Information Report – The Globe Theatre

Globe Theatre is the name of an Elizabethan theatre building on the South Bank of the Thames in London, which takes an important place in the history of the theatre.

History the of Globe Theater

The Globe Theatre was built in 1599 at Bankside, a London district on the right Thames bank. Beyond the city centre, was the approved pleasure centre, with other theaters (e.g. The Rose, The Hope, and The Swan) and an arena for the popular spot of Bear Baiting.

The Globe was owned by actors who were also shareholders in “Lord Chamberlain's Men”. Two of the six Globe shareholders, Richard Burbage and his brother Cuthbert Burbage, owned double shares of the whole, or 25% each; the other four men, Shakespeare, John Heminges, Augustine Phillips, and Thomas Pope, owned a single share, or 12.5%.

On 29 June 1613 the Globe Theatre went up in flames during a performance of Henry the Eighth. Theatrical cannons, set off during the performance, misfired, igniting the wooden beams and thatching. According to one of the few surviving documents of the event, no one was hurt except a man whose burning breeches were put out with a bottle of ale. It was rebuilt in the following year but, like all the other theatres in London, the Globe was closed down by the Puritans in 1642. It was pulled down in 1644, to make room for tenements.
Construction

The Globe's actual dimensions are unknown, but its shape and size can be approximated from scholarly inquiry over the last two centuries. The evidence suggests that it was an open-air amphitheatre that could house up to 3,000 spectators.

It consisted of a round or octagonal timber-framed building, three floors high and 30 meters in diameter.

The spectators spread over several rooms. The cheapest places were to be found in the inner courtyard, called the yard, which spreads out in front of the big stage. Here there were only standing places, and the standing visitors, called the groundlings, had to pay one penny for it. In the court they stood on the ground, and were put out under the open sky with wind and rain.

In the galleries there were roofed seats and the audience had to pay one penny more, when they wanted further upwards.

The best seats lay immediately beside or behind the stage. High rulers booked these boxes (if they were not used in the play) to be especially near the play, and in order to be seen of course by all other visitors.

The special, and the biggest difference to today's theatres, probably exists, apart from the unusual construction form, in the nearness between spectators and actors. No place was more than 20 meters from the stage.

Globe Theatre with audience and actors. View out of the third gallery.
The stage with the “heaven”

A rectangular stage platform, also known as an 'apron stage', thrust out into the middle of the open-air yard. The stage was about 15 meters wide and 9 meters deep. In contrast to the inner courtyard it was roofed. This roof served not only the protection of the actors before the unpredictable London weather; it was also used as a part of the plays.

The ceiling under this roof was called "heavens," and was painted with clouds and the sky. A trap door in the heavens enabled performers to drop some stage props. The back wall of the stage had two or three doors on the main level, with a curtained inner stage in the centre and a balcony above it. The doors entered into the "tiring house" (backstage area) where the actors dressed and awaited their entrances. The floors above could have been used to store costumes and props. The balcony housed the musicians and could also be used for scenes requiring an upper space. A free place under the stage, called "cellarage", was used to bring equipment by a trapdoor on the stage, but also actors used this way to appear in a spectacular way on the stage, it was like “coming out of hell”.

View out of the first gallery
All together the Globe Theatre was not only a theatre and a place where people had fun; it was also a business for Shakespeare and the other shareholders. The Globe Theatre was and will be one of the famous theatres of the world.

My opinion about the Globe Theatre

In my opinion the visit to the Globe Theatre was the most exciting and interesting thing that we did, not just because it was the theme of my group. It was much more the view back to Shakespeare’s time which was fascinating. When you stand on the “yard” or sit in one of the galleries, you think you are right in Shakespeare’s time and you want to see a theatre play. Unfortunately we could not see a play in the Globe Theatre which I really regret. Maybe one day I will be back in the Globe in London and see a fascinating play by Shakespeare.

Some pictures of the Globe which I made in London:

A model of the Globe Theatre

Picture of the stage

Picture of the stage and in the background the painted galleries for the high rulers.

Picture of the galleries

Sources: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Globe_Theatre
http://www.globe-theatre.org.uk/
http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xGlobe.html
Interview in the Globe Theatre

13.06.2011 Jannik Siems