

The Origin of Drama



Do you know
where did
drama start
in England?



Any options?

Well, you would not believe it, but the answer is : in CHURCH



Are you surprised?

You should not, living tableaux were introduced into sacred services as early as the 5th century

They developed in time into Mystery Plays



The Mystery Plays

- The plays were *tropes*, that is, verbal embellishments of liturgical texts, ex: “The nativity”
- Slowly became more elaborate adding prose dialogues.
- These performances were given in **Latin**, but were preceded by a **vernacular** prologue about the synopsis of the events.
- The writers and directors were probably **monks**.
- When these liturgical dramas increased in popularity, **vernacular** forms emerged.
- **Themes:** BIBLICAL





Remember,
there was no
Netflix at the
time

Therefore, a religious
play in a language you
could understand, was
a great diversion.

One more thing, YOU
could have been one
of the actors!!





Outcomes of Popularity

- Pope Innocent III issued a papal edict **forbidding clergy** from acting on a public stage.
- Hence, the organization of the dramas passed from church to **town guilds**.
- Vernacular **replaced** Latin completely .
- Non-biblical passages were added along with comic scenes.
- Acting and characterization became more elaborate.





Where did the performances take place?

1. Churchyard
 2. Public marketplaces
- They were performed and produced by **guilds** now
 - Each guild took responsibility for a particular piece of scriptural history.





We wouldn't be far from the truth if we said that this was an early form of **ADVERTISING**



A guild of carpenters, for example, was very likely to perform «the Nativity» and St. Joseph.





Further Development

- The plays dealt with all the major events in the Christian calendar.
- By the end of the 15th century, the practice of acting these plays in **cycles** on festival days had become common in Europe.
- Plays were often performed on **pageant carts**.
- Actors were both professionals and amateurs.

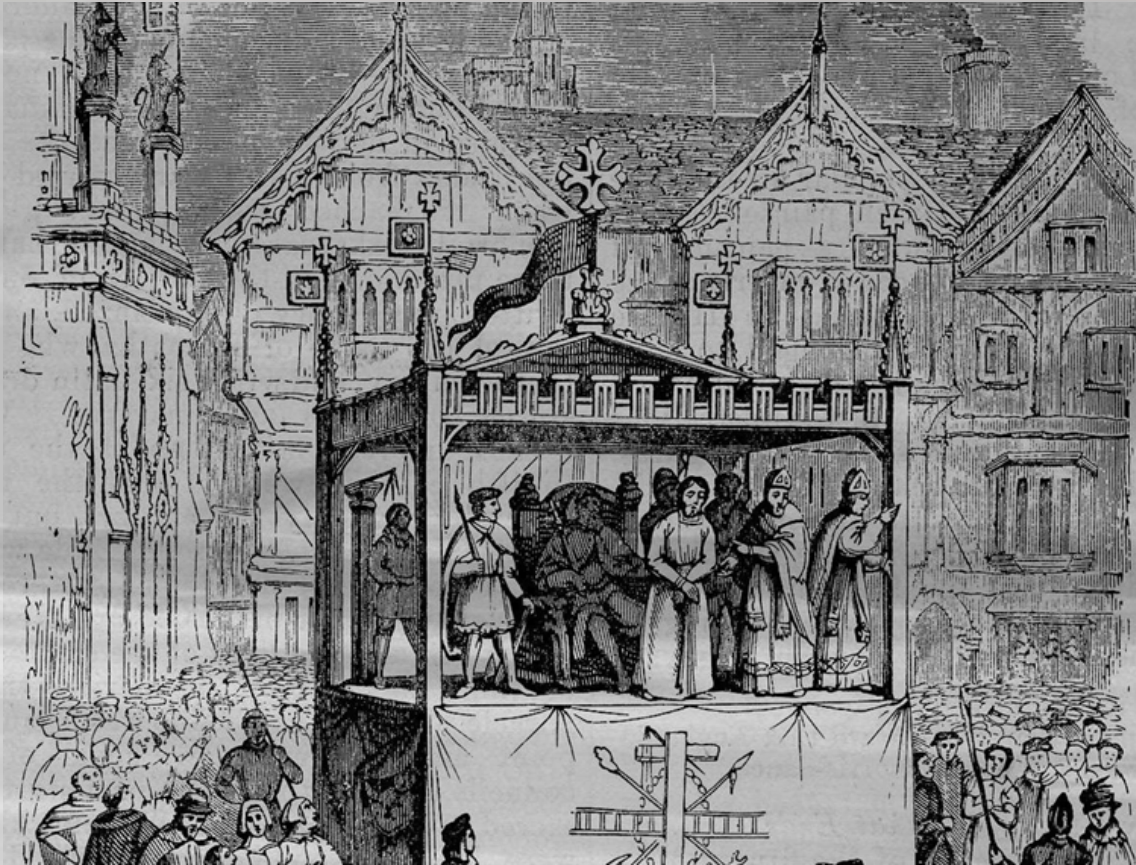




Pageants

- Pageant carts moved about the city to allow different crowds to watch each play.
- They provided actors with a **dressing room** as well as a **stage**.
- The entire cycle could take up to twenty hours to perform .
- Sets were often extravagant.
- ‘Special effects’ were employed .





Pageant cart among the crowd

These temporary wheeled stages were used to present the dramas.





Had performances
been only about
religion, I
wouldn't have
become so
famous.

Topics
started to
vary in time





Morality Plays

- An **intermediate step** in the transition from **liturgical** to **professional** secular drama
- Widespread in Europe during the 15^o and 16^o centuries.
- Allegorical drama .
- Characters personified:
 1. moral qualities (such as charity or vice)
 2. abstractions (as death or youth)
- Aimed at **teaching a moral**.
- Vernacular drama.





The Morality Play Pattern

- The action of the morality play centres on a **hero** (Everyman).
- His weaknesses are assaulted by personified diabolic forces.
- He struggles for redemption
- The plays were:
 1. short.
 2. Serious themes and **farce** coexist.
- **Everyman** is the greatest of all Morality plays and it is still performed.





In a way the
topic of the
Morality was
modern

As it was a
dramatization of the
battle between the
forces of good and
evil in the human
soul. My favourite
topic!!!





Performing at Court

- At the end of the 15^o century **professional actors** began to appear in England and Europe.
- Richard III and Henry VII both maintained **small companies** of professional actors. Why ?
- Their plays were performed in the great hall of a nobleman's residence.
- Raised platform at one end for the audience and a "screen" at the other for the actors.
- Court masques (singing, dancing, acting) were vastly popular.





When I was born
the time was ripe
for further
developments

People from
every station
enjoyed
watching plays.

Larger
spaces were
needed



But, having lived
under the reign of
the greatest Queen
ever was my greatest
fortune! I'm talking
about.....

Queen
Elizabeth I





The Elizabethan Era

- The Elizabethan era (1558 – 1603) was a major turning point for London's theatrical scene.
- Queen Elizabeth I was a prominent patron of the arts.
- Under her reign the first permanent theatre in the city was built, called "The Theatre" in in Shoreditch.
- The making of many others will follow.





My acting
company will
own a theatre
too....

But this is
another story,
ooooops....pptx



