

1584-1586

# Provincial Players Move to London

## Leading actor, Edward Alleyn, is Rising New Star

1585: Lord Howard's Men have toured the provinces for the past nine years, but have now taken up permanent residency in London. Lord Howard himself has been appointed the Lord High Admiral of England - so the players under his patronage will henceforward be known as the Admiral's Men.

The company has been joined by Edward Alleyn, the 19 year old son of an innkeeper, who is already being acclaimed as a great actor.

## Henslowe & Alleyn Partnership

1586: Philip Henslowe, who is beginning to gain fame as a theatrical proprietor, has joined forces with the 20 year old Edward Alleyn - a rising star in the theatrical world. Together they intend to create a new company in a new theatre.

## Leicester's Men Tour Holland and Denmark

1586: Leicester's Men have undertaken a foreign tour, playing in the Low Countries as a part-military, part-diplomatic expedition led by the Earl himself. The touring company included Thomas Pope, George Bryan and the comedian, William Kemp. A performance was given before King Christian I of Saxony, and another was given in the recently built Danish castle of Helsingor (Elsinore).

Not all the company undertook the trip, The remainder, headed by James Burbage, carried out a less glamorous tour of the English provinces.



Edward Alleyn, much acclaimed young actor, portrayed here in the role of Tamburlaine which established him as a leading player in 1587

## Arden of Faversham pulls in crowds

1585: "Arden of Faversham" is proving to be a highly popular play this season. It is based on the real-life murder of the Mayor of Faversham in Kent in 1548, and the story closely follows the actual events. Thomas Arden's wife, Alice, plotted to murder her husband, and hired two ruffians to carry out the deed for her. After several failed attempts, they succeeded in killing the Mayor whilst he played draughts in his parlour with Alice's lover, Thomas Mosby.

This is the first "domestic melodrama" based on real life to be staged. Although no playwright's name has been credited, many feel it is the work of Thomas Kyd, the 27 year old writer who has been achieving great success with his plays this season, particularly with "The Spanish Tragedy".

## Opposition Closes Blackfriars

1584: Sir William More has taken over the former church property at Blackfriars, where Richard Farrant has been running a children's theatre company. The acting company has been evicted, and the building will now be used as a schoolroom.

## Thomas Kyd's "Spanish Tragedy" starts Revenge Play fashion

1585: Thomas Kyd's blank-verse play "The Spanish Tragedy" has been hugely successful this season, and has started a vogue for many imitations. Set in Spain, it tells the story of Hieronimo, whose son, Horatio, has been murdered for political reasons. Hieronimo fails to get justice, so carries out his own personal revenge. He stages a play, employing his son's murderers as actors. In the course of the play he gets his revenge as the two murderers are themselves killed. Hieronimo then bites off his own tongue before running off to commit suicide.

The success of this play is unparalleled in theatre history, and everyone is jumping on the bandwagon to write imitations and cash in on this new vogue for Revenge plays. Unfortunately this spectacular success is not going to benefit Thomas Kyd personally.

A playwright is paid a "one-off" sum for his work and receives no further payment, even if the play is revived many times. Sometimes rival theatres send a "shorthand" writer to watch a performance and scribble down the words as fast as he can. The play is then performed at the rival theatre with no fee paid at all. The playwright can benefit if his work is printed. By registering it at the Stationer's Office he can prevent anyone else from printing it, but once printed, it is even easier for rival playhouses to produce the piece.