

The Globe Theatre – Sam Wanamaker and Mickey Mouse

- The Globe Theatre nowadays

The theme of our group was 'The Globe Theatre – Sam Wanamaker and Mickey Mouse. We divided the theme in three different parts. My part is the Globe today.

Development of the Globe

In the last centuries , the Globe really has changed. In 1613 it burned down and was restored. In 1642 and 1644, the Puritans closed the Theatre and pulled it down. Finally , in 1949, 300 years later, it was rebuilt by Sam Wanamaker.

Sam Wanamaker was the founder of the new Globe.

In 1997 was the re-opening of the Globe. Even the Queen came to visit and consecrate the Globe. Unfortunately, Sam Wanamaker died before he could admire his life's work.

Rebuilding the theatre was a big challenge. Sam Wanamaker and his supporters wanted the new theatre as close as possible to the old one. Sam Wanamaker collected a lot of donations and made it possible. The sponsors are carved into the stones around the Globe.

Soon a big problem came. The old location was occupied by the ' Anchor Terrasse ' some very old houses which couldn't be pulled down. They are under a special protection because of their age.

He needed a new site. He decided to take a site which was 230m away from the old one. Now it is in the 'New Globe Walk, Bankside'. In this corner of London it is quite calm. Not much traffic, no airplanes flying over the Globe or other things which could disturbing the silence during a play. There were good conditions for a theatre like the Globe.

The whole Globe consists of oak

The Structure of the Globe

The whole Globe is a completely round building and exists of oak. In modern London it was quite difficult to find trees which were big enough to be used for such a purpose.

Fortunately, In October of 1987, a big storm destroyed a lot of trees and the workers used the oaks to build the Globe. Nowadays it consists of almost 6000 parts of oak.

Another challenge was the roof. In Shakespeare's time, it was a a thatched roof.

To make it as original as possible they wanted to use that again. The problem was, that it was forbidden to use those roofs because of the great fire in London in 1666. They had to ensure modern security measures to make it safe for the audience and the actors, for example now they have lightning conductors and fire sprinklers which they hadn't then.

The construction of the stage is also still the same as in Shakespeare's time.

The Stage projects into the yard where the audience stands. It is 15m wide and 9m deep and has a roof. What makes this aspect so important for me is the proximity to the audience. Sometimes the actors involve the audience or one or two people during the play. That's a really surprising effect especially if you have the feeling that suddenly the spotlight is on you. In my opinion this makes the Globe even more special than a 'normal' theatre.

In contrast to the stage and the other seats around the yard, the yard doesn't have a roof.

400 years ago the yard was reserved for 'the groundlings'. 'The groundlings' were the lower classes who couldn't pay for better seats.

Today, If you have a seat in the yard, you have to stand all the time until the play is over, but you're allowed to bring your own food and beer, to rest your arm on the stage or to whistle, clap and cheer during the play. A negative aspect is the fact that the play wouldn't be stopped if it was raining or some other bad weather appeared. All in all these things are very unusual for a modern theatre and it is very popular with the audience.

Special Features of the Theatre

One of the most significant aspects appears to be the stage. The stage is painted very beautifully. It is very colourful and a special feature is 'Heaven' above in the roof of the stage and 'Hell' under the stage. In a play for example, an angel can fly from heaven on stage and if an actor 'dies' he can disappear into hell or heaven.

Around the stage there are three floors for the audience. The best seats nowadays are the ones in the first floor at the side. You can see the most and you have a roof above your head.

Above the stage is a balcony. This was built originally for the play 'Romeo and Juliet'. Today, sometimes it is still used by actors but normally the musicians have their place here. 400 years ago the Globe was open for 3000 people. Today, only 1500 people are allowed. This decision was very important for safety. In Shakespeare's time it was a normal situation to push as many people into the Globe as possible. They wanted as much as money they could get.

Today it is much more comfortable for the audience. They have more space to stay and sit; especially for the 500 people at ground level it is a better situation. In addition in case of danger, the audience can escape easily. Today, the Globe closes from late October until April, depending on the weather. In the wintertime it is too cold for audience and actors to be in there a long time.

The fact that the Globe is an exact copy of the original, has positive and negative aspects.

A negative aspect is that the Globe isn't too comfortable. According to the fact that it is open to the sky in the middle of the theatre you can easily get sunburn or get wet if it is rainy.

After a while, it is also exhausting to stand during the whole play. It was therefore a good idea to allow people to leave the theatre during the play and come back whenever they wanted.

The price you have to pay for a play has also changed. In Shakespeare's time the cheapest seats for a play would cost 2 pound and the most expensive 10 pounds.

Nowadays it is 5 pound for a play as a groundling and the most expensive will cost 29 pound. If you compare this , the price has risen a lot, but 400 years ago, 2p was 1/12 of the weekly salary.

My own Opinion about the Globe

Finally it can be said that Sam Wanamaker achieved his goal. The Globe is one of the most impressive buildings I have ever seen. It is not because it is big, colourful or the fact that the whole theatre made out of oak, it is because of the atmosphere inside the Globe. If you go in there, you can imagine how the theatre world was in the 16th century. The actors I saw in the short time I was there, looked as if they felt the atmosphere and if they wanted to play like this.

I think it was really disappointing that we couldn't see a play in the Globe. The purpose of this report was to make the Globe as attractive as it was.

I was surprised when I saw this theatre, I did not expect such a big building.

To sum the whole report up, it was my best experience in London and I think that it's a good decision that they play most of the time Shakespeare's plays in the Globe, even if they sometimes do a modern version. When we visited the Globe there were a lot of little children who visited the Globe too. The woman who explained the Globe to us; said that the actors played a short and modern version of Mc Beth especially for the kids.

In my opinion this is a good decision to bring Shakespeare closer to younger generations.

Sources The three floors for the audience

The Museum of the Globe

Brochures from the Globe