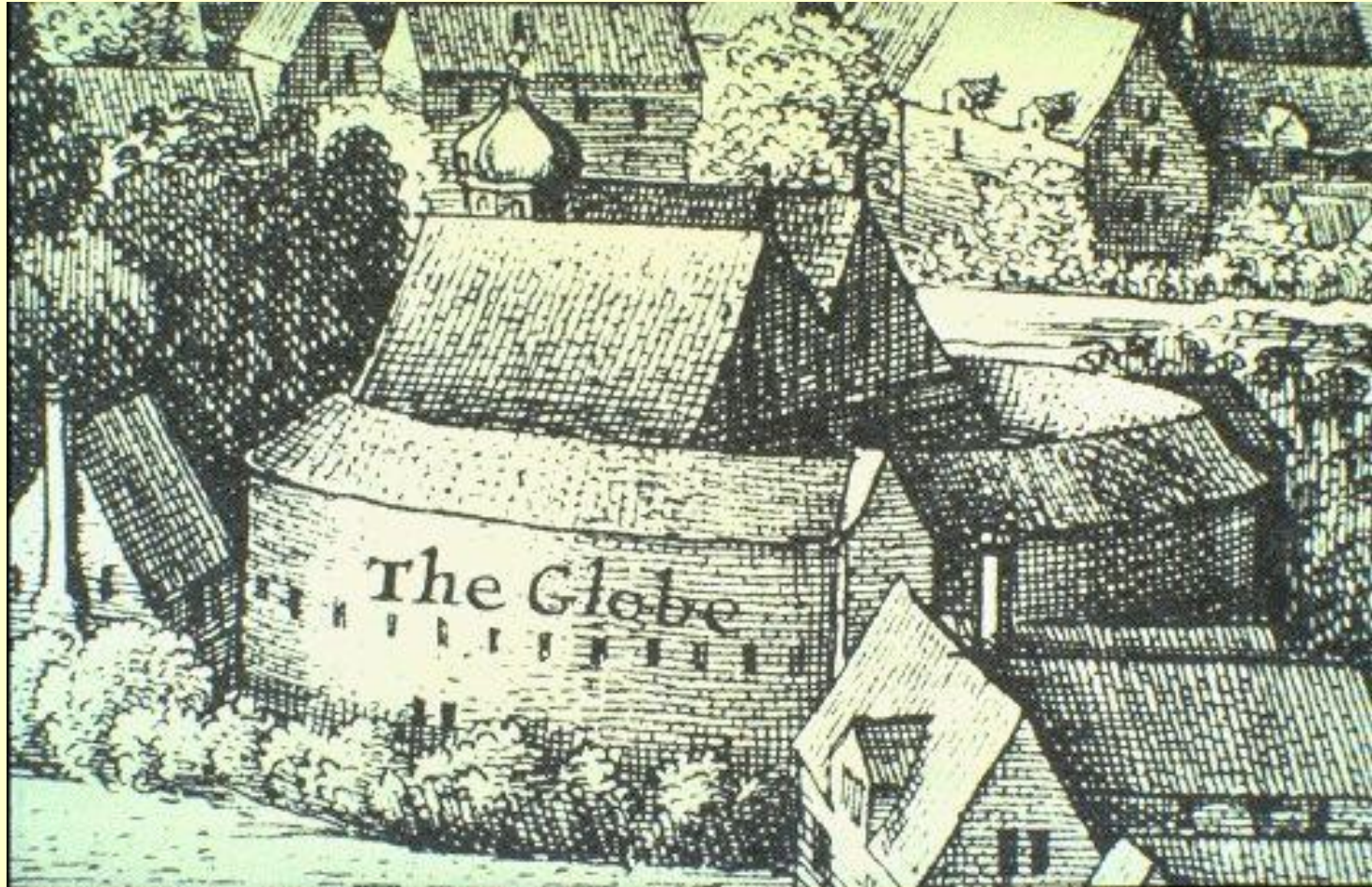


Shakespeare's Globe Theatre



- Shakespeare's Globe was the most popular English theater of its time, frequented by people from all walks of Elizabethan life.
- From 1599 until 1640 the audiences at the Globe consisted of people from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. Peasants, prostitutes, merchants, labourers, wealthy citizens and lords and ladies frequented the playhouses of Shakespeare's London.

- Today we understand The Globe's significance as a physical center for literature, history, and social interaction.



- The Globe Theatre was a huge success and as it had been built in close proximity to the Bear Garden. The profits of the Bear Garden slumped and in 1614.

Bear Garden?

- Bear-baiting was popular in England until the nineteenth century. From the sixteenth century, many herds of bears were maintained for baiting.
- In its best-known form, arenas for this purpose were called bear-gardens, consisting of a circular high fenced area, the "pit", and raised seating for spectators.
- A post would be set in the ground towards the edge of the pit and the bear chained to it, either by the leg or neck.

- A number of well-trained hunting dogs would then be set on it, being replaced as they tired or were wounded or killed. In some cases the bear was let loose, allowing it to chase after animals or people.
- For a long time, the main bear-garden in London was the Paris Garden at Southwark.



Why was the Globe built?

The Lord Chamberlain's Men (Shakespeare's acting troupe) needed a place to perform their plays so they could compete with other acting troupes.



William Shakespeare

History of the Globe Theatre

- Built in 1598 and opened in 1599
- Burned down in 1613 from a cannon blast during the play “Henry VIII”
- Rebuilt and reopened in 1614
- Closed down by Puritans in 1642 and was torn down in 1644
- In 1996 a replica was built on the original site

Facts about the Globe Theatre

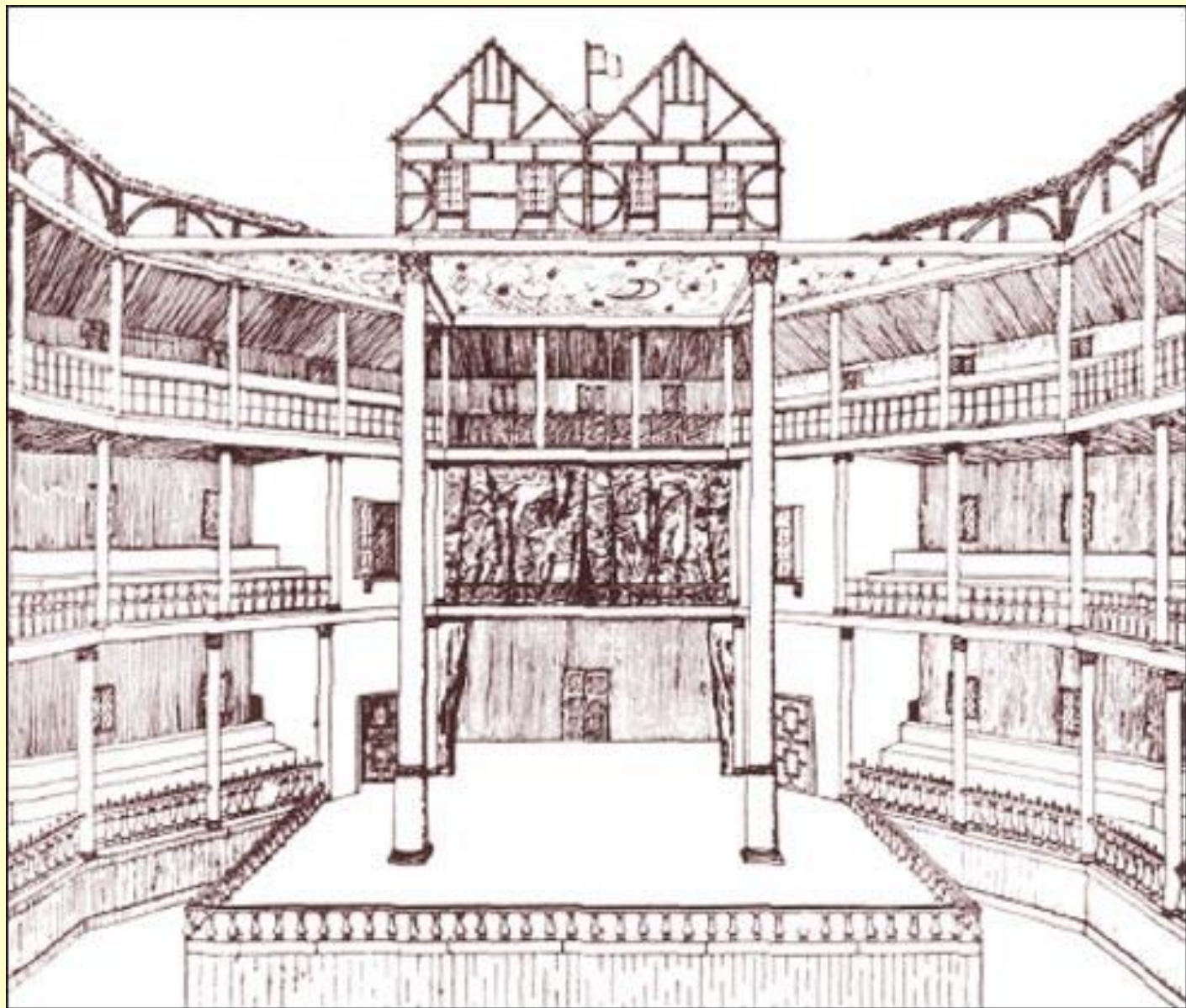
- Original Globe was 3 stories and held about 3000 people.
- Although most of Shakespeare's plays were held there, he only owned 12% of the theatre.
- Located in Southwark near the Thames River (just outside of London).

More Globe Facts

- All classes of people attended plays there.
- No roof so that they had sunlight.
- Thus, plays had to be during the day.
- People often skipped work to go.
- Was not allowed to be built in the city of London because crowds often became rowdy.

Problems at the Theatre

- Fights
- Spread of disease (the plague)
- Drug dealing
- Prostitution
- Theft



Entrance View



- Everybody entered at the same place regardless of where you paid to sit or stand.
- The stage juts out onto the floor, so some people would view from the side.

Floor View



- Poor people could get into plays for little money, but had to stand. They were known as Groundlings.
- It would be very difficult to see unless you were right next to the stage.
- Plays often lasted 4-6 hours and the Groundlings would stand the whole time.

Second Floor View



- The middle to upper class people could afford to sit on the second level.
- The second level wrapped around both sides of the stage.

Third Floor View

- Only the upper class could afford seats on the third level.
- For extra money they could get a padded seat.



Stage View



- The actors had to deal with many distractions:
 - Weather (no roof)
 - Rowdy Audience
 - Fruits and Veggies thrown at them if the play or the acting was bad.

The Tiring House

- The tiring house (or 'attiring house') was the area behind the stage where costumes and props were stored and where actors dressed to prepare themselves before their performances. The most expensive items owned by acting companies were their costumes.

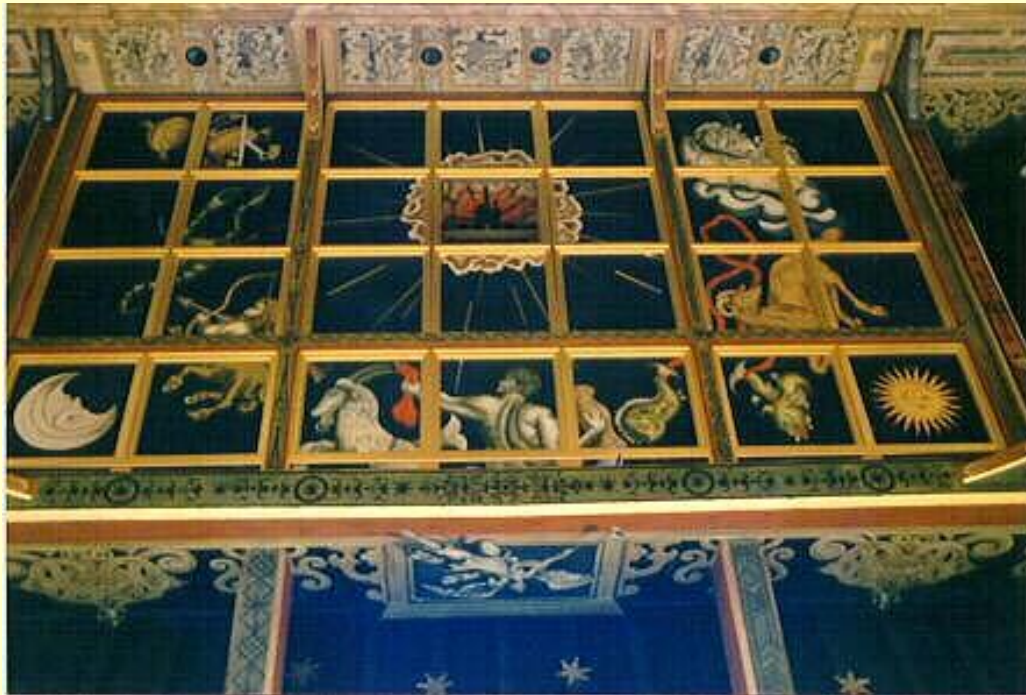
- Costumes had two functions on the Elizabethan stage. First, they created a spectacular effect, since many of the clothes actors wore on stage were made of fine materials such as silk, velvet and taffeta.
- The second function of costume was to help the audience identify the characters: a clown, a nurse, a shepherd or a king would be instantly recognisable.

- During Shakespeare's lifetime, there were laws forbidding people from wearing clothes better than their social rank, making it easy to identify the social status of people on the streets.
- So, if an actor who played a king wore his costume outside of the playhouse he could be prosecuted.

The Heavens, Earth & Hell

- The trapdoor would lead to the area under the stage, known sometimes as hell or the underworld at the new Globe. It is likely to have served as Ophelia's grave in *Hamlet* and as the tomb of the Andronici in *Titus Andronicus*.

- The stage roof was referred to as the heavens.



- The stage platform was earth and the space beneath the stage was called hell.
- This symbolism suggested, as Shakespeare often declared, that the theatre was like a little world, and therefore the world was like a theatre: ‘All the world’s a stage...’. Why else would Shakespeare’s playhouse be called the Globe?

The Reconstructed Globe

- In 1949, when Sam Wanamaker came to London for the first time, he looked for the site of the original Globe and was disappointed not to find a more lasting memorial to one of the greatest playwrights in the world.
- In 1970 he founded the Shakespeare Globe Trust.

- In 1987, building work began on the site.
- In 1993, the construction of the Globe Theatre itself began.
- Sadly, Sam Wanamaker died on 18 December 1993. At that time, twelve of the fifteen bays had been erected. The plasterwork and thatching began the following year and were completed in 1997.





- If you ever get the chance to visit London I am sure the Globe Theatre will be #1 on your things to do list, with your new found interest in Shakespeare!







Photo Credit: Tom Green



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