

Elizabethan Theatre

Introduction

The Elizabethan period is one of the greatest periods in English history. In many aspects her rule contributed not only to England but to whole civilization. During her rule theatre prospered and gave big writers such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, etc. Their dramas are played even today in big and famous theatres.

Italy, which had a big influence on Englishmen had also influence on English drama. The main topics are in Italy or in some Mediterranean countries. Actors were not so popular at the end of XVI century. They were treated like homeless people or beggars! In 1572 one decree was published against actors and they could work only if they were patronized by some lord. The first patron was Earl of Leicester, so “his” actors were called Earl of Leicester’s Men. After him there were many other earls who became patrons. After a while patronage became very popular so during the time of King James there were King’s Men.

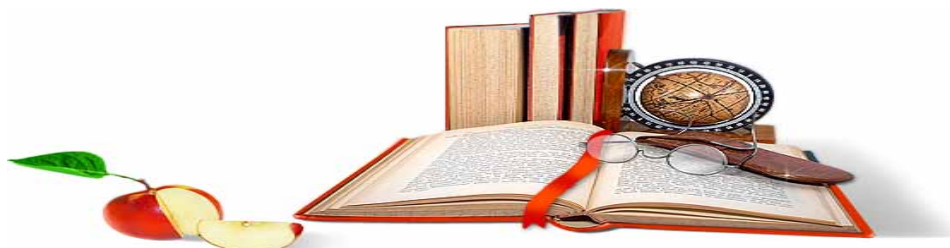
Theatre performances were held in the afternoon, because, of course, there was no artificial lighting. Women attended plays, though often the prosperous woman would wear a mask to disguise her identity. Further, no women performed in the plays. Female roles were generally performed by young boys. Costumes were contemporary but in some dramas, where the topic was historical, costumes were old-fashioned.

Drama of this period had, perhaps, the biggest prosperity in the history of English literature, and like that survived centuries and those dramas are interesting to audience four centuries after their premiere.

---- OSTATAK TEKSTA NIJE PRIKAZAN. CEO RAD MOŽETE PREUZETI NA
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maturskiradovi.net@gmail.com