МИНИСТЕРСТВО НАУКИ И ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ Федеральное государственное бюджетное образовательное учреждение высшего образования

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**РЕФЕРАТ**

**ENGLISH RENAISSANCE THEATRE**

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**INTRODUCTION**

In this research we are going to analyze English renaissance theatre, which is sometimes called Elizabethan theatre and with the help of the various resources: textbooks, films, videos, identify its main features. We are going to identify its genres, find out the most famous playwrights as well as its development and the impact on the modern theatre.

A study of English Renaissance theatre and its historical influence has been done by such scientist as E. Voevoda. The relevance of this study lies in the growing interest of the theatre in the Great Britain. Its modern image can not be explained or understood without having a sweeping view at its image during the reign of Elizabeth.

The subject of this work are main features, especially appearance, genres, playwrights, theatres architecture of the English renaissance theatre. We also need to analyze the periodization the period because Renaissance can be divided into three main periods.

The main purpose of the research can be defined as the study of the characteristics of the English Renaissance theatre or early modern theatre and identify its most striking differences in comparison with the English theatre nowadays.

**1 English Renaissance Theatre**

* 1. **Background**

English Renaissance theatre is English drama written between the Reformation and the closure of the theaters in 1642, after the Puritan revolution. It may also be called early modern English theatre.

Renaissance theater derived from several medieval theater traditions, such as the mystery plays that formed a part of religious festivals in England and other parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. The mystery plays were complex retellings of legends based on biblical themes, originally performed in churches but later becoming more linked to the secular celebrations that grew up around religious festivals.

Companies of players attached to households of leading noblemen and performing seasonally in various locations existed before the reign of Elizabeth I. These became the foundation for the professional players that performed on the Elizabethan stage. The tours of these players gradually replaced the performances of the mystery and morality plays by local players, and a 1572 law eliminated the remaining companies lacking formal patronage by labeling them vagabonds. At court as well, the performance of masques by courtiers and other amateurs, apparently common in the early years of Elizabeth, was replaced by the professional companies with noble patrons, who grew in number and quality during her reign.

The City of London authorities were generally hostile to public performances, but its hostility was overwhelmed by the Queen's taste for plays and the Privy Council's support. Theaters sprang up in suburbs, especially in the liberty of Southwark, accessible across the Thames to city dwellers, but beyond the authority's control.

Along with the economics of the profession, the character of the drama changed toward the end of the period. Under Elizabeth, the drama was a unified expression: Court watched the same plays the commoners saw in the public

playhouses. With the development of the private theaters, drama became more oriented toward the tastes and values of an upper-class audience.

* 1. **Periodization**

English Renaissance theater is sometimes called "Elizabethan theatre." The term "Elizabethan theatre," however, covers only the plays written and performed publicly in England during the reign of Queen Elizabeth (1558–1603). As such, "Elizabethan theatre" is distinguished from Jacobean theatre (associated with the reign of King James I, 1603–1625), and Caroline theatre (associated with King Charles I, 1625 until the closure of the theatres in 1642). "English Renaissance theatre" or "early modern theatre" refers to all three sub-classifications taken together.

1. **Playhouses**
   1. **The first playhouses**

The development of drama in England was closely connected with the development of the theatre. From the very beginning, the regular drama was divided into comedy and tragedy. Most companies of players had their own playwrights who were also actors. As plays became more complicated, there appeared special playhouses. The first regular playhouse in London appeared on the premises of the former Blackfriars Monastery where miracles had been performed even before the Reformation. That playhouse was built in 1576 by the actor James Burbage who called it The Theatre. The Theatre was an Elizabethan playhouse located in Shoreditch, just outside the City of London. The Theatre is considered to have been the first playhouse built in London for the sole purpose of theatrical productions. The Theatre's history includes a number of important acting troupes including the Lord Chamberlain's Men which employed Shakespeare as actor and playwright.

* 1. **Playhouse architecture**

Archaeological excavations on the foundations of the Rose and the Globe in the late twentieth century showed that all the London theatres had individual differences; yet their common function necessitated a similar general plan. The public theaters were three stories high and built around an open space at the center. Usually polygonal in plan to give an overall rounded effect (though the Red Bull and the first Fortune were square), the three levels of inward-facing galleries overlooked the open center, into which jutted the stage — essentially a platform surrounded on three sides by the audience, only the rear being restricted for the entrances and exits of the actors and seating for the musicians. The upper level behind the stage could be used as a balcony, as in Romeo and Juliet or Antony and Cleopatra, or as a position from which an actor could harangue a crowd, as in Julius Caesar.

Usually built of timber and with thatched roofs, the early theaters were vulnerable to fire, and were replaced with stronger structures. When the Globe burned down in June 1613, it was rebuilt with a tile roof; when the Fortune burned down in December 1621, it was rebuilt in brick.

Around 1580, when both the Theatre and the Curtain were full on summer days, the total theater capacity of London was about 5000 spectators. With the building of new theater facilities and the formation of new companies, the capital's total theatre capacity exceeded 10,000 after 1610. In 1580, the poorest citizens could purchase admittance to the Curtain or the Theatre for a penny; in 1640, their counterparts could gain admittance to the Globe, the Cockpit, or the Red Bull — for the same price.

* 1. **Performances**

The acting companies functioned on a repertory system: unlike modern productions that can run for months or years on end, the troupes of this era rarely acted the same play two days in a row. Thomas Middleton's A Game at Chess ran for nine straight performances in August 1624 before it was closed by the authorities; but this was due to the political content of the play and was a unique, unprecedented, and unrepeatable phenomenon. The 1592 season of Lord Strange's Men at the Rose Theatre was far more representative: between 19 February and 23 June the company played six days a week, minus Good Friday and two other days. They performed 23 different plays, some only once, and their most popular play of the season, The First Part of Hieronimo, based on Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, 15 times. They never played the same play two days in a row, and rarely the same play twice in a week. The workload on the actors, especially the leading performers like Richard Burbage or Edward Alleyn, must have been tremendous.

One distinctive feature of the companies was that they included only males. Female parts were played by adolescent boy players in women's costume. Some companies were composed entirely of boy players. Performances in the public theatres took place in the afternoon with no artificial lighting, but when, in the course of a play, the light began to fade, candles were lit. In the enclosed private theatres artificial lighting was used throughout. Plays contained little to no scenery as the scenery was described by the actors or indicated by costume through the course of the play.

In the Elizabethan era, research has been conclusive about how many actors and troupes there were in the 16th century, but little research delves into the roles of the actors on the English renaissance stage. The first point is that during the Elizabethan era, women were not allowed to act on stage. The actors were all male; in fact, most were boys. For plays written that had male and female parts, the female parts were played by the youngest boy players.

In Elizabethan entertainment, troupes were created and they were considered the actor companies. They traveled around England as drama was the most entertaining art at the time. As a boy player, many skills had to be implemented such as voice and athleticism. Stronger female roles in tragedies were acted by older boy players because they had the experience.

Elizabethan actors never played the same show on successive days and added a new play to their repertoire every other week. These actors were getting paid within these troupes so for their job, they would constantly learn new plays as they toured different cities in England. In these plays, there were bookkeepers that acted as the narrators of these plays and they would introduce the actors and the different roles they played. At some points, the bookkeeper wouldn’t state the narrative of the scene, so the audience could find out for themselves. In Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, the plays often exceeded the number of characters/roles and didn’t have enough actors to fulfill them, thus the idea of doubling roles came to be. Doubling roles is used to reinforce a plays theme by having the actor act out the different roles simultaneously. The reason for this was for the acting companies to control salary costs, or to be able to perform under conditions where resources such as other actor companies lending actors were not present.

There are two acting styles implemented. Formal and natural. Formal acting is objective and traditional, natural acting attempts to create an illusion for the audience by remaining in character and imitating the fictional circumstances. The formal actor symbolizes while the natural actor interprets. The natural actor impersonates while the formal actor represents the role. Natural and formal are opposites of each other, where natural acting is subjective. Overall, the use of these acting styles and the doubled roles dramatic device made Elizabethan plays very popular.

* 1. **Costumes**

One of the main uses of costume during the Elizabethan era was to make up for the lack of scenery, set, and props on stage. It created a visual effect for the audience, and it was an integral part of the overall performance. Since the main visual appeal on stage were the costumes, they were often bright in color and visually entrancing. Colors symbolized social hierarchy, and costumes were made to reflect that. For example, if a character was royalty, their costume would include purple. The colours, as well as the different fabrics of the costumes, allowed the audience to know the status of each character when they first appeared on stage.

Costumes were collected in inventory and they wouldn't be made individually to fit the actor. Instead, they would be selected out of the stock that theatre companies would keep. A theatre company reused costumes when possible and would rarely get new costumes made. Costumes themselves were expensive, so usually players wore contemporary clothing regardless of the period of the play. The most expensive pieces were given to higher class characters because costuming was used to identify social status on stage. The fabrics within a playhouse would indicate the wealth of the company itself. The fabrics used the most were: velvet, satin silk, cloth-of-gold, lace, and ermine. For less significant characters; actors would use their own clothes.

Actors also left clothes in their will for following actors to use. Masters would also leave clothes for servants in their will, but servants weren’t allowed to wear fancy clothing, instead, they sold the clothes back to theatre companies. In the Elizabethan era, there was a law stating that certain classes could only wear clothing fitting of their status in society. There was a discrimination of status within the classes. Higher classes flaunted their wealth and power through the appearance of clothing, however, actors were the only exception. If actors belonged to a licensed acting company, they could dress above their standing in society for specific roles in a production.

* 1. **Playwrights**

The growing population of London, the growing wealth of its people, and their fondness for spectacle produced a dramatic literature of remarkable variety, quality, and extent. Although most of the plays written for the Elizabethan stage have been lost, over 600 remain.

The people who wrote these plays were primarily self-made men from modest backgrounds. Some of them were educated at either Oxford or Cambridge, but many were not. Although William Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were actors, the majority do not seem to have been performers, and no major author who came on to the scene after 1600 is known to have supplemented his income by acting. Their lives were subject to the same levels of danger and earlier mortality as all who lived during the early modern period: Christopher Marlowe was killed in an apparent tavern brawl, while Ben Jonson killed an actor in a duel.

Playwrights were normally paid in during the writing process, and if their play was accepted, they would also receive the proceeds from one day's performance. However, they had no ownership of the plays they wrote. Once a play was sold to a company, the company owned it, and the playwright had no control over casting, performance, revision, or publication.

The profession of dramatist was challenging and far from lucrative. Entries in Philip Henslowe's Diary show that in the years around 1600 Henslowe paid as little as £6 or £7 per play. This was probably at the low end of the range, though even the best writers could not demand too much more. A playwright, working alone, could generally produce two plays a year at most. In the 1630s Richard Brome signed a contract with the Salisbury Court Theatre to supply three plays a year but found himself unable to meet the workload. Shakespeare produced fewer than 40 solo plays in a career that spanned more than two decades: he was financially successful because he was an actor and, most importantly, a shareholder in the company for which he acted and in the theatres they used. Ben Jonson achieved success as a purveyor of Court masques and was talented at playing the patronage game that was an important part of the social and economic life of the era. Those who were purely playwrights fared far less well: the biographies of early figures like George Peele and Robert Greene, and later ones like Brome and Philip Massinger, are marked by financial uncertainty, struggle, and poverty.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, it should be noted, firstly, that English Renaissance theatre is English drama written between the Reformation and the closure of the theaters in 1642. We distinguish between 3 periods of the English Renaissance Theatre: "Elizabethan theatre” (1558–1603), Jacobean theatre (associated with the reign of King James I, 1603–1625), and Caroline theatre (associated with King Charles I, 1625 until the closure of the theatres in 1642). Secondly, first playhouse was built in 1576 by the actor James Burbage who called it The Theatre and then a number of theatres was built rapidly. All the playhouses had a similar architecture and were built of timber. Thirdly, we need to point out that only men could be actors and dramatists during that period. Finally, the most preferable genres were history plays which depicted the life of English and European kings, city comedies which showed the life in London and tragedies. The impact of this period cannot be overestimated.

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