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978-0-521-65040-3 - The Cambridge History of British Theatre: Origins to 1660: Volume 1

Edited by Jane Milling and Peter Thomson

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
BRITISH THEATRE

*

VOLUME I

Origins to 1660

Volume I of *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* begins in Roman Britain and ends with Charles II's restoration to the throne imminent. The four essays in Part I treat pre-Elizabethan theatre, the eight in Part II focus on the riches of the Elizabethan era, and the seven in Part III on theatrical developments during and after the reigns of James I and Charles I. The essays are written for the general reader by leading British and American scholars, who combine an interest in the written drama with an understanding of the material conditions of the evolving professional theatre which the drama helped to sustain, often enough against formidable odds. The volume unfolds a story of enterprise, innovation and, sometimes, of desperate survival over years in which theatre and drama were necessarily embroiled in the politics of everyday life: a vivid subject vividly presented.

JANE MILLING is Lecturer in Drama at the University of Exeter. She has written on Restoration performers and female dramatists. Her work in the modern period includes co-authorship with Graham Ley of *Modern Theories of Performance: From Stanislavski to Boal* (2001).

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF
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General Editor

PETER THOMSON, *University of Exeter*

The Cambridge History of British Theatre provides a uniquely authoritative account of the turbulent and often troublesome public life of performance in Britain. Whilst making full use of new research in a subject that is at the centre of current concern, the essays are designed for the general reader as well as for the specialist. Each volume is fully illustrated. Together, they offer a comprehensive and comprehensible history of theatre, of which plays are a part but by no means the whole.

The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 1: Origins to 1660

EDITED BY JANE MILLING AND PETER THOMSON

The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 2: 1660 to 1895

EDITED BY JOSEPH DONOHUE

The Cambridge History of British Theatre, Volume 3: Since 1895

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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

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Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107497078

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First published 2004

First paperback edition 2015

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN - 3 Volume set 978-0-521-82790-4 Hardback

ISBN - 3 Volume set 978-1-107-49711-5 Paperback

ISBN - Volume I 978-0-521-65040-3 Hardback

ISBN - Volume I 978-1-107-49707-8 Paperback

ISBN - Volume II 978-0-521-65068-7 Hardback

ISBN - Volume II 978-1-107-49708-5 Paperback

ISBN - Volume III 978-0-521-65132-5 Hardback

ISBN - Volume III 978-1-107-49709-2 Paperback

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into Renaissance performance practice has been guided by his direction of authentic revivals of plays of the period.

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General preface

It is not the aim of the three-volume *Cambridge History of British Theatre* to construct theatrical history as a seamless narrative, not least because such seamlessness would be a distortion of the stop/start/try-again, often opportunistic, truth. Chronology has guided, but not bullied, us. The editorial privilege has been to assemble a team of international scholars able to speak with authority on their assigned (or sometimes chosen) topics. The binding subject is theatre, to which drama is a major, but not the only, contributor.

Each of the volumes includes some essays which are broad surveys, some which treat specific themes or episodes, some which are socio-theatrical 'snapshots' of single years and some which offer case studies of particular performance events. There is, of course, an underlying assertion: that a nation's theatre is necessarily and importantly expressive of, even when resistant to, the values that predominate at the time, but the choice of what to emphasise and what, however regretfully, to omit has rested with the volume's editor or editors. The aim has been to provide a comprehensive 'history' that makes no vain pretence to all-inclusiveness. The character of the volumes is the character of their contributors, and those contributors have been more often asked to use a searchlight than a floodlight in order to illuminate the past.

It is in the nature of 'histories' to be superseded. These volumes, though, may hope to stand as a millennial record of scholarship on a cultural enterprise – the British theatre – whose uniqueness is still valued. They are addressed to a readership that ranges from students to sheer enthusiasts. A 'history' is not the place for scholars to talk in secret to other scholars. If we have ever erred in that direction, it has been without the sanction of Victoria Cooper, who has shepherded these volumes through to publication with the generosity that is well known to all the authors who have worked with her.

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	Theatrical events	Political events
1540	Lindsay's <i>Satire of the Three Estates</i> acted before the Scottish court at Linlithgow.	Fall and execution of Thomas Cromwell. Henry VIII marries Ann of Cleves (marriage annulled); marries Katherine Howard.
1542		War with Scotland (until 1560); Katherine Howard executed; James V dies, Mary Queen of Scots born and succeeds to Scottish throne. Founding of the Roman Inquisition.
1543	Act of Parliament forbids plays meddling with religious doctrine.	Henry VIII marries Katherine Parr; Act 'for the Advancement of True Religion' against unauthorised translations of the Bible. Copernicus's <i>De revolutionibus</i> published.
1544		Henry VIII at war with France. Boulogne captured. John Bale's <i>Brief Chronicle concerning Sir John Oldcastle</i> published.
1545	First full-time post of Master of the Revels.	Council of Trent meets to reform Catholic church.
1546		War with France ends. Luther dies.
1547	Anti-Catholic plays mark Edward VI's coronation. Act of 1543	Henry VIII dies. Edward VI succeeds to the throne. Henry

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| | repealed. Sebastian Westcott becomes master of Paul's Boys. | Howard, Earl of Surrey, executed and Somerset becomes Protector. Chantries suppressed. |
| 1549 | Kett's rebellion supported by audience for annual play at Wymondham near Norwich. All English plays banned for two months. | War with France (until 1550). Kett's rebellion. Act of Uniformity, Catholic mass illegal. First <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> . |
| 1550 | | Catholic bishops removed in England. |
| 1551 | Royal proclamation requires all professional acting companies to be licensed. | |
| 1552 | <i>Troas</i> , first of Seneca's plays acted in England at Trinity College, Cambridge. | Somerset executed. Second Act of Uniformity. Second <i>Book of Common Prayer</i> . |
| 1553 | Bale's anti-Catholic trilogy (<i>God's Promises, John the Baptist's Preaching, Temptation of our Lord</i>) acted at Kilkenny. Renewal of ban on doctrinal plays. | Forty-Two Articles. Edward VI dies. Mary I succeeds to the throne. |
| 1554 | Version of Lindsay's <i>Satire of the Three Estates</i> acted at Carlton Hill, Edinburgh, before Marie de Guise. | Sir Thomas Wyatt's rebellion. Lady Jane Grey executed. Mary marries Philip of Spain. England reconciled with Rome. Knox meets Calvin at Geneva. Reginald Pole made Cardinal Legate in England. |
| 1555 | Nicholas Udall headmaster of Westminster School. Worcester's Men become active. | Latimer and Ridley burned. Religious peace of Augsburg. |
| 1556 | Seditious plays against Mary and Philip performed by Sir Francis Leke's company. | Cranmer burned. Charles V, Holy Roman emperor, abdicates. His son (Mary I's consort) Philip II crowned King of Spain. |
| 1557 | Seditious plays in Kent. | War with France (to 1559). Pole's legatine commission withdrawn. |

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| 1558 | | Loss of Calais. Mary dies. Elizabeth I succeeds to the throne. Knox's <i>First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women</i> published. |
| 1559 | Renewed governmental prohibition of plays of religious controversy. Warwick's Men become active. | Knox's return to Scotland sparks religious revolt. Third Act of Uniformity and Act of Supremacy. Matthew Parker appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. England and Spain make peace with France. |
| 1560 | Westcott begins regular court performances with Paul's Boys. | Treaty of Edinburgh. French expelled from Scotland. |
| 1561 | Thomas Ashton becomes headmaster of Shrewsbury School and begins annual open-air religious plays. | O'Neill's rebellion in Ireland. |
| 1562 | <i>Gorboduc</i> first performed at Inner Temple, later at court before Elizabeth I. | Civil war in France. |
| 1563 | Derby's Men become active. | Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion define Anglican theology. First Poor Law. Foxe's <i>Acts and Monuments</i> published. Calvin dies. |
| 1564 | Elizabeth I sees Plautus's <i>Aulularia</i> , Haliwell's <i>Dido</i> and Udall's <i>Ezechias</i> at King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Rich's Men become active. | |
| 1566 | Elizabeth I sees <i>Marcus Geminus</i> , Calfhill's <i>Progne</i> and Edwards's <i>Palamon and Arcite</i> at Christ Church hall, Oxford. Richard Farrant begins annual court play with Windsor Chapel Children. | Revolt in the Netherlands. |

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| 1567 | John Brayne builds Red Lion playhouse in Stepney, east of London. | Duke of Alva in the Netherlands. The 'council of Blood'. |
| 1568 | | Mary Queen of Scots flees to England. |
| 1569 | Last performance of York miracle cycle. Sussex's Men become active. | Rising in the north against Elizabeth. |
| 1570 | | Elizabeth excommunicated by Pope Pius V. |
| 1571 | | Ridolfi plot. Elizabeth breaks off diplomatic relations with Spain. |
| 1572 | Act for the Punishment of Vagabonds (includes unlicensed travelling players). Richard Mulcaster begins annual court play with Merchant Taylors' boys. | Massacre of St Bartholomew. Knox dies. |
| 1573 | Italian players (including women) allowed to act in London by command of the Privy Council. Leicester's Men active. | Diplomatic relations with Spain resumed. |
| 1574 | Elizabeth grants patent to Earl of Leicester's company. | Persecution of Catholics in England. |
| 1575 | Earl of Leicester entertains Elizabeth I at Kenilworth with shows. Mayor of Chester summoned for permitting performance of miracle cycle. Westcott using part of St Paul's school property for 'private theatre' performances. | New Poor Law. Anabaptists burned in England. |
| 1576 | James Burbage and John Brayne build The Theatre in Shoreditch, London. Richard Farrant takes over Chapel Royal plays and sets up Blackfriars 'private' theatre. | Edmund Grindal appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Frobisher's voyage begins. |

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| 1577 | Strange's Men active. Curtain playhouse opens? Newington Butts playhouse built about this time. | Drake sets off around the world. |
| 1579 | Edmond Tilney appointed Master of the Revels. | Proposed marriage of Elizabeth I and Duke of Anjou. Military involvement supporting Dutch rebellion against Spain. |
| 1580 | Oxford's Men active. | |
| 1582 | Chamberlain's Men active. | |
| 1583 | Queen's Men formed. Oxford's Boys perform at Blackfriars. | Whitgift made Archbishop of Canterbury. Throckmorton plot. |
| 1584 | | Raleigh fails in Virginia. Oath of Association to defend Elizabeth. |
| 1585 | Admiral's Men active. | |
| 1586 | Will Kemp at Frederick II's court in Elsinore. | Battle of Zutphen. Babbington plot to free Mary Queen of Scots; her trial. Star Chamber forbids publications without ecclesiastical approval. |
| 1587 | Rose playhouse built. | Pope declares crusade against England. Mary Queen of Scots executed. Drake at Cadiz. |
| 1588 | Tarlton dies. | The Spanish Armada fails. |
| 1589 | | James VI of Scotland marries Anne of Denmark. |
| 1590 | Paul's Boys cease playing. | |
| 1592 | Plague closes the playhouses for two years. Pembroke's Men on tour. | |
| 1593 | | Non-attendance at church punishable by banishment. |
| 1594 | Admiral's Men and Chamberlain's Men begin playing. | |
| 1595 | | Raleigh in Guiana. Drake and Hawkins die in West Indies. Tyrone rebellion in Ireland. |

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| 1596 | Second Blackfriars playhouse built. | Essex attacks Cadiz. |
| 1597 | | Second Armada fails. |
| 1598 | Playing in London restricted to Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men. | Philip II of Spain dies. Poor Law revised. |
| 1599 | Globe playhouse built. Paul's Boys resurrected. | Essex as general in Ireland: recalled and imprisoned. |
| 1600 | Fortune playhouse built. Chapel Boys active again. | East India Company founded. Prince Charles (later Charles I) born to James VI of Scotland. Gowrie plot against James. |
| 1601 | | Essex rebellion and execution. |
| 1603 | Admiral's Men become Prince Henry's Men, Chamberlain's Men become King's Men. | Death of Elizabeth. Accession of James VI of Scotland as James I of England. Surrender of Earl of Tyrone, end of Irish rebellion. |
| 1604 | Worcester's Men become Queen Anne's Men. Children of the Queen's Revels formed. | |
| 1605 | Red Bull built. | James inaugurates campaign against recusants. Gunpowder plot discovered. |
| 1606 | Whitefriars playhouse built. | |
| 1607 | King's Revels boy company at Whitefriars. | Robert Carr, James's Scottish favourite, knighted. Francis Bacon appointed solicitor-general. |
| 1608 | King's Men lease Blackfriars. | Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, appointed lord treasurer. |
| 1609 | Cockpit (Phoenix) built. | |
| 1610 | George Buc becomes Master of Revels. | Plantation of Ulster. In Holland Olden Barneveldt and Grotius espouse Arminian views. |
| 1611 | Lady Elizabeth's Men active. | George Abbot appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Carr made Viscount Rochester. Sale of baronetcies at £1,095 a piece. |

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| 1612 | Prince's Men active. Thomas Heywood's <i>Apology for Actors</i> published. | Prince Henry dies. Lancashire witches hanged. |
| 1613 | Prince Henry's Men become Palsgrave's Men. Globe burns down. Children of the Revels and Lady Elizabeth's Men amalgamate. | Princess Elizabeth marries Frederick, the Elector Palatine. The Essex divorce – the Countess of Essex marries Robert Carr, later Earl of Somerset. Death of Thomas Overbury. Sarmiento (Count of Gondomar) appointed Spanish ambassador. |
| 1614 | Second Globe playhouse built. Hope playhouse built. | 'Addled' Parliament. |
| 1615 | Porter's Hall playhouse built. Cockpit/Phoenix used as theatre. | Trial of Earl and Countess of Somerset for Overbury's murder. Sale of peerages. |
| 1616 | Ben Jonson's <i>Works</i> published in Folio, and he receives a life pension from James I. Death of Shakespeare. | Raleigh's expedition to Guiana. First Congregational church founded in England. |
| 1617 | Shrove Tuesday riots damage the Phoenix playhouse. | James I's journey to Scotland. |
| 1618 | Raleigh's execution arranged for same day (29 October) as Lord Mayor's show. | Beginning of the Thirty Years' War. |
| 1619 | Remnants of Queen Anne's company become Red Bull (Revels) company. Inigo Jones begins work on Banqueting House (completed 1622). | Death of Queen Anne. Execution of Olden Barneveldt. |
| 1620 | | Spanish invasion of Palatinate. King Frederick of Bohemia expelled from kingdom. Pilgrim Fathers found New Plymouth, Massachusetts. |
| 1621 | Fortune Theatre burns down. | Parliament attacks monopolies and patents and impeaches Bacon for taking bribes. Hostility between king and Commons. |

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| 1622 | John Astley briefly Master of the Revels. | |
| 1623 | New Fortune Theatre opened. Henry Herbert becomes Master of the Revels. | Massacre at Amboyna. Prince Charles and Duke of Buckingham on match-making visit to infanta in Spain. Elector Frederick expelled from Palatinate by imperial troops. |
| 1624 | <i>A Game at Chess</i> performed at Globe. Actors and author called before Privy Council. | War with Spain. Richelieu becomes first minister of France. |
| 1625 | London playhouses close at death of James (27 March). Plague keeps them closed until November/December, when Queen Henrietta's Men become active. | Death of James I and accession of Charles I. Marriage to Henrietta Maria of France. Plague in London. |
| 1626 | Remnants of Prince's Men form Red Bull company. Queen Henrietta Maria and ladies perform French play at Somerset House. Riot in Fortune Theatre. | Opposition between king and Commons over forced loan. |
| 1627 | | England declares war on France. Siege of La Rochelle. |
| 1628 | | Charles accepts Petition of Right condemning extra-parliamentary taxation. Murder of the Duke of Buckingham. |
| 1629 | Salisbury Court playhouse built. Visiting French troupe, including actresses, meet a hostile reception at Blackfriars. Also perform at Red Bull and Fortune. | Charles I dissolves third parliament: beginning of eleven years' personal rule. Imprisonment of Sir John Eliot and rebellious MPs. Peace with France. |
| 1630 | Plague closes theatres for seven months. Cockpit-in-Court opened. | Birth of future Charles II. |

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| 1631 | Prince Charles's Men become active. Plague closures in early part of year. | |
| 1632 | Cockpit-in-Court converted. | |
| 1633 | Queen performs in Montague's <i>The Shepherd's Paradise</i> at Somerset House. | |
| 1634 | Spanish actors at court. William Prynne pilloried and imprisoned for <i>Histrion-Mastix</i> . | Charles visits Scotland. Death of Wallenstein. William Laud appointed Archbishop of Canterbury. Birth of future James II. |
| 1635 | French actors in London. | |
| 1636 | Plague closures from 12 May to 2 October 1637. August/September – troupes play before king at Oxford. | Charles I and Laud visit Oxford. |
| 1637 | Brief reopening of theatres in February. Beeston's Boys formed. Queen's Men active. Ogilby's Men active in Dublin. Werburgh Street Theatre built there. | Ship money controversy. Scots ordered to accept English Prayer Book. |
| 1638 | New Masquing House at Whitehall. | Star Chamber ruling that 'Rex is Lex'. Solemn League and Covenant. |
| 1639 | Red Bull actors summoned by Privy Council for libellous <i>The Whore New Vamped</i> . Lord Mayor's shows stopped. | First Bishops' War. Strafford becomes king's chief counsellor. |
| 1640 | Beeston imprisoned for Beeston's Boys' play at Cockpit. William Davenant replaces him to run company until 1641. September/November – plague closures. | The 'Short' Parliament (13 April – 5 May). Second Bishops' War. 'Long' Parliament summoned. Laud and Strafford arrested. Citizens bring 'Root and Branch' petition to Commons proposing abolition of bishops. |
| 1641 | August/November – plague closures. <i>The Stage-Player's</i> | Execution of Strafford. Star Chamber and Court of High |

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| | <i>Complaint</i> published. Davenant, Suckling and Jermyn flee after army plot uncovered. | Commission abolished. Root and Branch bill and Grand Remonstrance. Irish rebellion. |
| 1642 | Parliamentary debates on suppression of plays: 2 September – Parliament orders closure of theatres. | Attempted arrest of five MPs. Charles takes refuge in York. 22 August – Royal standard raised at Nottingham. 23 October – battle of Edgehill. Charles I establishes headquarters in Oxford. |
| 1643 | <i>The Actors' Remonstrance</i> . Some players at Oxford throughout the war. Raid on illicit performance at Fortune. | Parliament accepts Scottish alliance and Solemn League and Covenant. Death of John Hampden, John Pym and Louis XIII. |
| 1644 | Interior of Globe playhouse dismantled. | 2 July – battle of Marston Moor. |
| 1645 | Masquing House at Whitehall 'pulled down'. | Prayer Book abolished. Laud executed. New Model Army formed under Cromwell and Fairfax. 14 June – battle of Naseby. |
| 1646 | King's players petition and win salary arrears from House of Lords. Davenant in Paris. | Presbyterianism made state religion. King takes refuge with Scots. Oxford surrenders. |
| 1647 | Players act publicly at Salisbury Court, Cockpit and Fortune. 16 July – parliamentary order against playing. 22 October – further parliamentary order against playing. Beaumont and Fletcher Folio published. | King handed over to parliament in London, seized by army on 4 June, escapes to Isle of Wight. Putney debates between Levellers and army generals. |
| 1648 | Players at Cockpit and Red Bull. 9 February – ordinance to suppress players. June and July ordinances for suppression passed. Surreptitious performances continue. | Second Civil War. Defeat of Scottish royal army at Preston. 6–7 December Pride's Purge. End of Thirty Years' War with Treaty of Westphalia. |

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|------|--|--|
| 1649 | Interiors of Fortune, Cockpit and Salisbury Court dismantled. Red Bull continues performances. | King's trial and execution on 30 January. Rump Parliament abolishes House of Lords and monarchy. Commonwealth proclaimed. Levellers capture Burford. Cromwell crushes Irish rebellion. |
| 1650 | 'Humble Petition' of impoverished actors to Parliament. Raid on Red Bull. Beeston repairs Cockpit and sets up a boy's training company. | Charles II in Scotland accepts Covenant. |
| 1651 | | Charles II crowned at Scone. Battle of Worcester and Charles's escape. Royalist estates confiscated. |
| 1652 | Beeston buys lease of Salisbury Court. | End of Irish War. |
| 1653 | Robert Cox performs at Red Bull. Gibbon's Tennis Court used for performances. Raid on performance of Killigrew's <i>Claracilla</i> . John Rowe, in <i>Tragi-Comoedia</i> , implies illicit provincial performance. | Parliament expelled by Cromwell. 'Barebones' parliament sits July – December. Instrument of Government establishes Protectorate. Trial and acquittal of John Lilburne. |
| 1654 | Attempts to suppress playing. Raid on <i>Wit Without Money</i> at Red Bull. | Peace with Holland. First protectorate parliament. |
| 1655 | Plays at Red Bull, raided on 14 September. Blackfriars playhouse 'pulled down'. Lord Mayor's shows resume. | Proclamation on religious liberty. War with Spain. Treaty with France. |
| 1656 | Davenant apparently using Gibbon's Tennis Court, Cockpit and Apothecaries' Hall for performance. May – performances at Rutland House. Hope Theatre 'pulled down'. | Second protectorate parliament. Naval victories in war with Spain. |

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1657		Cromwell declines kingship.
1658	Davenant's performances at Cockpit.	Parliament dissolved. Death of Oliver Cromwell on 3 September. Richard Cromwell appointed Lord Protector.
1659	Performances at Red Bull. Davenant imprisoned for part in royalist plot. <i>Siege of Rhodes</i> acted at Cockpit. Actors arrested for performing at Red Bull.	End of Protectorate. Rump Parliament recalled. Monck leads army from Scotland.
1660	Theatre patents granted to Killigrew and Davenant.	Monck recalls MPs excluded since 1648, who vote for dissolution of parliament. Declaration of Breda. New Parliament recalls Charles II, who enters London on 29 May. Founding of Royal Society.