According to English law, any person roaming the country masterless could be branded in the chest with the letter “ V” and taken into slavery for two years.

If that person was found a second time roaming the country without a job, he could be branded on the cheek with the letter “ S” and condemned to servitude for life. This law, combined with the Puritans ceaseless efforts to banish their profession, made life hellish for actors. At court the masques were the most popular form of theatre. They originated in the early 1500s as a form of entertainment written especially for the monarch and an invited audience. Usually staged on banquet halls, court masques, were characterized by grand dances, extravagant costumes, lavish spectacle, poetry, and florid speeches.

With the reestablishment of the monarchy, the period of English history, known as the Restoration, began. This was a period of scientific discovery, new philosophical concepts, unproved economic conditions, and the return of theatre- in the French style. The Restoration also brought another innovation. In 1661, thanks to Charles II, women could legally appear on stages in

England for the first time. One of the most famous women was the pretty and irreverent Nell Gwynn (1650- 1687). Women on stage wore a novelty and most audience members found them delightful, but some still consider them indecent.

The Enlightenment was a time of great philosophical, scientific, technological, political, and religious revolutions. One Renaissance thinker who helped to usher the Enlightenment was the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), born the same year as Shakespeare. He questioned the earth-centered theory of the universe. During the Renaissance, bloody wars had raged over which type of Christianity was God's "revealed path", and validity of Christianity itself was questioned. But perhaps the father of Enlightenment was Francis Bacon (1561- 1626), who said that, "if one begins with certainty he shall end in doubts, but he will be content to begin in doubts he shall end in certainty". The revolutions in philosophy changed how playwright viewed character.

A rationalistic empirical slowly took over as actors and play writers began to look at the character's environment in order to understand why they make particular decisions. The Renaissance, the Puritans, the rogues and vagabonds, the masques, Restoration, the Enlightenment, and revolutionary theatre were all major time periods that created and shaped theatre revival in Europe. These events made European history, and is the very reason theatre was reborn and never forgotten.