

The Elizabethan Theatre

The GLOBE PLAYHOUSE

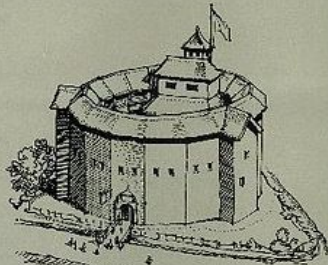
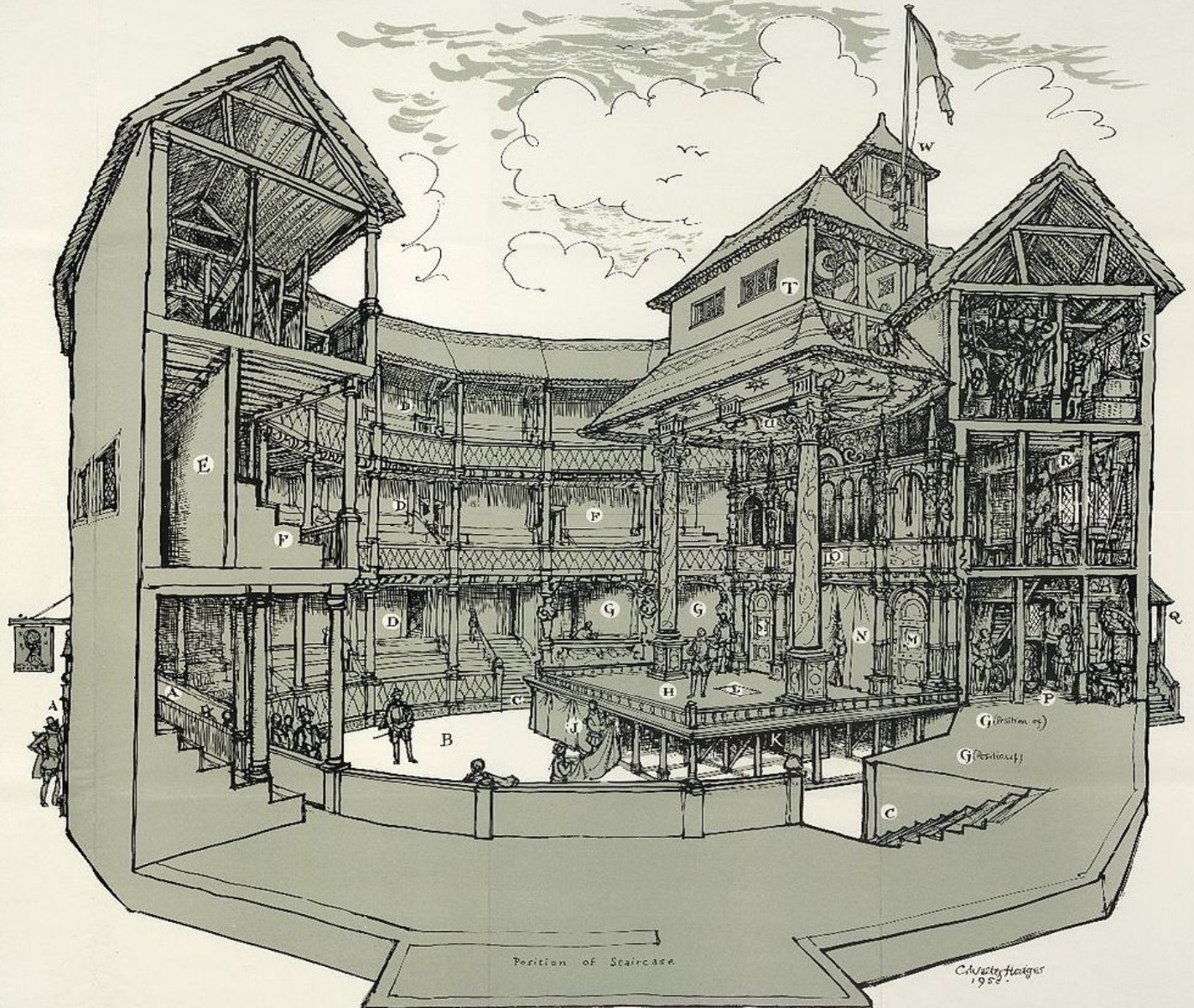
1599-1613

A Conjectural Reconstruction by
C. Walter Hodges



KEY

- AA Main entrance
- B The Yard, where the 'groundlings' stood (for one penny admission)
- CC Entrance to lower gallery (on payment of another penny)
- D Entrances to staircase and upper galleries
- E Corridor serving the different sections of the middle gallery
- F Middle gallery. (The 'Taverning Rooms')
'Gentleman's Room' or 'Lord's Room'
- G The stage
- H The benches being put up round the stage. (As in some theatres this was boarded in)
- I The 'Hell' under the stage
- J The stage trap, leading down to the Hell
- K Stage door, leading into the tiring-house
- MM Curtain's place behind the stage, sometimes opened for special scenes
- O Gallery above the stage, used as required sometimes by musicians, sometimes by spectators, and often as part of the play (e.g. Rooms and Palace)
- P Backstage area (the tiring-house)
- Q Tiring-house door
- R Dressing rooms
- S Warehouse and storage
- T The hat housing the machine for lowering extended galls, etc., to the stage
- U The 'Heaven'
- W Hoisting the playhouse flag



Origin of the English Theatre

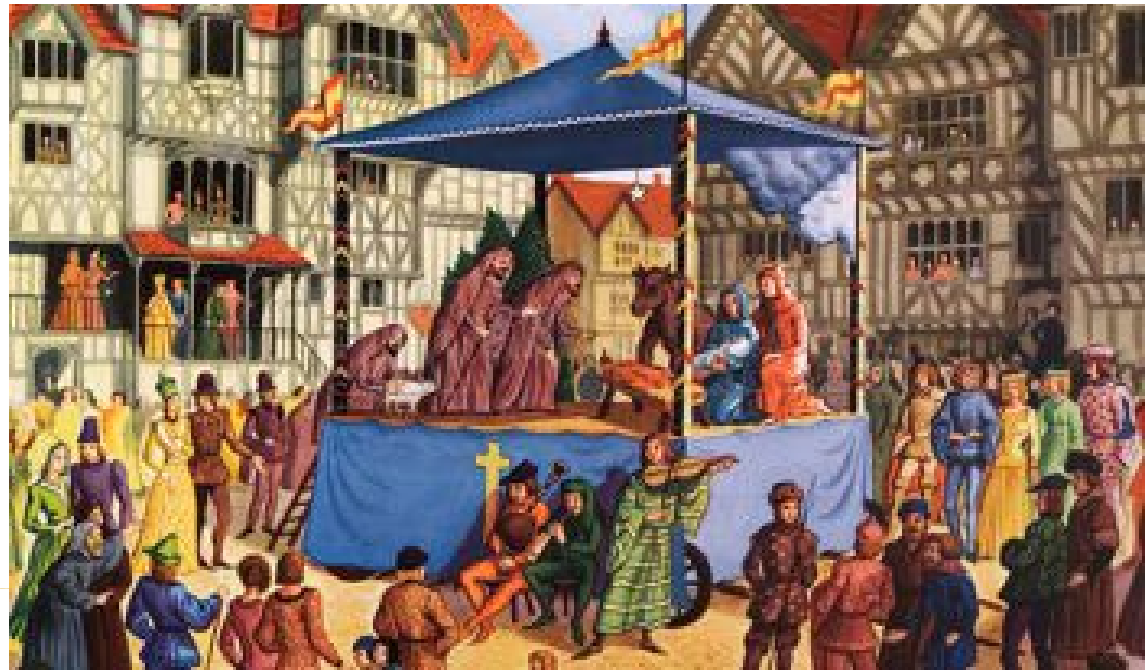
The Church – “the cradle of English drama”

→ Mystery and Miracle plays → Morality plays → strolling players



Touring dramatic companies → erected structures
→ James Burbage → ‘The Theatre’ (1576) and other similar theatres.

Mystery Plays



- > religious drama - purely didactic - under the complete control of the church
- > performances inside the church
- > actors - priests
- > larger crowds made it impossible to stage plays inside the church → the yards → the village greens → the streets

Mystery Plays (Cont.)

- > Laymen started acting
- > language was French, later Latin and then English
- > plays were purely Biblical: scenes from the lives of Abraham, Noah, and Christ.

Miracle Plays → Lives of Saints

→ the first play -
“St. Catherine” (AD
1110)



Morality Plays

-> a later evolution in the drama

-> didactic

-> characters – personified abstractions

- science,
perseverance, free will,
good and bad angels –
'Everyman'



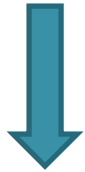
Strolling Players → Touring Dramatic Companies



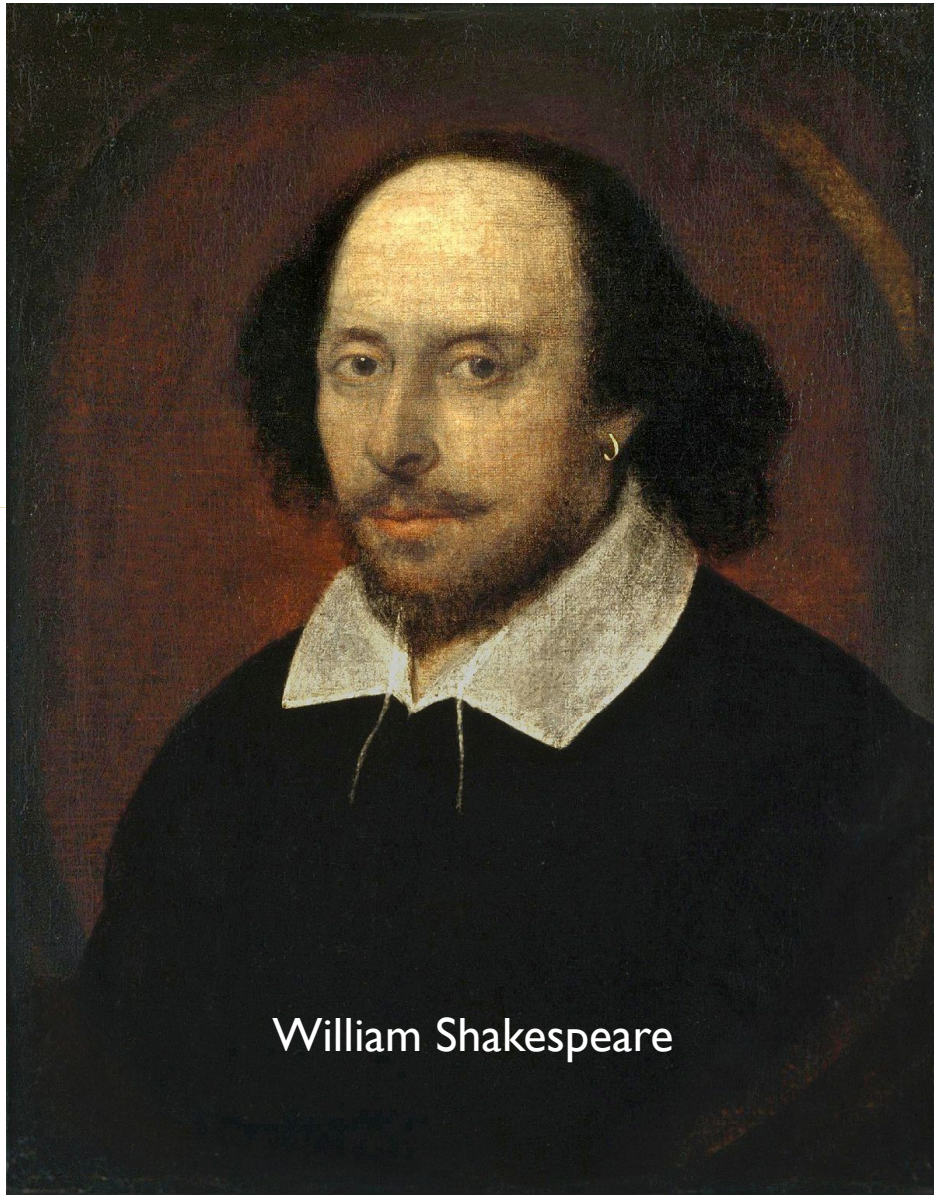
Admiral's men

Chamberlain's men

Both patronised
by Queen Liz



patronised by King James I of Great Britain → "King's Men" → Shakespeare



William Shakespeare

The Early theatres in England

- > 'The Theatre', and 'The Curtain' in 1576
- > The Rose in 1589
- > The Globe in 1599
- > The Fortune in 1600
- > The Blackfriars in 1608



The Elizabethan theatre - In and Out

- > No proper appliances to produce the effect of change in time and place (the major drawback)
- > Placards - to show the location - an unrealistic view according to Shakespeare
- > No drop curtain - a scene or act ended with a rhyming couplet
- > No female actors - young boys acted out the women characters (therefore, very few female characters in Shakespeare's plays)

The Elizabethan Theatre – In and Out (Cont.)

→ Due to boys' inability to act womanly, Shakespeare's heroines were in the disguise of men:

Portia in 'The Merchant of Venice'

Rosalind in 'As You Like It' →

Viola in 'The Twelfth Night'



A painting of Rosalind in the disguise of a shepherd in the forest of Arden

Portia—The quality of mercy
is not strain'd,
It droppeth,
as the gentle
rain from
heaven.

*The Merchant
of Venice.
Act iv. Sc. 1.*



A painting of Portia in the disguise of a man of law addressing Shylock the Jew.

Shakespeare's heroine in disguise



Shakespeare's Audience



Shakespeare's Audience

- > from all sections of the society
- > seats were arranged according to class/
payment – Galleries – Boxes – Seats onstage
– The Pit (the groundlings who paid a penny)
- > a challenge for Shakespeare – to satisfy all
the members of his audience





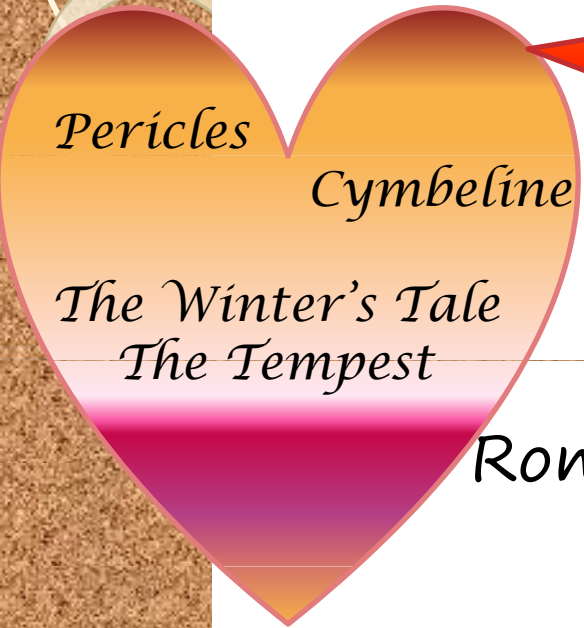
The Elizabethan age → transition from the Old religious drama to modern non-religious drama

Shakespeare's predecessors abided by the three Unities – Time, Place and Action

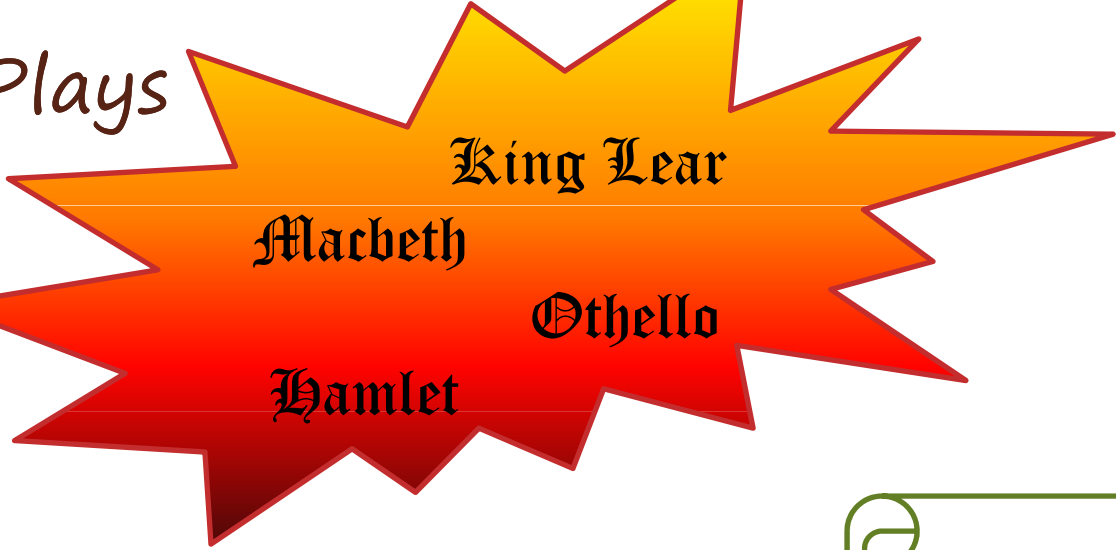


Rules were put off by Shakespeare

Shakespeare's Plays



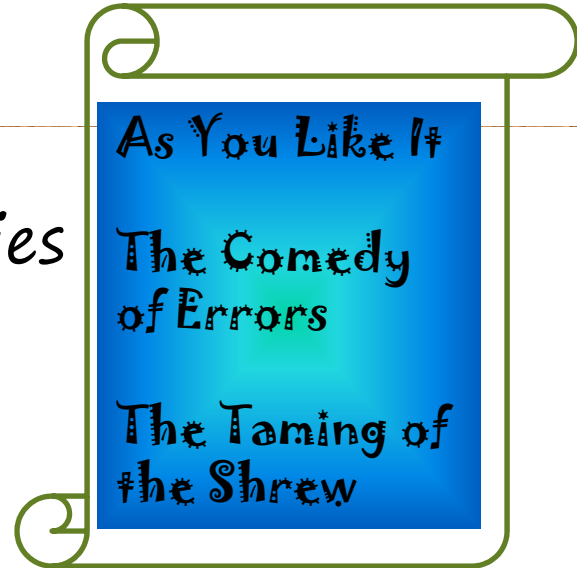
Romances



Tragedies



Comedies



Histories



Differences in Shakespeare's Plays

1) Tragedies

-> Unworthy heroines

-> 'the tragic flaw' in the hero

-> ended with the death of the hero

-> death bells



THE DEATH OF OTHELLO

Differences in Shakespeare's Plays (Cont.)

II) Comedies

-> Unworthy heroes

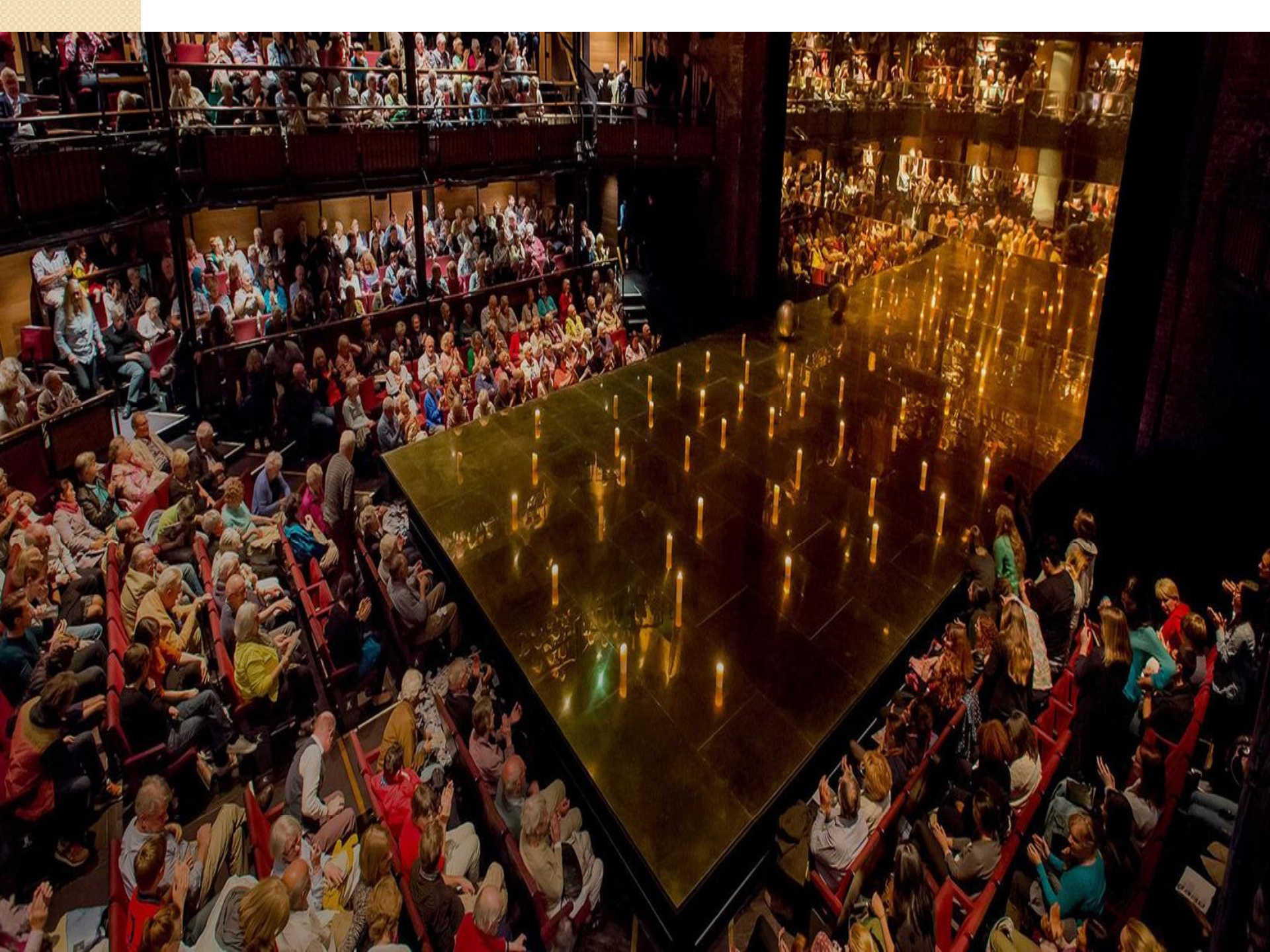
-> normal lives portrayed - difficulties

-> ended with the sound of wedding bells











Thank you