

An Account of the stage, audience and actors of the Elizabethan and Restoration periods in England, with reference to the developing stage conditions, acting techniques, and changes in the attitude of the audience

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Abstrak

When we review the theatre in its development from the Elizabethan age to the Restoration period, we find that the playhouse changes from one exposed to the open air, dependent for its illumination on the capricious daylight and not altogether protected from the noise from outside, to one covered by a roof. In this covered playhouse, intimacy is secured. Acting took place within an enclosed space. The light of the candles used in the Restoration theatre would have provided an atmosphere of enchantment for an Elizabethan audience used to daylight performances. Whilst the attention of an Elizabethan audience might wander away from the stage--because in the bright light the spectators could see many other things besides the stage, including one another--the attention of the Restoration audience could remain focussed on the stage. We have seen that the scenery was being used on the Elizabethan masque atages and this was also adopted in the Restoration public theatre. It had not, however, yet come to represent an imitation of real life. Scenery was still only used as colourful decoration of the acting area. According to Richard Southern, this refusal to make of the stage a reproduction of reality, should not be interpreted as 'crudeness', a failure on the part of the Restoration stage managers to exploit the potentialities of the scenic stage. They deliberately kept it 'crude', because they realised the difficulties involved in giving a realistic presentation. The Restoration stage, though it included scenery, was fundamentally the same platform stage of the Elizabethan period. It was still a long way from the modern 'picture frame' stage, which often strives to give the stage an illusion of reality. It was only in the nineteenth century that in most productions the apron finally disappeared. The acting was essentially the same in both periods. We noted that the actors of both periods used the 'acted speech' technique, where the speech was also enacted physically, i.e. by gestures and facial expression. Consequently the texts written by the dramatists_