

1604-1606

# Shakespeare & Burbage Produce Big Successes

## Open after Year-Long Plague

1604: After a year's closure, caused first by the death of Queen Elizabeth and then by a serious outbreak of plague, the Privy Council has agreed to the re-opening of London's theatres. Queen Anne's Men are installed at the Curtain and the Boar's Head. Prince Henry's Men (Henslowe's company) are at the Fortune, and The King's Men (Burbage's company) are at the Globe. The Rose has not re-opened. Its lease is due to expire next year, and Henslowe has failed to negotiate an extension. He has said he would rather pull down the playhouse than pay the new rent of £20 a year plus an additional £40 a year for service and maintenance.

## Alleyn & Henslowe Buy Bear Garden

1604: Bear-baiting has grown to enormous popularity and Edward Alleyn and Philip Henslowe have paid £450 to Sir William Steward, Master of the Royal Game, for the exclusive rights to provide entertainment at the Bear Garden. The sum paid is astonishingly large.

## Red Bull now a Playhouse

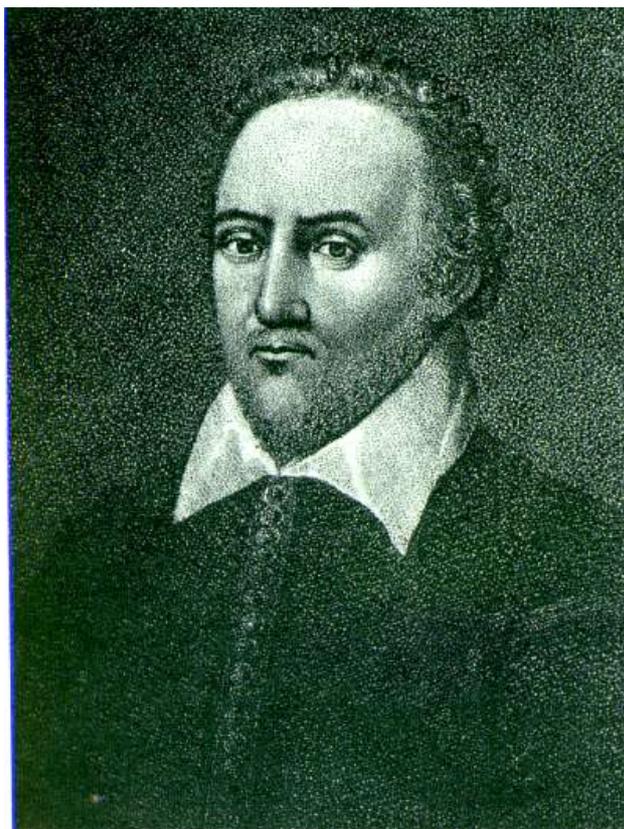
1605: The Red Bull Theatre has opened in Upper Street, Clerkenwell. It is a conversion from the old inn-yard theatre which has existed on the same site. The builder is Aaron Holland, and he has rented it to the Queen's Men.

## "Eastward Ho" - Playwrights Jailed

1605: Don't make any jokes about Scotland or Scotsmen - that's the advice offered by George Chapman, John Marston and Ben Jonson - joint authors of "Eastward Ho". A brief Scottish diatribe in their comedy at the Blackfriars Theatre so enraged King James that all three writers were thrown into Marshalsea Prison. Their release was obtained only after much representation by influential friends.

## Producers Jailed for Political Play

1606: John Day, the author of "Isle of Gulls" staged by the Children's Company at the Blackfriars Theatre, has been arrested and jailed along with others involved in the production of that play. "The Isle of Gulls" is a satire on English and Scottish relations and is said to have deeply offended the King.



Durwich Gallery

*Richard Burbage, the famous actor*

It is a combination that will go down in history. The venue is the Globe Theatre, the actor manager who heads it is Richard Burbage, and the resident playwright is William Shakespeare. It is clearly a dream team, and each successive season is producing astonishingly successful hit plays for the company.

At the turn of the century it was "Julius Caesar" and the phenomenal "Hamlet", and since then Shakespeare's plays have included "Twelfth Night", "Troilus and Cressida", "Measure for Measure" and "Antony and Cleopatra" - all of which have done good business.

But the last three seasons have also seen three successive tragedies of the highest quality: "Othello", "King Lear" and "Macbeth". Any one of these would be a masterwork for a playwright and any one of them would guarantee the author a place in the literary hall of fame. Yet Shakespeare is responsible for all three - and seems to be producing incomparable works of theatre art one after the other - simply to meet the demanding schedule of the Globe.

"Othello" will be the benchmark tragedy against which all future plays dealing with jealousy will be measured. "Macbeth" is a powerful study of the destructive power of overwhelming ambition - and because of its strong super-natural element it has proved to be extremely popular with King James himself. "King Lear" has also proved popular at Court but rather oddly seems to be less of a public favourite than the others, though posterity may well judge it to be the best of the three plays.

All three of these tragedies have provided a magnificent leading role for Richard Burbage, and all three of them have produced catchwords and phrases which have been absorbed into the saws and proverbs of the contemporary language.

### Some performances known to have been given between 1601 and 1606

#### 1601-1603

Twelfth Night, Sejanus, Troilus and Cressida

#### 1604-1606

The Malcontent, Measure For Measure, Eastward Ho, Westward Ho, Volpone, The Revengers Tragedy, Anthony and Cleopatra, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Bussy D'Ambois, The Honest Whore, The Dutch Courtesan, If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody, The Woman Hater, The Miseries of the Enforced Marriage