

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## *Introduction*

*Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper*

In the winter of 2014, Shakespeare's Globe moves indoors with an opening season for the indoor Jacobean theatre, aptly named the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse. The title of this book is in part inspired by this endeavour, one that Wanamaker envisioned as part of his own two-playhouse plan when he sought to reconstruct the Globe Theatre; this book will go some way to reflect upon and examine the task of building, as Oliver Jones refers to it in Chapter 3, a 'Jacobean ideal'. This scheme, the completion of a project first envisaged by Sam Wanamaker in the 1980s, is meant to add what the Shakespeare company wanted as early as 1594, a winter playhouse to accompany the outdoor playhouse they already possessed. Sam's reason for wanting an indoor venue as well as the outdoor Globe was that the Shakespeare company, within three months of its being founded, tried to obtain an indoor playhouse they could use in the winter. In 1596 the Blackfriars was built for them, but sadly the locals blocked them from using it. In the event, their plan did not succeed until 1609, when Shakespeare himself was near the end of his writing career.

The new indoor theatre is somewhat based on drawings discovered at Worcester College Oxford in the 1960s and that were once considered to be authored by Inigo Jones. Since Shakespeare's Globe opened in 1997, subsequent scholarship has shown that the drawings might have been penned as late as the Restoration and by John Webb, a protégé of Jones. The Globe's aspirations for a 'Jacobean' indoor theatre are driven by these drawings, which provide a 'spatial map' upon which to construct a playhouse Shakespeare might recognize. But the Globe's Architecture Research Group have been tasked with investigating what is known about indoor performance, Jacobean decorative arts and architectural construction; the new playhouse is not the Blackfriars, however, though it will invoke a version of the indoor playhouse Shakespeare's company occupied from 1609 to 1642.

The idea of using the Worcester College drawings as the basis for the new indoor playhouse was agreed for a number of reasons. First, although James

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse  
Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper  
Excerpt  
[More information](#)

---

Burbage built the indoor Blackfriars for the Shakespeare company in 1596, in the later years of Queen Elizabeth, it did not become available to the company for regular use until the plague year of 1608, and plays were not performed there until 1609 or 1610. Thus it became in fact and in character the first Jacobean venue used for plays by an adult acting company. Second, it is the best and indeed the only set of drawings for an indoor playhouse that we have. It shows a number of distinctive features that might fix it to the Jacobean period, most notably the priority it may give to hearing over seeing the plays (though this positioning does allow for privileged viewing), since nearly a third of the seats are positioned at the sides or rear of the stage in order to give the best proximity for hearing. It does not do what modern theatres normally do, which is maximize the best views of the stage by positioning all the audience to face the stage from what we think of as the front. Thirdly, like the Blackfriars, it was clearly intended as a wooden construct built independently, and probably intended to fit inside a given external shell.

The drawings do suggest the style of decor that Inigo Jones began to use in his various designs from about 1616 onwards, when he became the king's Surveyor of the Works. Since that was also the date when the first Jacobean playhouse was built, designed deliberately to imitate Burbage's Blackfriars, that is, Christopher Beeston's Cockpit, the Globe has set its own target date for the design of its new indoor playhouse at around 1616. While this book will examine the documentary and practical evidence for the construction of an indoor theatre, it will, in the main, analyze the material, social and economic conditions that made the Shakespeare company invest in two playhouses, and will assess the effects this had on the repertory after 1608. The importance of Shakespeare's indoor theatre has been overshadowed by the attention to and focus upon the amphitheatres in the last twenty years of scholarship. Drawing upon established expertise and the new research emerging from the Globe's academic enquiry into indoor Jacobean performance and playhouse architecture, this book will examine the ways in which the indoor theatre affected the King's Men and their performance practices, the dramaturgy of Shakespeare and his contemporaries who created plays for the company, and its refashioning of and impact upon the playgoers. Despite the increasing critical interest in early modern performance history, apart from Irwin Smith's still highly rated *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse: Its History and Design* (1964) and the more recent collection from Paul Menzer, *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage* (2006), there have been very few considerations of the conditions at Shakespeare's indoor playhouse and the wider context for

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

3

seventeenth-century indoor performance. Examining the past through the lens of the Globe's current construction of an indoor Jacobean theatre, this book will chiefly cover the Blackfriars, but will necessarily extend to both of the subsequent indoor playhouses (the Cockpit and Salisbury Court), and will look broadly at the evident material and ephemeral differences between the indoor and the outdoor repertoires and the effects of the move indoors on dramatic style and content as playwriting developed through the Jacobean and Caroline periods.

**Why indoors?**

In October 1594 the company that included Shakespeare as a player, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, asked their patron to get them the use of an inn with a roofed upper room to perform in through the winter months. He specified the Cross Keys Inn, located in Gracechurch Street in the centre of the city. It had been used in previous years as a winter playhouse, and several members of the new company had performed there. Clearly the company wanted to continue their tradition when the weather was bad of performing indoors inside the city. This traditional view seems to have been maintained in striking contrast to the company's opposites, the Lord Admiral's Men, who seem to have been content to continue through both summer and winter at their assigned venue, the Rose on Bankside. This contrast between the two leading companies' policies had massive long-term effects.

However we read the limited evidence for this difference of attitude between the two companies to the changing seasons, it had drastic effects on the finances of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. The Lord Admiral's always sustained their use of their outdoor venues, first the Rose on Bankside, and then after the Globe was built barely forty yards away from the Rose, at the Fortune in Clerkenwell. They and their successors remained there until the total closure of all playing in 1642. The Lord Chamberlain's Men had a much more varied set of experiences. Whether they did get access to the Cross Keys or not that October we cannot tell, although in our view it was extremely unlikely, because the Lord Mayor who took office at the end of that month (at Michaelmas) was a notoriously severe enemy of all playing. What we do know is that in the following winter of 1595/6 the Chamberlain's Men's financier and playhouse owner James Burbage purchased the freehold of a property in the Blackfriars precinct, inside the city and close to St Paul's Cathedral (see John Astington's Chapter 1 below). There he built a new playhouse for his company.

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)

This (second) Blackfriars venue eventually became the most famous and most fashionable theatre in London. But its first years were a disaster for the Burbages and their company. Their crisis may well have provoked the invention of Shylock as a well-disguised figure for London's moneylenders. On 6 February 1596 Burbage bought the freehold of the hall, originally the monastery's Upper Frater, tore down the tenements that filled it, and spent in all over a thousand pounds building the new playhouse inside that great chamber, which had once been used for meetings of Parliament under Richard II. But in November of the same year thirty-one senior residents of the Blackfriars precinct petitioned the Privy Council to forbid its use as a playhouse. The first signatory on this petition was the dowager Lady Russell, sister-in-law to Lord Burghley, who chaired the Privy Council. The second signatory was the new Lord Hunsdon, the company's own patron, who had inherited the title and the company upon his father's death five months earlier.

The petition was of course approved immediately, and old Burbage, less than three months from death, was immediately besieged by his creditors. They could see that he had lost any means to make money from it and repay their investments. This was when Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice*, depicting Antonio's problem with his bond, and its effect on his protégé Bassanio. That role was most likely played by Richard Burbage, who in February 1597 inherited the Blackfriars property and its debts from his father. While the play was first being staged, like Antonio, the young Burbage was suffering from London's moneylenders in the wake of his now deceased father. The play was written and staged just at the time when young Burbage found his father's creditors hammering on his own door. It is tempting to consider that the play may have been written and staged at least in part as a response to the financial position in which the company found themselves.

As with the Globe, almost all the sharers in the Second Blackfriars Playhouse were also sharers in the company. But unlike the £100 that each player contributed to buy their share in the Globe, none of the new Blackfriars sharers who were also players had to pay for their new property. It was Richard Burbage's gift to them, as leaders of the company team. This was a tricky deal, and is one that can be seen in various lights. It was distinctly old-fashioned, in that it relied on team spirit to run the operation. In practical and financial terms, to run the two playhouses as seasonal venues was potentially costly. To keep one playhouse closed while they played at the other deprived the sharers of any income from the one that was empty. That may explain Burbage's generosity in not asking the players to

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

5

pay for their new shares in the Blackfriars. If the new deal had been a plan for the two playhouses to work at the same time throughout the year, they might have been expected to pay a lot for the privilege of doubling their income. Nothing is on record to explain why they adopted their new policy of using their two playhouses seasonally.

For a playing company's sharers to hold shares in their two playhouses was a substantial guarantee of security. They had the king as their patron, and they were far less likely than the boy company to suffer trouble with the authorities. What they chose to do with their new playhouse was, nonetheless, quite remarkable, and utterly unprecedented. In a time when playhouses were in notoriously short supply, with the king's two younger children each having a new company to be patron of, the King's Men chose to revert to the policy they had first tried to adopt back in 1594, and play outdoors in summer and indoors in winter. They could easily have rented one of their two prized venues to another company, but instead, it seems, they chose to keep one empty while they performed in the other. This was extravagant and arrogant. No company had ever followed such a practice since the years up to 1594, before they lost the use of the city inns. In later years they did sometimes let out the Globe for special performers such as acrobats, but they never allowed (as far as extant evidence tells us) another playing company to use either of their playhouses.

This brief summary of the King's Men's unique position as owners of two extraordinarily popular playhouses lays some foundation for the chief aim of this collection: to examine the motives and the conditions that provoked the move theatre companies – namely the Shakespeare company – made indoors. In doing so, this book will address several questions. When, fourteen years after it was originally built for them, the Shakespeare company finally started using their indoor playhouse at the Blackfriars, did they develop a new repertory of plays for it? What were the material, visual and acoustic conditions at the Blackfriars and how did these influence the early modern repertory? Who attended these indoor venues and what were the effects of the indoor conditions on audience reception? In Part I: The Context of Hard Evidence, we examine the appeal of the indoor playhouse and assess practical and documentary evidence for constructing a version of a Jacobean indoor playhouse now. In Chapter 1, John Astington examines why the theatres changed. For Astington, the acquisition of the Blackfriars playhouse by the King's Men in 1608 profoundly influenced subsequent theatre ventures: the Phoenix or Cockpit playhouse in Drury Lane (1616), the projected theatre at Porters' Hall (1613–17), and the Salisbury Court playhouse (1629–30). The change was driven by entrepreneurship on the

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)

part of the actors and by taste on the part of audiences. Playing indoors within a converted hall was an old practice, well known to actors and audiences of all kinds from the medieval period onwards, but it was the commercialized playing of the chorister children's troupes in the 1570s and 1580s that initiated an alternative option for playgoing within London: instead of mixing in the large crowds at the outdoor playhouses, wealthier members of society could join a smaller, select audience indoors, where plays were performed on smaller stage platforms illuminated by candlelight. Astington also explores the big question of whether or not the change in venues altered the ways in which actors approached the performance of plays, indoors and out. In Chapter 2, *Practical Evidence for a Reimagining of an Indoor Jacobean Theatre*, architect Jon Greenfield and timber craftsman Peter McCurdy show how the construction of an indoor Jacobean theatre is possible by applying an understanding of contemporary Jacobean construction technology, together with knowledge gained from an examination of contemporary building accounts and surviving Jacobean interiors. This process, they argue, has generated a reinterpretation that captures both strong similarities with the designs expressed in the Worcester College drawings and significant differences. The result is a Jacobean archetype that promises to yield important new discoveries in seventeenth-century indoor performance. We have chosen to leave some technical detail in this chapter to demonstrate the different sorts of evidence available and to draw attention to the historic methodology that accompanies 'reconstruction' projects. In the chapter that follows, *Documentary Evidence for an Indoor Jacobean Theatre*, Oliver Jones, who served as Research Associate on the Globe's indoor theatre project, suggests that clues about the construction and decoration of a seventeenth-century indoor theatre have to be teased from documents such as Burbage's purchase contract for his Blackfriars site and from inferences in surviving play texts, but that these do not offer a ready blueprint for modern reproduction. However, when casting the net wider to include a broader survey of Jacobean buildings, several examples emerge containing features similar to those present in an indoor theatre. Jones reflects that by investigating the accounts of work undertaken at elite estates such as Hatfield House, or at Whitehall during the construction of the pre-Inigo Jones Banqueting House, we can more fully understand the Jacobean building process and what ramifications this has when attempting to replicate an indoor theatre of the early modern period.

In Chapter 4, *Continuities and Innovations in Staging*, Mariko Ichikawa considers how the physical features of the stage and auditorium of the Blackfriars Theatre and what is known of performance practice might

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

7

have influenced the plays acted there. The Blackfriars stage, being much narrower than that of the Globe, and the presence of stage-sitters would have reduced the width of the playing area, affecting actors' positions on the stage. By examining the entrances and exits in these plays, the width of the playing area in relation to a scene's location and the intended use of stage facilities, Ichikawa makes a convincing case for the Blackfriars having a significant atmospheric advantage over the open-air theatres where the actors played in broad daylight.

Part II examines the materiality of the indoor venues, and indeed many chapters in this volume take up the question of the visual and acoustic effects of this materiality on performance, audience response and repertory. In the first chapter of this section, Tiffany Stern starts with Blackfriars as a place of nostalgia, redolent of its past, with audiences who repeatedly draw attention to the space's previous manifestations: to the monastery once there, to the parliament and legatine court that shared its buildings, to the choirboys that typified its previous theatre. She asks how the prehistory visible in the entrance, stairway and outer shell of the Second Blackfriars Playhouse contributed to its haunted atmosphere. She also takes into account what theatrical accoutrements – such as boxes, latticed and otherwise, galleries and stage-stools, as well as audience effects (cloaks and bejewelled gowns) – may have been added to the Second Blackfriars Playhouse to make it simultaneously current as well as an echo of something lost. Stern asks if a yearning for being elsewhere – in court – also shaped the experience of attending the Second Blackfriars Playhouse. She considers how plays were affected by the combination of nostalgia and modernity that visually, aurally and sensually infused the space.

Following on from Stern's consideration of the look and feel of the Blackfriars, in Chapter 6, Martin White draws on a wide range of sources in order to try to understand how lighting technology was employed. White covers techniques of lighting the stage, the contribution that may have been made by daylight, and offers new insights into the number, nature and deployment of the candles used, their operation before and during performances, the possibility and impact of changing lighting states to match or create particular moods, and the ways hand-held instruments helped articulate and focus the general lighting. He consults a range of sources, including records of staging plays at court and at the professional commercial playhouses before and immediately following the Restoration, as well as accounts of the purchase and maintenance of the wide range of equipment required to light those performances. White also draws evidence from the texts of plays known to have been written for, or performed, indoors, and

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)

from the author's extensive experience of staging early modern plays under candlelight. This chapter explores how the nature of candlelight was a key factor in deciding the decor of the interior of the playhouses and examines its effect on the clothes worn by actors and their audiences, concluding with an analysis based on experiments undertaken in a temporary 'reconstructed' indoor playhouse with John Webster's tragedy, *The Duchess of Malfi*. In Chapter 7, Acoustic and Visual Practices Indoors, Sarah Dustagheer examines further the material constituents of indoor performance. Her chapter analyses the ways in which music was a dominant and integral aspect of the dramaturgy of indoor plays, as seen particularly in the work of Marston and Shakespeare. In the first part, she shows how, rather than just an incidental or discrete presence, music was woven into narrative and character development; in the second part, her focus turns to the visual aesthetic of Blackfriars. She notes, along with other contributors to this volume, that contemporary accounts of the Blackfriars indicate that the audience 'glittered' and 'glistened' under the candlelight, using the playhouse to display the latest London fashions. In response to this distinct visual environment, Dustagheer argues that playwrights deployed props and costumes deliberately to create a rich, 'material-laden vision' for their stage.

In the next chapter, The Audience of the Indoor Theatre, Penelope Woods considers the nature of the Jacobean audience at the indoor theatres by examining 'the ecology of performance effects' and audience responses to them that were produced by the professional adult company performing indoors. The Blackfriars was a commercial but expensive, and consequently, elite theatre with a much smaller auditorium than the outdoor performance space at the Globe used by the King's Men. Its seating arrangements and audience distribution brought actors and audiences into different physical relationships to one another, and since it was brightly illuminated with candles, and permeated with a different musical soundscape, this theatre produced a different audience experience and response to that previously examined in considerations of early modern reception history. Woods argues that these changes 'choreographed the audience's physical and emotional relationships' and its relationship to the actors in significant ways that were distinct from performance and its reception in the outdoor theatres. Drawing on the critical work of historical phenomenology, Woods considers what happened *in-between* performance, theatre and its reception. Her chapter takes the cases of 'pity' and 'wonder', key responses produced by indoor Jacobean audiences. Examining three moments of performance, from *Othello*, *The Lady's Tragedy* and *The Winter's Tale* and three corresponding eyewitness



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

9

accounts, Woods considers what happens in these scenes between actor, audience and theatre space.

In Chapter 9, *In the Event of Fire*, Paul Menzer argues that the Blackfriars ‘reset western theatre’s disposition towards time and place’ by articulating a commitment to intimacy and an investment in loss that permeates the protocols of playmaking, then and even now. In strictly material terms, Menzer argues, it is easy to think of Burbage’s indoor playhouse simply as an ‘inverted amphitheatre: private not public; coterie not populist; intimate not rowdy’. The Blackfriars, in these terms, compromised the Globe. The Blackfriars was simply the Globe turned outside in. Yet, to imagine the Blackfriars as an ‘inverted Globe’ underestimates its historical significance. For the Blackfriars did not just invert the Globe, Menzer suggests; it ultimately supplanted it. Menzer observes that, in fact, the Blackfriars struck the ‘death knell’ not just for the Globe, nor for early English outdoor playing, but for a nearly two thousand-year-old theatrical tradition of outdoor theatre. Menzer argues that the opening of the Blackfriars marked the beginning of the end to a long chapter in western theatre history, revising the ‘sensory norm’ for theatrical attendance, in which the experience of assembly has been thoroughly domesticated. He suggests emphatically that in fact the ‘sensory norm of inside playing’, as he calls it, of ‘institutionalized intimacy’, reconfigured ‘not just what it meant to be live in 1610, but what it still means to be live today’.

The final chapter (Chapter 10) in Part II considers how faces might ‘glisten in a playhouse’. Here, Farah Karim-Cooper examines the aesthetic implications of using cosmetic face paint in a candlelit indoor playhouse. Focussing on Ben Jonson’s *The Devil is an Ass*, Thomas Middleton’s *The Lady’s Tragedy* and Shakespeare’s *The Winter’s Tale*, Karim-Cooper argues that the indoor repertory shows a markedly different type of engagement with cosmetics and cosmetic metaphors than the outdoor repertory (meaning plays written with outdoor spaces in mind – though not necessarily performed just in those spaces), which is, in part, a response to the different architectural, proxemic and lighting conditions of the indoor playhouses. In addition to imagining the visual aesthetic created by facial cosmetics on the indoor stage, Karim-Cooper’s chapter explores the social and ideological questions raised by representations of cosmetic spectacle in Jacobean drama and the dialectical resonances the effects of makeup create for the female spectators in the space.

The final part of this book focusses on the influence that indoor theatres might have had on shaping repertory, re-examining what is meant by ‘late Shakespeare’ and looking forward to the Caroline repertory. Andrew Gurr,

Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-04063-2 - Moving Shakespeare Indoors: Performance and Repertoire  
in the Jacobean Playhouse

Edited by Andrew Gurr and Farah Karim-Cooper

Excerpt

[More information](#)

in Chapter 11, sees a radical shift in Shakespeare's own work as he developed the new, so-called 'romances' in the later part of his career. Gurr asks, what might have prompted this innovation? And how far did the Shakespeare company's acquisition of Blackfriars in 1608 influence the kind of plays that Shakespeare went on to write, such as *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Tempest* and *Two Noble Kinsmen*? Did the addition of Beaumont's and Fletcher's work to the company's repertoire influence Shakespeare's own writing, or did it work the other way round? Gurr suggests that calculating how far this set of innovations relates to the Blackfriars might either heighten the impact of the indoor theatre or shrink its distinctive value for the company.

In Chapter 12, Eleanor Collins explores the genres of tragicomedy and romance that were developed and revived on the Caroline stages of the hall playhouses, genres which have become, in many critical accounts, characteristic of drama in this later period. Collins focusses in particular on the figure of the heroic woman in 1630s drama, and the means by which male dramatists negotiated the representation of female characters. She argues that this was a period that witnessed a sea change in attitudes towards women, their cultural status and agency, in the light of Queen Henrietta Maria's interventions into drama, her influence on the courtier playwrights, and the idealization of women through the politicized doctrine of Neoplatonic love that she promoted at court. The discussion traces the development of the theatrical fashion for heroic women which emerged across the London repertories and was taken up by professional playwrights including James Shirley, Thomas Heywood and Philip Massinger, who all contributed to the debate over female autonomy and further established the appeal of strong female roles. It goes on to explore how these representations of women were enhanced and complicated by revivals from older periods and from the amphitheatre traditions. Finally, helping to draw together some of the other chapters in this book, Collins considers how heroic women in the Caroline repertory might have appeared on stage to audiences of the indoor theatres, taking into account the unique performance conditions, which include the portrayal of women by boy actors; the intimacy of the indoor theatres; and the uses of cosmetics, costuming, and lighting in the representation of women.

In the final chapter in this collection, *Reviving the Legacy of Indoor Performance*, Bart van Es questions the argument that 1608 was a turning point for Shakespeare's habits of composition. This chapter considers the Shakespearean late style in the light of the existing repertory of the indoor playhouse. On the surface, it seems that stylistic evolution was directly