

## Widow is First Woman to Head Theatre Company

The Earl of Derby, formerly Ferdinando, Lord Strange, has died at the age of 35 in mysterious circumstances. His theatre company, formed with James Burbage twenty years ago, has undergone many changes of name. For fourteen years known as the Earl of Leicester's Men, then as Lord Strange's Men, it became the Early of Derby's Men when Lord Strange inherited his father's title. The Company has just performed at Winchester under the name "The Countess of Derby's Men" - the first instance of a woman other than the Queen having patronage of a theatrical company.

## Companies Merge and Regroup

The Admiral's and Chamberlain's Men seem to have merged for a joint season at Newington Butts. True to its reputation as an out-of-town theatre of last resort, their ten performances took a total of Four pounds and eleven shillings - less than might be taken on a good night at the Rose.

The "new" company, headed by Richard Burbage, includes William Shakespeare and William Kemp. Since Burbage and Kemp were formerly members of the Derby Company, it appears that the Countess of Derby has given up her role as the first woman theatre manager after just a few months.

## Shakespeare on the scene

Three new plays this season - The Comedy of Errors, Richard III and Titus Andronicus - are said to be written by William Shakespeare. An actor, not previously known as a playwright, Shakespeare is said to have had a hand in "Henry VI" a few years ago. His "Titus Andronicus" - a revenge play much influenced by Kyd - has particularly lavish costume designs which attempt to capture the spirit of Roman dress styles.

(Pictured below)

# THOMAS KYD DIES IN POVERTY & DISGRACE

## Playwright dies eight months after imprisonment and torture

At the age of 36, and just eight months after his release from prison and torture, Thomas Kyd has died in poverty and humiliation. His mother, Anna, has formally renounced the administration of his estate in the name of her husband, Francis - either as a means of thwarting creditors, or to illustrate her rejection of her disgraced son.

He was the author of "The Spanish Tragedy", one of the most successful plays so far written, a blank verse revenge play somewhat short on poetry but very generous with blood. Audiences loved it, and envious playwrights frequently tried to imitate it. Kyd was a close and intimate friend of Christopher Marlowe, and it was this friendship that led to Kyd's imprisonment. The investigations into Marlowe's atheism and blasphemy led to the arrest of his room-mate, Kyd. Kyd was tortured extensively in an attempt to get him to incriminate himself. In the course of his torture he is said to have given information which led the authorities to arrest Marlowe on charges of blasphemy. Marlowe was on bail awaiting trial on these charges when he was killed in suspicious circumstances last year.

Thomas Kyd was released from prison without charge following his "confession". However, he had suffered crippling physical and mental injuries as a result of his torture, and he seems to have been shunned by all his previous theatrical associates - either because they were offended by his betrayal of Marlowe, or because they were afraid that association with Kyd would bring suspicion upon themselves.

## Plague Closes Theatres as Watermen Urge Re-Opening

Plague has broken out in London yet again, and, on February 3rd, the Earl of Sussex's Men were forced to close their season at the Rose Theatre early, following a closure order by the authorities. The same ruling will close all theatres and places of entertainments in the London area.

A group of Thames watermen who earn their living ferrying passengers back and forth the Bankside have urged the Privy Council to re-open the theatres. The watermen claim the plague has now abated, but they continue to suffer a serious loss of income from the closures. The petition is headed by William Dorrett, Master of Her Majesty's Barge.

