

The Colorado Shakespeare Festival

E D U C A T I O N O U T R E A C H

FAST FACTS ON THE ELIZABETHAN STAGE

- ❖ Learn Your Lines and Don't Bump Into the Furniture
 - ❖ Actors were only given their own lines and their cues (prompt scripts). They never saw the entire script. On top of this they only had a matter of days to rehearse.
- ❖ *'Tis Pity She's a Whore...*
 - ❖ Women were not allowed to perform in plays. However, it is known that Elizabeth performed in a masque (more of allegorical musical pageant than a play). An ignorant critic of the time condemned women performers as 'whores.' Elizabeth had his thumbs cut off.
- ❖ Shakes...who?
 - ❖ Shakespeare was not the only playwright during his time. Nor was he the most popular. The likes of Christopher Marlowe and Ben Jonson received as much if not more attention than the Bard.
- ❖ *"You don't have to put on the red light..."*
 - ❖ The more familiar playhouses like the Globe, the Rose, and the Swan were on the opposite side of the Thames as London proper. This area was referred to as the *liberties*. The *liberties* were a sort of red light district of the time. It wouldn't be shock to walk out of a performance of *Hamlet* and pass a brothel.
- ❖ A Penny will get you the best view and three hours on your feet
 - ❖ Admission to the pit was only a penny, but there were no seats to relax on during the shows which could run as long as 3 hours. The groundlings (people in the pit) would often lean on the stage and even talk to the actors if they were bored.
- ❖ Bring your own doublet...
 - ❖ The actors were not provided with costumes. They were expected to furnish their own wardrobe. In spite of this seeming inconvenience actors spared no expense. From Henslow's *Diary*: "Bought: a doublet of white satin laid thick with gold lace and a pair or round hose [slops] of cloth of silver, the panes laid with gold lace."

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