

WILL POWER



EXPERIENCE GUIDE

EPISODE SIX

ROMEO AND JULIET

THE GLOBE THEATER

Visiting the theater in Shakespeare's era was a very different experience than what we know today. Nowadays, we often think of going to the theater in the evening, wearing nice clothes and listening politely as audience members. But at the Globe Theatre in London, where Shakespeare presented many of his plays, it was a very different picture!

Because there was no electricity and candles were expensive to burn, the Globe Theatre was designed in the shape of an "O" with an open roof in the middle to allow daylight inside. Plays were performed at the Globe during the daytime during summer months. During the rest of the year, the players would perform at the homes of wealthy patrons or at indoor theaters.

The Globe was located in a seedy district along the River Thames that was known for its brothels, gambling and bear-baiting. Nevertheless, plays were attended by both the peasants and the nobility. Some of the upper-class ladies did not want to be seen in this shady part of town, so they wore masks to the theater. But other members of the nobility saw it as an opportunity to show off their fancy clothes. (It was actually against the law for commoners to wear certain types of clothing that were reserved for the upper class.)

On the green outside the theater was a festival-like atmosphere with gambling, animal fighting and music. Sometimes actors performed preview scenes from the play to lure in audiences – sort of like a trailer for a movie. The Globe could hold up to 3000 people inside, but there were often just as many people enjoying themselves outside.

The Globe was just one of several theaters in the district. At that time, London's theaters served between 10,000 and 20,000 spectators every week!



Wooden "O" by Graham Clarke

The Globe Theatre flew a flag that proudly bore its motto:

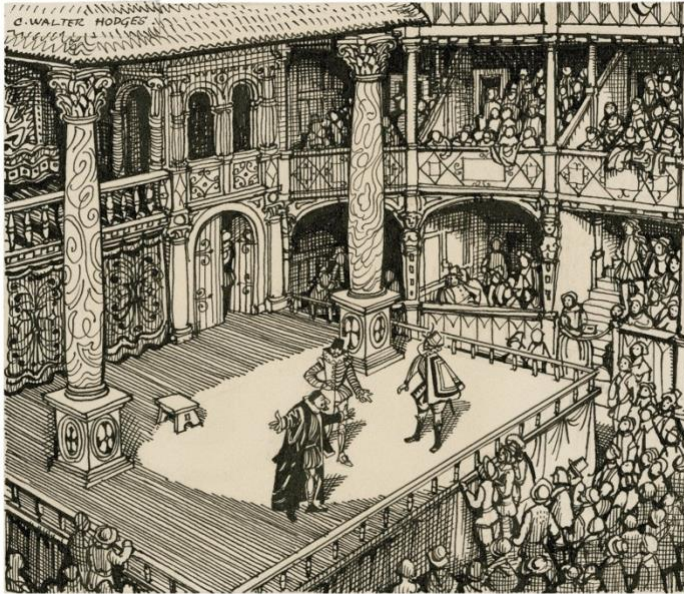
Totus mundus agit histrionem

“All the world's a playhouse.”

What do you think this motto means? Do you agree?

THE GLOBE THEATER

There were several seating options at the Globe, depending on how much you could pay. For one penny you could stand on the ground in front of the stage. People who stood here were called “groundlings.” This would give you a close-up view of the performance but standing for three hours is no easy task.



From the Folger Digital Image Collection

(The Fortune Theatre had to ban dancing because the crowd had caused ‘tumults and outrage.’) The groundlings also had to watch out for pickpockets who moved through the crowd during the performances.

Because the audience wasn’t in the dark and they were standing right at the edge of the stage, there was a lot more interaction between the actors and the audience than we experience in most plays today. No wonder Shakespeare included “asides” or lines spoken directly to the audience. At the Globe, the audience was very much a part of the world of the play!

Excavations of the original site of the Globe found bottles, spoons, oyster shells, fruit remnants and nut shells. People would have brought food of their own or they could buy snacks at the theater during the breaks. Archeological finds at other theater sites include a lead token which probably would have been used to buy a pot of ale, a bone comb commonly used to remove insects from hair, and a broken piece of pottery that may have been used as a whistle to create bird sounds for the performances.

Would you prefer to attend the theater at the Globe or in a modern theater? Why or why not?

It wouldn’t have smelled great either. Imagine hundreds of sweaty peasants standing shoulder to shoulder in the heat of summer on fruit peelings, spilled beer, nut shells and garbage. And there were no bathrooms – only buckets.

For another penny, you could sit in the first tier under the roof. And for another penny you may be able to sit on a cushion. The nobility paid five or six pennies to sit in the “Lord’s Rooms” which were located on the sides of the stage. It was only possible to see the actor’s backs from these rooms, but it was easier to hear the words.

Audiences were not polite and quiet at the Globe. They would cheer if they were excited. They’d boo for the villain. They may even throw food if they thought the acting was bad. And it was a social event, so people would catch up on the news and gossip with their neighbors during the play. At the end of some shows, there was music and dancing.

When people arrived at the theater, they would drop their pennies into boxes. Those boxes were carried into a back office to count the money. This is where our modern term “**box office**” comes from!



HEAVEN AND HELL

Above the stage at the Globe was a beautifully painted ceiling which was called “heaven.” And in the stage was a trap door that led down to “hell.” Shakespeare used references to these places in his text to indicate where things might be happening on stage. So, when Romeo compares Juliet to “the sun” and “angels,” we can guess that she’d be standing in the upper level of the stage, near “heaven!”



TRY IT YOURSELF!

Write a Scene for the Globe Stage! Because there were no stage lights or set at the Globe, Shakespeare had to write descriptive language to help the audience imagine the scene. The characters spoke lines that described the time of day, the buildings, the weather, etc.

Here’s an example... After their wedding night, Juliet says, “Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.” And Romeo replies, “Night’s candles are burnt out.” This tells us that this scene is happening just as the night is changing into morning.

TRY IT! Imagine writing a scene for the Globe stage that takes place in a haunted house. What would the characters say to help the audience visualize where and when the scene takes place?

- Use all of your senses. What would you hear, see, smell, taste or feel?
- Consider using Shakespearean language. What are some colorful words you could use or invent to paint a vivid picture? Here are a few words Shakespeare invented that you might like to use:

fly-bitten, grime, homely, majestic, rascally, airless, bedroom, bloodstained, bump, cold-blooded, vulnerable, savage, moonbeam, madcap, lonely, howl, leaky, fretful, lackluster, excitement

W.8.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.



WILL POWER TEAM:

Crystal Marie Stewart, Actor, video production, curriculum development

Christina Farrell, Curriculum development, stop motion animation

Rob Merritt, Video editing and production

Adam Knight, Riverside Theatre Producing Artistic Director

Irena Sarić, Riverside Theatre Managing Director

ACTORS:

Crystal Marie Stewart: Mercutio (Act 3.1), Juliet (Act 2.2)

Aaron Stonerook: Tybalt (Act 3.1), Romeo (Act 2.2)

Christina Sullivan: Benvolio (Act 3.1)

Ray Vanek: Romeo (Act 3.1)

Kevin Michael Moore, Fight Choreographer

Thank you to the **TCR Costume Department!**