

THE ELIZABETHAN THEATRE

Elizabethan drama grew out (nasce da) of:

1. THE MEDIEVAL HERITAGE (eredità):

- medieval popular theatre;
- the play was a kind of sermon and the situations are allegorical types;
- comedy mixed with tragedy;
- there was the idea of man's place inside an ordered universe;
- there was the concept of the mutability of fortunes and the influence of the stars.

2. CLASSICAL INFLUENCE:

- influence of the humanists;
- the italian "commedia dell'arte";
- the works of Macchiavelli (themes like: horror, intrigues, corruption);
- Greek and Latin plays (Seneca became new theatrical models);
- Plays were divided into five acts and new themes were introduced (revenge, tragic and bloody incidents, conflicting emotions and passions);

The structure of theatres:

Elizabethan players hadn't stable home until James Butbage built the firts permanent theatre.

The permanent theatres were circular or octagonal. The stage was a large platform surrounded by the audience on three sides.

Over the stage the roof protected the players from the rain. The playhouse was very small.

Difference with the modern theatre:

In the modern theatre actors are separated from the audience by a curtains and they act in bright light before spectators hidden in a darkened auditorium. In Elizabethan theatre the actor played in daylight fused into a common experience with his audience. The soliloquy (the actor speak to himself) wasn't artificial but quite natural communication with the spectators.

There wasn't light or sound effects but the Elizabethan actor was able to achieve his effects by the emotions and imagination of the spectators.

The actions was continuous. The scene ended when all actors had gone off the stage and a new set of characters came on. The exact locality of the scene wasn't important.

The scenery was symbolic; it used symbol to give an idea about something: chairs or stools showed indoor scene; a man wearing riding-boots was a messenger, ecc.

The actors

Every actor played more than one characteres. He had a little time for long and elaborated preparations and was always ready to improvise. The actors were only men and the feminine roles were interpreted to the young men.