



Hogarth's engraving of strolling players in a provincial barn as they prepare for a performance

1736: Two theatres have opened this year at opposite ends of the realm. One is in the city of Cork in Ireland, and the other in Ipswich. No one has made a count of the number of provincial theatres now operating, but it is known that there are permanent structures in Aberdeen, Bath, Bristol, Bury St Edmunds, Cork, Dublin, Edinburgh, Ipswich, Lichfield, Liverpool, Norwich, Oxford, Plymouth, Totnes and York - and there are doubtless many others.

Some of the provincial theatres receive their product from the London companies on summer tours. Others have developed their own company of players based in a particular town but touring to other venues in a well-established circuit of theatres, as is the case in Bath, Norwich and York. These companies play lengthy seasons at their home theatre before embarking on their touring circuit.

Additionally there is an unknown number of travelling, or "strolling" players. The truly itinerant groups move from town to town playing in inns, town halls, even barnyards as well as the occasional "real" theatre. Some of the strolling groups have established themselves for long seasons in certain towns.

Some provincial theatres which have opened since the Restoration

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| 1662 | Dublin, Smock Alley Theatre |
| 1664 | Oxford, Sheldonian Theatre |
| 1678 | Edinburgh, Canongate Theatre |
| 1692 | Norwich, Angel Theatre (closed 1699) |
| 1700 | Aberdeen, Scott's Theatre |
| 1705 | Bath, Theatre |
| 1707 | Totnes, Theatre |
| 1722 | Norwich, the Second Angel Theatre |
| 1723 | Norwich, White Swan Theatre |
| 1729 | Bristol, Jacobs Wells Theatre (closed 1736) |
| 1731 | Ipswich, St Nicholas Street Theatre |
| 1734 | Bury St Edmunds Theatre |
| | York, Tennis Court Theatre |
| 1736 | Cork Theatre |
| | Ipswich, Tankard Street Theatre |
| | Lichfield, Playhouse |

Fielding's Satires Annoy Authorities

1736: Henry Fielding, the successful author of the burlesque "Tom Thumb", has taken over the management of the Little Theatre in the Haymarket and caused a great stir. He has presented two political satires - "Pasquin" and "The Historical Register for 1736", in which he has attacked the prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole, as well as other targets like the Cibbers. Walpole is said to be seething with anger, and determined to stamp out such political attacks which he considers damaging to the country.

Fielding, who is 29 years old, was educated at Eton. During his college days he was bound over to keep the peace following a failed attempt to abduct a young heiress with whom he was in love. He was sent to study at the University of Leiden. Since his return eight years ago, he has written 25 plays, burlesques, farces, ballad operas and satires, a few of which have been aimed at Sir Robert Walpole. Now that he is running his own theatre, Walpole fears these satires will increase in number.