Staging and Stage Décor

Perspectives on European Theater 1500-1950

Edited by

Bárbara Mujica

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Cover design by Vernon Press. Cover image: Generic set design by Sebastiano Serlio for a tragedy (scena tragica), from “Trattato sopra le scene” (1545).

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Introduction

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This volume addresses staging and stage design in European theater from diverse points of view. Some articles elucidate staging techniques used by period authors and directors, while others deal with modern adaptations of early plays. Some deal with theater construction, theater technology, audience placement and reception, or props and costuming. Along with the Introduction, which focuses on pre-modern and early Renaissance theater, this book provides an overview of staging and stage décor from the earliest performance venues until the present.

Classical Precedents

The blossoming of European theater that took place in the sixteenth century had roots deep in antiquity. Early European theater professionals inherited from their Greek predecessors theatrical genres, character types, plots, and rules about the composition and poetry of plays, as well as traditions pertaining to staging and stage décor. The oldest extant treatise on dramatic theory, Aristotle's *Poetics,* written in the fifth century BCE, attained new prominence in early modern Italy and France and influenced not only what kinds of plays were written, but also how they were staged.

By the fifth century BCE, the Greeks had developed a culture of performance that included not only plays but religious rituals, festivals, processions, and dance, gymnastics, music and poetry presentations. The most important of the festivals, which included dramatic performances, was the Dionysia, in ancient Athens. A smaller festival, which featured a dramatic competition, took place at Lenaea and dates from before 440 BCE. Graham Ley notes that although the Dionysia remained the more important of the two, "a comic writer such as Aristophanes seems to have written quite readily for both" (7). It is likely that Aristophanes' surviving plays were first performed at the Dionysia. In addition, rural Dionysia were celebrated in *demos,* or towns, but only the most important of these included dramatic competitions (Oliva and Torres Monreal 26). Fifth-century Athenian audiences did not have to be coaxed to the theater, explains J. R. Green: "Athenians themselves arranged command performances. Their agents, the magistrates, selected from the plays on offer" (7). They then found sponsors to finance the productions, offering prizes to writers and actors as inducements, as well as honoraria to the writers (Green 7).

The festivals were charged with political and cultural significance. Because they took place in early spring, when the allies of Athens were to pay their annual taxes, many dignitaries attended. Athens therefore used these occasions to demonstrate its power and wealth by making the festivals as opulent and imposing as possible (Fischer-Lichte 10). Dedicated to the god Dionysius, the festivals also served to affirm Athenian identity: "those who attend are reminded of their collective unity which derives from a single being" (Fischer-Lichte 10). This multipurpose character of theater will prevail in early modern Europe as well.

Aristotle's *Poetics* divides plays into tragedies and comedies, a distinction that endured, often with modifications, into the early modern period and beyond. The first part of the treatise defines tragedy as a type of play whose plot evokes "pity and fear"; the tragic hero develops throughout the course of the play and uses elegant, poetic language (Aristotle 9). With the exception of the texts of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, few of the hundreds of tragedies written during the Hellenistic period have survived. The second part of the *Poetics,* which deals with comedy, has been lost, although some scholars believe that the *Tractatus coislinianus,* a tenth-century Greek manuscript defining the characteristics of comedy, offers clues about the missing material. We know Greek comedy largely through the works of Aristophanes.

The first part of Aristotle's treatise was read widely among early modern European playwrights, who either followed its guidelines or rebelled against them—often leading to fierce debates. One of the most controversial aspects of the *Poetics* was the principle of the three *unities.* The unity of action required a play to depict a single happening or episode. The unity of place stipulated that it occurs at a single location, and the unity of time that it takes place in the course of a single day. Aristotle also defined poetic *decorum,* which originally referred to the appropriateness of a character's action or speech, but later came to be associated with the notion of literary propriety—the sense that certain types of scene, such as those depicting extreme violence, were not suitable for the stage.

According to Basil Willey, the three unities were really an invention of the Renaissance. Aristotle had insisted on "unity or conciseness of action" and noted that in tragedy, the action usually took place "within a single circuit of the sun" (Willey 37). Aneta Kliszcz clarifies that the unity of action "shouldn't be identified with the reduction of the plot to a single story arc but understood as the retention of the coherence of various story arcs within the plot" (35). However, during the Renaissance, commentators turned Aristotle's observations into dogma (Willey 37). In early seventeenth-century France, as Guy Spielmann argues in this volume, theorists began to insist that plays strictly adhere to the unities, provoking endless quarrels and debates on the subject.

In Spain, Lope de Vega had liberated theater from the three unities decades earlier, but in France, debates on the unities dominated until the Romantic era, when, at the opening a performance of Victor Hugo's *Hermani* (1830), classicists demonstrated violently against the play, claiming it made a mockery of the Aristotelian rules and of theater decorum. Spielmann notes that when Pierre Corneille sought to offer a Gallicized version of Guillén de Castro's *Las Mocedades del Cid* [The Youth of El Cid], a 1618 Spanish *comedia* in three acts whose action takes place in multiple locations over several years, he felt obligated to restructure the play into five acts with a single main action that occurs in one place during a time-span of 24 hours.

The practice of combining comedy and tragedy, characteristic of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega, for example, has antecedents in Greek theater. In addition to tragedies and comedies, the Greeks produced *satyr plays,* a combination of tragedy and comedy that incorporated dialogue, verse, song, dance, costumes, and a chorus. These became popular around 515. Ley explains: "The satyr play takes its name from the curious half-human, half-bestial creatures who were inevitable participants in the action, and who were called satyrs" (6).

How and where were these plays—tragedies, comedies, satyr plays—staged? The Great Dionysia was held in the precinct of the god for which it was named on the southern slope of the citadel of Athens. The word "theater" derives from *theatron,* or "watching space," the seating area built into a hill, which provided a natural grading for seats. In the earliest theaters, these were made of wood, but starting around 499 BCE, inlaid stones called *prohedria* [seats of honor] were positioned into the hillside for priests and high dignitaries.

Ley notes that the earliest evidence for performances in the precinct of Dionysius is probably the *orchestra,* a flattened circular area at the foot of the hill (17). Located in front of the *theatron,* the *orchestra* was the performance space for the actors and chorus. In the earliest theaters, it was located at ground level, but was later raised. Over the decades, the Greek theater evolved with the need to accommodate larger audiences and the accessibility of new materials. Plays could be extremely long, lasting many hours or even days, and so it was necessary to provide spectators with adequate seating.

The classical Greek structure was created in the fifth century BCE, when theater became an institution, providing not only entertainment but also political instruction and spiritual nourishment for the public. It consisted of the *orchestra* and the *koilon,* the hill slope that provided amphitheatric space. K. Chourmouziadou and J. Kang explain: “Stepped tiers were hewn in the shape of concentric circular sections in the hillside around the *orchestra* to allow the audience a better view of the performers. They were then replaced with wooden benches,” which, in turn, were replaced by stone or marble in the late fifth century BCE. “The seats were laid out concentrically around the now circular *orchestra* in arcs exceeding 180°, often extended around two-thirds of the *orchestra* circle” (Chourmouziadou and Kang).

The original performances consisted of a text chanted by an ex-archon, or former magistrate, to which a chorus shouted a reply. The chorus, a homogeneous group of actors who commented collectively on the action of the play, was an essential element in Greek theater. Sometimes the chorus would make observations on a moral issue raised in the performance or express an emotion appropriate to the stage action. The *coryphaeus,* or leader, could leave the chorus and enter into the stage action as a character. Oliva and Torres Monreal comment that these early dialogs between the chorus and the ex-archon were not so different from the exchanges between the chorus and the *coryphaeus* in tragedy (26). In time, the *coryphaeus* gave way to the “first actor,” and with the appearance of the “first actor,” western theater was born, for now, individual actors began to replace the chorus as the focus of the stage action (Oliva and Torres Monreal 26). Ancient sources name Thespsis (from which the word “thespian” derives) as the original chorist, but Aristotle does not mention him and we cannot be certain that this account is accurate (Zerba and Gorman xiii).

Junker notes that by 400 BCE, actors and musicians had begun to professionalize, and the success of a play depended more on the ability of the actors than on the author’s poetry (131). The objective of the actor came to be the embodiment of the mythological and historical characters who were the real focus of the play; that is, through *mimesis,* the actors were to turn these characters into flesh and blood people (Oliva and Torres Monreal 27). The introduction of a second and third actor corresponded to modifications in stage design: the focus of the performance moved from the *orchestra* to the raised stage. In some cases, the *koilon* was extended to accommodate more spectators (Chourmouziadou and Kang). Although in early modern theater, the chorus ceded primacy to the actor, some early modern playwrights integrated modified versions of the Greek chorus into their plays. For example, in *Fuenteovejuna,* by the Spaniard Lope de Vega, the *músicos* (musicians and singers) sometimes function as a Greek chorus.

At first, plays were performed with little stage décor, but sometime around 465, the *skené* (from which “scene” and “scenography” derive) appeared in Greek theaters. The *skené* was originally a simple structure with one door that served as a cast dressing room, but eventually was set up along the circumference of *orchestra* facing the audience. It then could provide a backdrop and be "elaborated to provide such elementary machinery as was needed to display and remove corpses, in accordance with Greek ideas of decorum, or to project gods and goddesses downwards into the moral world of stage-action or to hoist them up out of it again" (Wickham 40). Eventually, the *paraskenia*—a long stone wall, possibly with openings for entrances and exits, and with sides that jutted out from the façade at right angles the toward the audience—became part of stage architecture. The *paraskenia* functioned as wings. The single door was replaced by three: a central door with doors placed on either side of it. The *proskenion* (from which the modern word "proscenium" derives), was a raised platform in front of the *skené* that became the performance space (Wickham 40).

In later Greek theater, the *proskenion* became a narrow, elevated platform, from which solo actors delivered their lines, while other actors spoke from areas above or behind it, or from the *skené*. Early modern proscenium theaters often included a frame, or proscenium arch, that surrounded the stage and separated the audience from the performance space, creating the so-called "fourth wall." Greek theaters contained no such arch, which meant that spectators had full view of the actors at all times. The multi-level performance space of the Greek theater is reflected in the sixteenth-century Spanish *corral* theater, which was two stories high, and the Globe, in London, which was three. Estimates of audiences at ancient Greek theaters run as high as fourteen thousand, which means that architects and engineers had to design spaces with excellent acoustics so that actors' voices could be heard from anywhere.

The Greeks used several stage devices and decorative elements that later theater cultures adopted and adapted to their own performance needs. Ley remarks: "The details of the machinery remain unknown, but the principles of its operation are relatively clear" (21). The *mechane* was a type of crane used to enable actors to give the appearance of flying through the air. The *ekkyklêma* was a wheeled platform that could move on and off the stage, sometimes to show dead characters—for example, at the end of Euripides' *Hyppolytus,* when the protagonist's dying body is rolled onstage. *Skenographia*—literally, "painting on a *skené*"—is thought to refer to the creation of theatrical settings by paintings on panels called *pinakes,* an innovation ascribed either to Aeschylus or Sophocles, although Ley cautions that data on this subject is sparse (23). Scenery was also created by means of *thyromata,* complex pictures built into the scene.

Props were used in Greek theater, especially in comedy, where kitchen implements often served to create a household ambiance. Ley remarks:

"Contrived properties may form a spectacular opening to a play, such as the giant dung beetle attached to the *mechane* in Aristophanes' *Peace*" (29). In tragedy, props were used more sparingly, but could serve to identify a character—for example, Apollo and Artemis might carry a bow (Ley 29).

The mask, or *prosopon* (literally, "face"), was essential to Greek theater and also to certain religious celebrations. According to Jennifer Wise: "The shift from a narrative to a dramatic mode was made by Thespis through the introduction of the mask… For masks had never been used in any epic or lyric performance before that time" (81). Although no examples of Greek masks have survived, several ancient paintings show actors removing or putting on a *prosopon*. Early masks appear to have been helmet-shaped, with wigs, and were probably made out of some lightweight material, such as linen, wood, or cork, with animal or human hair. Each mask had exaggerated facial expressions identified with a particular role, as well as indications of the character's age and social status. As all actors were male, the mask also served to tell the character's sex. Masks also permitted the same actor to play several roles simply by changing masks. All members of the chorus wore the same mask, as they represented one voice. Use of the mask continued well into the Renaissance. In the Middle Ages, they were used in the mystery plays described below. They were also an integral aspect of the Italian *commedia dell'arte,* in which each mask was associated with a particular type of character.[1]

Costuming was another means by which the audience could distinguish characters. At first, costumes were based on the everyday wear of Greek citizens, but as time went on, they became more sumptuous and colorful—that is, more markedly theatrical. In Hellenistic times, actors playing tragic roles wore a *syrma,* a long, heavy-sleeved robe, and elevated boots, which made them taller than others onstage. Those playing comic roles wore a *chitōn,* a long robe or tunic that fastened at one shoulder, and thin-soled, sock-like shoes. Actors playing foreigners wore distinctive clothing—elaborate, long-sleeved, embroidered tunics—and realistic armor, helmets, hair-styles, and hats. Gods were distinguished by particular attributes, for example, Hermes by his winged boots (Wickham 40). Actors playing female roles wore a wooden apparatus on their chests to suggest breasts and padding on their stomachs to suggest softness. White body stockings made their skin appear lighter and more luminous. Men playing goddesses or noblewomen wore long cloaks decorated with jewels and gold. For comedy, actors might don a costume with a hugely disproportionate penis—the phallus being associated with the god Dionysus. Otherwise, "costume design might vary wildly, and fantastically, with the concept of the play" (Ley 28).

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[1] See below.

Although Greece succumbed to Roman domination after the battle of Corinth (146 BCE), the Hellenization of Rome had actually begun long before. Like Greece, Rome had a thriving performance tradition consisting of festivals, dance, acrobatics, street theater, and religious rituals. In fact, Etruscans from the area around what is now Tuscany had brought performance to Rome as early as the fourth century BCE, according to the Roman chronicler Livy. Wickham notes that Roman theater is often dismissed as inferior to its Greek predecessor because it is largely derivative with respect to content (43). However, Hellenization infused Roman theater with new energy, and Roman playwrights produced numerous high-quality plays, including the comedies of Plautus (c. 254-184 BCE) and the tragedies of Seneca (4 BCE-65 CE). Seneca's plays are of particular importance because they were read widely in translation in early modern Europe and influenced dramatists such as Shakespeare in England, Corneille and Racine in France, Lope de Vega and Calderón in Spain, and Joost van den Vondel in the Low Countries. With the expansion of the Roman Empire, theater spread throughout Europe. Roman theater influenced all later forms of farce and melodrama (Wickham 43).

In many ways, Roman theater mirrored its Greek predecessor structurally. The stage area in Roman theaters, called the *pulpitum*, was similar to the Greek *skené*. The vertical front, which was often made of stone and decorated, extended to the *orchestra* floor, and, as in ancient Greece, was called the *procaenium*. As in Greek theater, there was no proscenium arch, but even so, the actors were visible only from the front. One important Roman invention was the stone amphitheater, of which the Colosseum in Rome is the best-known example. The Roman engineer Vitruvius left a detailed description of theater architecture in the first century CE. Wickham writes: "it was his work, rediscovered early in the fifteenth century, that provided Italian architects of the Renaissance with most of their ideas of what a theatre should look like and how it should be built" (43).

K. Chourmouziadou and J. Kang point out that although Roman theaters derived from those of the Greeks, they differed in several respects:

> "The audience area, or *cavea,* of the Roman theatre was semicircular and it was united as a single structure with the stage building… There were vaulted passages at the point where the *orchestra* was connected to the *cavea,* to make the *orchestra* accessible. The walls of the stage building were the same height as the *cavea,* and the stage was wide but low in height, projecting much further than the *proscenium*, namely the front part of the stage building, and affecting the shape of the *orchestra,* which was reduced to a semicircle." (n.p.)

The raised stage and semicircular form of the *cavea* allowed every spectator to see the stage action. Chourmouziadou and Kang conclude that the innovations introduced by the Greeks, notably the raised stage and the use of stone rather than earth or wood for seating, improved acoustic conditions in the theater, both in terms of sound level and reverberation. However, the Roman theater, which was more enclosed than its predecessors, included a steeper seating area, harder materials, and a higher stage, achieved even better acoustics, "close to those in modern theaters" (Chourmouziadou and Kang).

The Roman theater typically included a curtain or tapestry, usually of a heavy, rich cloth, that could be lowered to the stage to reveal a scene. The curtain could then be raised when the scene was over. The stage floor, which was elevated about five feet above the ground, contained trapdoors through which actors and props could easily pass. Props consisted of everyday, moveable objects such as swords, daggers, goblets, articles of clothing, armor, imitation jewels, bones, or animal furs. Larger props such as sculptures, plants, or gilded statues representing Gods might also be used.

Roman scenography usually followed Greek models.[2] Oliva and Torres Monreal explain that Romans loved spectacles, which included victory parades, funeral processions, and dramatic presentations—especially those that dazzled with their visual effects—and this is reflected in the theater (54). Mime, gesture, dance and song were an integral part of theatrical performance. Different types of plays required distinct types of costume. The *fabula palliata* (new comedy, as represented by Terrence and Plautus), thus named because the actor wore a Greek robe or *pallium,* was a Romanized version of a Greek play. Actors playing women wore a *chiton* covered by a *himnation,* a cover or wrap. The *fabula togata* was a Latin comedy in a Roman setting in which the actors wore Roman togas. These comedies were eventually replaced by the *fabulas tabernarias,* which depicted popular settings and customs, and the *Atellanae* (Atellan farces), in which masked actors improvised scenes (Manuwald).

According to Oliva and Torres Monreal, we know little about the performance practices associated with Roman tragedy (56). We do know that the *praetextate* (so named for the *praetexta*, the white toga embroidered with purple worn by young patrician men) usually dealt with actual historical or current events. The *trabeate* (from *trabeatae*, a luxurious garment worn by Roman gentlemen) was a kind of bourgeois drama (Oliva and Torres Monreal 57). Actors playing young male characters wore brightly colored costumes and yellow wigs, while those playing young female characters wore yellow. Those playing elderly characters wore white garments and white wigs, and those playing merchants wore mottled clothing. Roman actors wore masks similar to those of the Greeks (Oliva and Torres Monreal 66-67).

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[2] Vayos Liapis, Costos Panayotakis, and George W. M. Harrison provide an extensive overview of research on the stagecraft of ancient Rome.

Another type of theatrical representation that gained popularity during Roman times was the *mimus*, or mime, which was originally part of the Atellan farce and eventually became a comic genre in its own right. The *mimus* consists of a burlesque sketch taken from everyday life, for which the actors wore no masks.

With the gradual collapse of the Roman Empire in the fourth and fifth centuries, theater came to a near standstill in Western Europe. There is evidence of small bands of performers—jugglers, minstrels, storytellers, mimes, and acrobats—who roamed from place to place, but apparently, no theater of lasting worth was produced during this period.

Medieval Theater

It was not until around the tenth century that European churches began to foster dramatizations of the liturgy as part of the celebration of particular feast days. These primitive enactments were meant to animate and illuminate religious rituals for mostly illiterate audiences. Scholars have traditionally thought that these began as narratives sung by two groups in call-and-response fashion rather than acted, and that they gradually gathered dramatic attributes such as impersonation, mime, and costume. However, Lawrence M. Clopper argues that most persons in the late Middle Ages had no reason to associate such reenactments with *theatrum* because "the church was a sacred place and the action cultic and symbolic" (2). *Theatrum* was a place for spectacle, but was habitually associated with obscenity and licentiousness (Clopper 3). Clerics resisted the very idea of the "theatricalization" of sacred writings. Clopper suggests that "as lay people began to institutionalize themselves—as civic corporations or trade or religious guilds—they increasingly contested clerical attempts at domination" and began to "find acceptable entertainments that reflected their concerns for their own spiritual welfare" (3).

The first actual play from this period is thought to be the *Quem Quaeritis* [Whom do you seek?], a trope (dramatic development) on the Easter Sunday liturgy. Recorded in the *Regularis Concordia* [*Monastic Agreement*], the *Quem Quaeritis* is a short work depicting the visit of the three Marys to Christ's tomb, complete with didascalias, composed between 965 and 975 by Æthelwold, Bishop of Winchester (904/9-984), a leader of the monastic reform movement in Anglo-Saxon England. Around the same time, the German canoness Hrosvitha (c. 935-973) wrote six plays on religious subjects fashioned after the comedies of the Roman playwright Terence (c. 195/185-c. 159? BCE). However, Hrosvitha

Christianized her texts, dispensing with Terrence's bawds and fools and replacing them with virginal maidens and wise men. These works were lost for centuries and so did not influence subsequent playwriting. Another woman religious, the German Benedictine mystic and magistra Hildegard of Bingen (c. 1098-1179), wrote a musical drama in Latin in 1155.

The late Middle Ages saw the development of both a literary or patrician type of theater and folk theater. Itinerant troupes began to perform for royal courts and noble households, where they entertained at different festivities. Several written performance texts—some quite elegant and witty—date from this period, most of them from France. At the same time, the folk play became popular. The folk play was a popular celebration to mark events of importance to the community, such as seasonal changes. The summer months were especially suitable for such festivities and gave occasion for *miracula* (dramas about miracles), somergames (song-dances, sports activities, and sketches involving lechery, drinking, and other forms of debauchery), and plough plays (Clopper 280). One example is the English Plough Monday play, in which a plow was decorated and pulled through the village—perhaps in a continuation of an ancient fertility rite. Another is the "Wild Man of the Woods" ritual, in which a man representing winter was ceremoniously "killed." Types of mimetic dances, such as the Morris (Moorish) dance, which featured a clown character, were especially popular in England but also performed elsewhere.

Although these plays undoubtedly originated from pagan rituals, Christian clergy gradually appropriated them. For example, the Feast of Fools, celebrated in France at the end of the twelfth century, was a combination of the pagan Saturnalia rites and a precursor of the pre-Lenten carnival in which the clergy wore masks and mocked the mass, inverting traditional roles. Men dressed as women, lower clergy elected a mock bishop, and a stinking incense created a horrible stench.

In England, *mumming* plays were performed by costumed amateurs who went from house to house on different holidays.[3] Mumming originated "in the propitiatory ritual of gift-giving… A mumming harnessed the rituals of disguise and dance to a procession and visitation to the home of a social superior… and was conducted in silence" (Wickham 62-63). After presenting their gifts to their host, the mummers, with his permission, danced and, as the genre evolved, presented plays. These plays typically ended with a battle in which one of the combatants was killed and restored to life by a doctor character. Mumming plays existed as early as 1296, when one was performed at the marriage of the daughter of Edward I, but may be much older. When performing before nobility, mummers wore luxurious jewel-laden costumes. Some scholars believe that the theme of death and rebirth reveals the religious origins of these plays.

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[3] See Clopper 125, 273.

In the universities and monasteries, classical texts, particularly those of Terrence, were often performed in Latin. In Spain, students and their instructors performed *juegos de escarnio* [games of jokes and jibes] on profane (non-religious) subjects such as unrequited love. *Juegos escolares* [school games], composed by students and priests, dealt with religious themes. In 1574, the humanist Lorenzo Palmyreno composed a play in Castilian, the language spoken by the masses, thereby taking a significant step toward the creation of a theater targeted at a general audience.

As an integral part of the mass, singing was naturally incorporated into performance. In tenth-century Switzerland, musical embellishments, impersonation, and dialogue were included in the Easter mass at the Monastery of Saint Gall. Like the *Quem Quaeritis,* Easter performances represented the three Marys'encounter with Christ's empty tomb. In early versions of the mass, the Marys were represented by half of the choir, and the angel, by the other half. In later versions, each Mary was played by a choir boy, while a priest in white robes played the angel. Eventually, a non-religious character, the spice merchant (who bore certain similarities to the doctor in the mumming plays), and detailed didascalias to specify the actors' movements, were added.

Other religious plays, such as Nativities, proliferated in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These were usually performed in a church, at first at the altar and later in other areas. Sometimes raised platforms were constructed for performances, and stage devices were used for special effects, such as flying angels. At first, actors used mime or improvised dialogue based on scenes from the Bible, but by the end of the twelfth century, they were using scripted dialogue, sometimes at least partially in the vernacular. Gradually, performances moved to play areas located outside the church, where they were presented independently of the mass. While priests managed early productions, with the relocation of performances, the laity assumed a larger role and finally took over theatrical activity. Throughout Europe, trade guilds or lay religious organizations began to assume responsibility for plays. In Spain, for example, the Hospital Brothers sponsored productions and used the revenue to care for the sick and destitute.

Sometimes short plays were combined into cycles depicting Biblical history from the creation to the Last Judgment, although the focus was always on the Passion. Bishop and Henke note that the first reference to the York mystery cycles date from the late fourteenth century (20). In France, these theatrical representations were called *mystères*; in England, mystery plays; in Germany, *Mysterienspielen*; and in Italy, *sacre rappresentazioni.* Mystery plays were performed in the Czech lands, Hungary and Dalmatia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and in Poland and Croatia in the sixteenth. In Spain, the *auto sacramental* [sacramental act], performed at Corpus Christi, drew from fifteenth-century traditions, but reached its highest form of expression in the seventeenth century, with the *autos* of Pedro Calderón de la Barca.

Sometimes cycles were performed over a period of several days on decorated platforms called *mansions*, each of which represented a different *locus* in the play. In most countries, the mansions were placed in a line or semicircle, with the spectators sitting in front. In Italy, they were arranged around the main square, with spectators in the center. Later, in England and Spain, the presentations were incorporated into processions, and the dramatic action took place on pageant carts. In Spain, these processions grew into elaborate Corpus Christi spectacles, of which the *auto sacramental* was the main attraction. Although the *mystères* were religious in nature, composed to teach doctrine, over the years, the entertainment aspect became increasingly important. The addition of buffoons, minstrels and jongleurs to the cast of performers attracted an increasing number of spectators, especially as vernacular languages began to replace Latin, and plays began to reflect local customs and usage.

A new dramatic genre, the *morality play,* emerged during the early fifteenth century and remained popular through the sixteenth. At first, moralities were performed in churches and later on platforms constructed outdoors. Less spectacular than the mystery cycles, morality plays depicted through allegory the struggle between good and evil within the human soul. They typically featured angels and devils or personified representations of virtues and vices that struggle to win the allegiance of a generic human character. The specter of death looms large in these allegories, whose pessimistic tone may reflect the frequent plagues and armed conflicts, such as the Hundred Years War, that beleaguered the period. Clopper notes that romantic scholars thought the moralities inferior to biblical plays because allegory was thought to be "lifeless" and therefore "theatrically ineffective" (248). They argued that "Moralities are dramas of ideas, not persons, and therefore cannot be said to be mimetic; rather, they are presentational. Characters are uninteresting because they are not persons but representations of ideas" (248-49). However, in modern productions, notes Clopper, audiences find the allegorical characters more palpable than previous critics thought possible.

Although morality plays probably originated in England, examples exist from other countries. In France, a favorite topic was gluttony. In *La condemnation de banquet* [the condemnation of overeating] (1507), by Nicholas de La Chesnaye, gourmandizing is denounced for its ill effects on health. The best-known morality play is *Everyman* (premiered 1510), by an anonymous author, probably from the Low Countries. The plot revolves around the notion that one's good and evil deeds are recorded in a kind of ledger, and that God will tally them after one dies. The protagonist, Everyman, who represents all humankind, is on a pilgrimage (that is, living his life) and tries in vain to convince other characters to accompany him. However, in the end, he realizes that he is irremediably alone, and will be judged solely on his own acts.

The *interlude,* another form of late medieval entertainment, was a short farce on a profane topic. Full of social satire, the interlude usually revolved around a fool who is duped by clever manipulators—sometimes cunning peasants or students. Interludes could be performed by traveling troupes in public squares or in the banquet halls of the aristocracy. In Spain, where they were called *pasos,* they were sometimes performed as part of a longer *comedia,* the name given to any full-length play. One example is *Cornudo y contento,* by Lope de Rueda, in which the fool is cuckolded by a cunning student posing as his wife's cousin. The *paso* is a precursor of the *entremés*—a one-act farce performed between the acts of a *comedia.* In France, the *soties* (from the French word *sots* [fools]) differed from the interludes in that, like the moralities, they were allegories—the characters did not have individual names. The *sotie* was a short, farcical play performed in costumes taken from contemporary dress but also included fantastic elements such as animal features. The *sotie* continued the carnivalesque tradition of portraying an "upside down" world, in which the fool is a shrewd and wise observer of social mores. Typically, he dressed in grey robes and wore a hood with donkey ears.

These late medieval farces did not require elaborate stage décor. Traveling troupes carried their props and costumes with them, or else rented or borrowed what they needed in the towns and villages they visited. In England, players in farces were required to have the patronage of an nobleman, an important move toward the professionalization of acting.

Early Modern Innovations: Italy

Given the long dramatic traditions of ancient Greece and Rome, it is not surprising that theater blossomed early in Italy. The renewed interest in classical culture characteristic of the Renaissance inspired Italian theater professionals to explore ancient dramatic theory, but aside from Aristotle's *Poetics,* little was accessible. They did read more general works on the subject, such as Horace's *Art of Poetry,* and adopted the neoclassical notion that plays should be verisimilar. Thus, fantasy and supernatural interventions were avoided, leading to the gradual elimination of the chorus. Plays were supposed to be realistic and impart moral lessons.

Around the end of the fifteenth century, powerful potentates began to finance productions of ancient Roman plays, thereby inspiring contemporary playwrights to create Italian-language versions or to compose entirely new plays following classical models. Seneca's *Phaedra,* translated into Italian by Francesco Pitti, was performed in 1509 in Ferrara. The first surviving tragedy written in Italian was *Pamphila & Philostrato,* by Antonio Camili da Pistoia, which was performed in Mantua and Ferrara in 1499 (Kreuder 150). Giangiorgio Trissino's *Sophonisba* (1524), one of the first plays in the vernacular, dramatized stories of the Carthaginian wars by the Roman historian Livy and employed the dramatic techniques of Sophocles and Euripides, including a fifteen-man chorus, in accordance with classical norms. Although Trissino adhered to the classical unities of time, space, and action, he introduced significant innovations such as the extensive use of *verso sciolto* [blank verse].

As in other aspects of Renaissance culture, Italy was at the vanguard in the area of staging techniques. As important as the plays themselves were the many advances in theater architecture and set design made during this period. In the mid-fifteenth century, Pomponius Laetus (1428-1497) formed the Accademia Romana for the purpose of reviving Italy's classical theater, pioneering the reintroduction of ancient Roman feasts and having his pupils stage comedies by Plautus (Hulfeld 115). To create a performance space, two residences were combined to form one unit, possibly framed by columns. This was perhaps an early step toward the invention of the proscenium arch—a frame that surrounded the stage, giving the audience only a partial view of the performance space. Early in the sixteenth century, the mansions were joined and became components of the city street. Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) further advanced theater design with the Teatro Olimpico, built 1580-1585 in Vicenza (northern Italy), which was completed after his death by Vicenzo Scamozzi (1548-1616). The theater uses *trompe-l'oeil* scenery that creates the illusion of long streets disappearing into the horizon. The back screen is a Roman-style *scaenae frons* of wood and stucco that looks like marble. The Florentine painter Francesco Salviati (1510-1552?) constructed a temporary proscenium stage in the mid-sixteenth century, a predecessor to the Teatro Farnese, in Parma, built in 1618, by Giovanni Battista Aleotti (1546-1636) and thought to be the first actual proscenium arch theater. Along with the Teatro Olimpico and the Teatro all'Antica in Sabbioneta, the Farnese is one of three surviving Renaissance theaters in Italy. By the mid-sixteenth century, Italian aristocrats were building theaters inside their palaces. These were mostly rectangular spaces with level auditoriums and proscenium arches. However, in Sabbioneta, a town in the province of Mantua built according to Renaissance theories of urban planning, one of the earliest freestanding theaters was built between 1588 and 1590 using Palladio's designs for the Teatro Olimpico (Newman 79).

The trend toward innovation continued into the next century. Books such as *Pratica di fabricar scene e macchine ne' teatri* [*Manual for Constructing Theatrical Scenes and Machines*], by the Italian architect Nicola Sabbatini (1574-1654), introduced Italian technology throughout Europe. Sabbatini included descriptions of innovations such as "angle wings"—flat panels painted according to the rules of perspective to create a more convincing illusion of distance and depth—that were positioned at the sides of the stage and could be turned to permit quick scene changes; *periaktoi* (plural of *perioktos,* from the Greek word for "revolving"), rotating solid equilateral triangular prisms that showed a different painted scene on each surface; "sliding shutters" mounted on grooves in the floor; "roller curtains," painted scenes that unrolled from above like modern window shades, each curtain covering the previous one; and "portcullises," sliding flats that ascended from beneath the floor using counterweights. Sabbatini probably did not invent these devices himself, as stage innovations were closely guarded secrets that the creators normally did not share. Sabbatini's book only revealed to a general reading audience what scenographers already knew.[4] In the years that followed, Italian theater engineers and set designers also created new forms of lighting as well as pyrotechniques to enhance stagings of storms, battle scenes, and supernatural phenomena. (See the article by Francesca Fantappiè in this volume.)

In 1641, Giacomo Torelli (1608-1678), the Italian stage engineer and scenographer known as "The Great Sorcerer" for of his stunning staging innovations, perfected the "chariot-and-pole" system, which permitted extraordinarily fast scene changes. The system consisted of trolleys or "chariots" mounted on casters that ran on tracks below and at the front of the stage and were connected by ropes to a central cylinder. Slots were cut into the floor to support poles, on which the flats were mounted. Hoxby explains: "In order to obtain central control of the wings, Torelli cut through the stage floor, running the wings on trolleys that were connected by ropes to a single drum. When this was set in motion by a counterweight, all eight pairs of wings changed simultaneously" (172). Prior to Torelli's invention, multiple stagehands were required to effect a scene change, but with this new system, only one was required. Scene changes could take place right in front of the audience; "the moment of transition was itself a theatrical event," a fact made clear by the fact that "under Torelli's direction, most scene changes took place *within* acts, not between acts" (Hoxby 172).

A different type of Italian contribution to European theater was the *commedia dell'arte,* sometimes translated as "artists' theater,"[5] although the implications of the term are rather more complex. *Arte* here actually means “technique” in the sense of “artisanry” or “workmanship,” and was meant to convey the notion that acting was a profession at a time when theater was practiced as an amateur activity. Originally known by other names, such as *commedia all’improviso* [improvised theater] or *commedia italiana* [Italian-style theater], this dramatic form developed from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries—although the term *commedia dell’arte* appeared for the first time in 1750 in a play by Goldoni. It and was characterized by humorous, improvised texts based on fixed types (tipi fissi) and plot outlines. Although the fixed types appeared in different plays, they took on distinct characteristics depending on the context.

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[4] My thanks to Guy Spellmann for clarifying this point.

[5] On translations of the term *commedia dell'arte,* see Rudlin 13.

The *Commedia dell’arte* actors did not work from conventional scripts. Each play was based on a preestablished scheme, and actors received general directions such as “love scene,” “jealousy scene.” They learned speeches, jokes, or anecdotes related to different situations, which they wove into a play. Performed by professional actors, the improvisations were seamlessly executed because the same actors played the same role repeatedly.

The fixed characters included the Harlequin, a madcap comic servant; the Columbine, the Harlequin’s wily wife; the Doctor; and Pulcinella, either a fool who is actually witty and wise or a know-it-all who is actually dumb. Pulcinella could be portrayed as either a master or a servant, but he is always opportunistic, self-serving, and acquisitive. Each character wore a distinctive costume and was associated with particular props. For example, Pulcinella usually wore a baggy, white, loose-fitting shirt that buttoned down the front, with wide-legged pants and a belt that fastened under the belly to emphasize his girth. He wore a white hat of varying types—a wide-brimmed cone being one of the most common. He typically carried a cudgel with which to defend himself or attack others, and a coin purse, which he kept close to his body.

As the actors of ancient Greece and Rome, the *commedia dell’arte* actors wore masks, except for those playing *tipi fissi,* such as the *innamorati* (lovers). Tiberio Fiorelli, the most famous actor of the seventeenth century, never wore a mask in the role of Scaramouche, a clown character, nor did Pierrot, the sad clown created in 1673, who is often depicted as pining for Columbine. Pierrot became especially popular in the nineteenth century.[6] *Commedia dell’arte* masks had exaggerated features to highlight the characteristics of the role. Pulcinella’s was black or dark brown to suggest weather-beaten skin and featured a prominent nose like a bird’s beak—either hooked or bulbous—sometimes with a wart or mole. His brow was wrinkled, suggesting a frown. The mask designated a character type; thus, although characters could “gain human significance from the context in which they find themselves, [they could] never be mistaken for the representation of a human being" (Rudlin 35). Psychological development was not the objective of the play; there was no backstory or exploration of motives. The plot moves forward as "one action begets another… Catharsis is not therefore possible," and so tragedy is not possible (Rudlin 35). "Laughter is dependent on stereotyping, on objects of derision being less than human" (Rudlin 35). Masks were therefore fundamental to the objectives of the *Commedia dell'arte,* even though they were not used for all characters.

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[6] My thanks to Guy Spielmann for his contributions to this section.

Commedia dell'arte troupes originally presented their plays in streets, town squares, and marketplaces, but eventually used traveling stages, which they could set up to create "temporary theaters." They toured in many parts of Europe, and their performances attracted huge audiences, drawn by the troupe's reputation, the amusing and colorful stories, and the showy costumes. Another attraction was the impressive athletic skill of the actors, whose acrobatic feats, mime, and clowning required considerable agility.

Beyond Italy: Spain and France

Italian theater culture had a lasting influence in Spain, which had strong cultural and political ties with Italy. Many Spanish playwrights went to Italy, where they were exposed to humanistic trends, while Italian touring companies and entrepreneurs traveled throughout Spain, bringing new ideas about stagecraft and the business of theater.

From the latter part of the sixteenth century, plays in Spain were performed mostly in *corrales*—open-air patios with a platform at one end. These were simple structures, with scenery painted on the wall of the building that housed the theater or on curtains. Stage décor and props were rudimentary. Although the *corrales* were in use into the second half of the seventeenth century and beyond, after 1620, the focus of theatrical performance shifted to the court. King Philip IV (1605-1665) initiated the construction of the Palace of the Buen Retiro [Good Retreat] in 1630, and he routinely hosted theater productions there. As theater technology became more sophisticated, audiences demanded *comedias de tramoyas*—that is, plays that made extensive use of stage devices. Unable to accommodate the new technology, the *corral* eventually gave way to the colosseum. In 1638, a thoroughly equipped theater called the Coliseo [Colosseum] was constructed. A new generation of playwrights, headed by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), began producing complex and spectacular plays.[7]

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[7] See the article by Bárbara Mujica in this volume.

The famous Italian stage designer Cosimo Lotti came to Spain in 1626, and once the Buen Retiro was built, began to mount productions that included the kinds of technological advances that were being used in Italy, such as perspective scenery and the intricate machinery that made possible rapid set changes. He also introduced the new lighting techniques being perfected abroad. He staged outdoor performances in the Buen Retiro park, using the artificial lake to stage spectacular scenes such as naval battles. For one production, he built a floating stage to depict a shipwreck. Among the special effects was a water chariot drawn by dolphins.

When the Bourbon king Philip V (1683-1746) ascended to the Spanish throne in 1700, he and his wife, Maria Luisa Gabriela de Saboya, introduced French and Italian cultural norms to Spain. Nevertheless, popular audiences continued to enjoy the *comedia de tramoyas*—in particular the *comedia de magia* [magic play], which made use of stage devices to create the illusion of magic.[8]

It was perhaps in France that Italian influence was farthest-reaching. During the first decades of the sixteenth century, French theater continued the traditions of its medieval precedents, but by mid-century, a humanistic, neoclassical theater had begun to emerge, and both classical dramas or new French adaptations were performed in Paris. French tragedies stressed Aristotelian norms, in particular, the unities of time, place, and action and the concept of decorum. Comedies reflected the influence of the *Commedia dell'arte* and were freer in form. *Commedia dell'arte* troupes traveled all over Europe. In France, where this theater form was known as *comédie italienne,* they attracted both nobles who knew Italian and the general population, which did not, but enjoyed the acrobatics, mime, and antics of the actors. Gradually, more French was introduced into the *comédie italienne* until Louis XIV granted one influential actor, Domenico Biancolelli (1636-1688), permission to offer plays partially in French. However, some of these plays were deemed indecorous. In 1697, a planned satire in the style of the *comédie italienne* was deemed offensive, and all *commedia dell'arte* troupes were forbidden from putting on more shows until, in 1716, the Regent Philippe d'Orléans invited a new troupe, led by Luigi Riccoboni, to perform. The "new" *comédie italienne* performed French plays by French playwrights, as well as works in Italian.

As elsewhere in Europe, guilds were deeply involved with theater activity in France. In 1548, the Confrérie de la Passion, a society of merchants and tradesmen dedicated to religious productions, in particular, mystery plays, had a theater installed in the Hôtel de Bourgogne, a former residence of the Dukes of Burgundy. It remained the most important theater in France until the 1630s. Although there are no extant plans, researchers believe it was long and narrow, approximately 102 by 42 feet, with a stage measuring 42 feet in depth. The pit for spectators, who watched the performance standing, occupied most of the auditorium. At the back, a steep tier of benches on a base of about 10 feet was reserved for patrons willing to pay extra to watch the play sitting down. Seven boxes on each side of the theater and five at the back were also available.

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[8] See Paun de García, "Staging the *Comedia de Magia*" and article by Bárbara Mujica in this volume.

The first actual playhouse in France was built in 1689. Before then, the usual practice was to convert a *jeu de paume,* a kind of squash court, into a performance space or, sometimes, to use a large room within a private residence, as in the case of the Hôtel de Bourgonge. These theaters had narrow stages by modern standards, with little room for complex sets or stage machinery, although they were regularly overhauled to accommodate more sophisticated staging. In addition to theaters, plays were also performed in private homes, at court, and in universities. At first, staging in these venues was simple. Eventually, though, larger performance spaces were built that allowed for more elaborate productions.

Performances usually took place in the afternoon—at 2:00 or 3:00 o'clock in Paris. Offered twice a week, sessions included a comic prologue, a tragedy or tragicomedy, an interlude, and finally, a song. In seventeenth-century theaters, nobles sometimes sat along the side of the stage, while other wealthy spectators sat in the galleries. Princes, musketeers, and royal pages were allowed into the auditorium without paying. The cheapest places were in the *parterre,* or area directly in front of the stage, where male spectators from different social groups stood, sometimes becoming quite rowdy. Until early in the seventeenth century, "decent" women did not go to the theater. As in Spain, women were allowed to perform onstage, but the Church took a dim view of actresses—and actors in general—and routinely excommunicated players of both sexes.

Before the seventeenth century, stage décor and costuming depended on the physical resources of the location where the play was performed, and "traditional medieval methods of identifying locality of stage-actions continued to be acceptable both to the public and the court" (Wickham 155). However, with the arrival in France of Italian scenographers, the situation changed dramatically. The golden age of French theater we associate with Molière and Racine occurred during the first fifteen years of the reign of Louis XIV, who occupied the throne from 1643-1715. According to Fischer-Lichte, "During this period, there was an almost endless string of court festivities, celebrations and extraordinary feasts" (97). Although Italian-style scenery was not unknown at the French court, it did not become popular until 1641, when the first theater with a permanent proscenium arch and a stage designed for flat wings was designed for Cardinal de Richelieu.

When Italian-born Cardinal Jules Mazarin succeeded Richelieu as chief minister in 1642, he decided to introduce the Italian opera into France. He brought Giacomo Torelli to Paris to work on a production of *La finta pazza* [The Pretend Madwoman]. Torelli created stunning scenic effects for the production, which was a huge success and launched his career in France. In 1647-48, Torelli remodeled the Palais-Royal to accommodate his invention of the chariot-and-pole system of scene shifting. Torelli remained in France during the series of civil wars known as *La Fronde* (1648-1653), and during that time, designed sets for Pierre Coneille's *Andromède*. The production was planned for the Palais-Royal, but the theater could not accommodate Torelli's stage machinery, and so the play was transferred to the Petit-Bourbon, where it opened in February 1560. Torelli went on to design many other sets in Paris, eventually becoming more involved in the court ballet than in the opera. In 1661, he fell out of favor with the King and returned to Italy. However, he left a lasting mark on early modern French theater with his innovative scenography.

England: A Theatrical Powerhouse

Italy was not the only center of theatrical innovation in the Renaissance. Theater activity burgeoned in England in the sixteenth century, at first on the outskirts of London, as plays were forbidden in the city itself due to the plague. The first professional acting companies appeared just as the medieval religious plays were drawing to a close, around 1580, when the last Passion and Corpus Christi cycle was completed (Fischer-Lichte 50).

As elsewhere in Europe, itinerant troupes performed in towns and villages, usually in inns or taverns. Plays also took place at the Inns of Court, the name given to the halls of four law schools responsible for admitting applicants to the bar: the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Gray's Inn, and Lincoln's Inn. These spaces served for performance even after the establishment of permanent theaters and housed at least two plays by William Shakespeare (1565-1616).

English audiences also enjoyed amateur theater. Grammar schools (which placed particular importance on rhetoric and oratory), choir schools (which performed for the Queen), and universities were common performance sites. Usually the actors were university students who performed for the court or other high-ranking members of the social hierarchy. This highly educated audience was knowledgeable about classical theater and theater developments in other European countries, especially France and Spain, and, later in the period, it was not unusual for foreign actors to perform on English stages.

The ban on playhouses and players in London prompted the construction of permanent performance spaces outside the city. By the end of the sixteenth century, the professional troupes no longer traveled from town to town but began to occupy these spaces. The Red Lion, the first permanent theater in England, was constructed in Whitechapel, east of Aldgate, although its exact location is, according to William Ingram, "a puzzling matter" (105). It opened in 1567, but lasted only a short time due to complaints by civil authorities (Newman 87). However, later endeavors were more successful. The Theatre, which opened in 1576, was constructed in Shoreditch by James Burbage and his brother-in-law, John Brayne. It was followed by The Curtain (1577), the Rose (1587), the Swan (1595), the Globe (1599)—where the Chamberlain's/King's Men, the troupe to which Shakespeare belonged, played—The Fortune (1600), and the Red Bull (1605).

One obstacle to the development of theater in London was the municipal authorities' hostility. Early playhouses were often in "entertainment areas" offering a variety of diversions such as juggling, bear baiting, acrobatics, and even brothels. The city patriarchs of London took a strong stand against the theater, which it accused of promoting debauchery and licentiousness. The Mayor of London even wrote a letter to Westminster protesting the lasciviousness of plays (Fischer-Lichte 50). Yet, despite the complaints of the city fathers and the clergy, "the public still flocked to the performances" (Fischer-Lichte 51). Judging from box-office receipts, approximately 15 to 20 percent of the population regularly attended the theater. They came from different social classes and represented a cross-section of London society (Fischer-Lichte 51).

The first public theaters were open-roofed structures with a large yard for standing. Seated viewers occupied the galleries and rooms on three sides and above the jutting stage (Gurr 13). As now, admission prices depended on one's location in the theater. Tickets for an unobstructed view of the stage were more expensive than those for less desirable positions. The poorest spectators saw the show standing in the yard, where places cost 1 pence, "as much as a pint of beer" (Fischer-Lichte 51). The plain seats in the gallery cost 2 pence, and the most expensive seats, 3 pence. Aside from the poorest echelons of society, the theater was accessible to most Londoners. Although women were not allowed to act, they could attend the theater, although the Puritans and other traditionalist groups opposed the practice (Fischer-Lichte 51).

Troupes rarely performed the same play for two consecutive days, which meant that patrons could attend the theater for several days in a row and see a different play on each occasion. This helps account for the dramatic surge in theater attendance during the early seventeenth century. By 1610, London's theater capacity surpassed 10,000. Ivan Cañadas notes: "The considerable range in seating and charges at the public theaters indicates that, for all the material differences between audience members, there was a certain uniformity of cultural taste" (13). In England, as in Spain, rich and poor enjoyed the same types of plays.

The Elizabethan theater building was typically three stories high, with a stage in the middle and three levels of galleries that faced the stage and surrounded it on three sides. The fourth side was used for the actors' entrances and exits and for the musicians. Most of the theater buildings were polygonal, although the Red Bull was a square. Blackfriars Theater, which became active in 1599, followed a different model. It was smaller than previous theaters and had a closed roof, which protected both actors and spectators from the elements. Later theaters such as Whitefriars (1608) used a similar design, allowing for the rapid expansion of dramatic activity.[9]

Marlowe, Shakespeare, Webster, Jonson, and a host of other playwrights supplied a constant flow of plays to audiences hungry for entertainments. English dramatists produced tragedies that revealed knowledge of classical models, but did not necessary adhere to Aristotelian rules. Shakespeare, for one, did not respect the three unities or the classical notion of decorum, and he included both tragic and comic elements in one play. Like Lope de Vega, he was more interested in pleasing audiences than in observing preestablished theatrical norms.

Early English plays required little stage décor. The location of the action was often conveyed principally by the actors' gestures or words, and atmosphere was created through the poetry of the verse.[10] When scenery was used, it consisted of boards covered with painted canvas. In addition, cloud borders masked the upper part of the performance space. At first, props were kept to a minimum and consisted of easy-to-obtain objects such as chairs, stools, swords, daggers, animal furs, flags and banners, caskets, flowers, etc. Many of Shakespeare's plays depict brutality and therefore required special props, such as handkerchiefs soaked in animal blood. Animal intestines, tongues, or other organs could also be used. To heighten the impact of a murder scene, an actor would hide a bladder filled with animal blood under his costume so that it would burst and spatter when pierced with a sword. Another technique involved the use of a turntable holding a blood-soaked mannequin.

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[9] See the article by Michael Collins in this volume.

[10] See the article by Michael Scott in this volume.

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