

# Globe Theatre

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*This article is about the original Globe Theatre of Shakespeare. For the modern reconstruction in London, see [Shakespeare's Globe](#). For other uses, see [Globe Theatre \(disambiguation\)](#).*



**Print, based on Hollar's 1644 Long View of London, of the 2nd Globe Theatre.**

<b>Address</b>	Park Street
<b>City</b>	<a href="#">Southwark, London</a>
<b>Country</b>	England
<b>Designation</b>	<i>Demolished</i>
<b>Architect</b>	Peter Street (carpenter)
<b>Owned by</b>	<a href="#">Lord Chamberlain's Men</a>
<b>Capacity</b>	3,000–seated and standing
<b>Type</b>	<a href="#">Elizabethan theatre</a>
<b>Opened</b>	1599

<b>Rebuilt</b>	1614
<b>Closed</b>	1642
Coordinates:  <a href="#">51°30′24″N</a> <a href="#">0°05′41″W</a> <span><span><span><span>51.506562</span>, <span>-0.094819</span></span></span></span>	

The **Globe Theatre** was a [theatre](#) in [London](#) associated with [William Shakespeare](#). It was built in 1599 by Shakespeare's [playing company](#), the [Lord Chamberlain's Men](#), and was destroyed by fire on [June 29, 1613](#).<sup>[1]</sup> A second Globe Theatre was rebuilt on the same site by June 1614 and closed in 1642.<sup>[2]</sup>

A modern reconstruction of the Globe, named "[Shakespeare's Globe](#)", opened in 1997. It is approximately 230 metres (750 ft) from the site of the original theatre.<sup>[3]</sup>

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## History

The Globe was owned by actors who were also shareholders in the [Lord Chamberlain's Men](#). Two of the six Globe shareholders, [Richard Burbage](#) and his brother [Cuthbert Burbage](#), owned double shares of the whole, or 25% each; the other four men, [Shakespeare](#), [John Heminges](#), [Augustine Phillips](#), and [Thomas Pope](#), owned a single share, or 12.5%. (Originally [William Kempe](#) was intended to be the seventh partner, but he sold out his share to the four minority sharers, leaving them with more than the originally planned 10%). These initial proportions changed over time, as new sharers were added. Shakespeare's share diminished from 1/8 to 1/14, or roughly 7%, over the course of his career.<sup>[4]</sup>

The Globe was built in 1599 using timber from an earlier theatre, [The Theatre](#), that had been built by Richard Burbage's father, [James Burbage](#), in [Shoreditch](#) in 1576. The Burbages originally had a 21-year [lease](#) of the site on which The Theatre was built but they owned the building outright. However the landlord, Giles Allen, claimed that the building had become his with the expiry of the lease. On [28 December 1598](#), while Allen was celebrating Christmas at his country home, carpenter Peter Street, supported by the players and their friends, dismantled The Theatre beam by beam and transported it to Street's waterfront warehouse near [Bridewell](#). With the onset of more favourable weather

in the following spring, the material was ferried over the [Thames](#) to reconstruct it as The Globe.<sup>[5]</sup>

On [June 29, 1613](#) the Globe Theatre went up in flames during a performance of *Henry the Eighth*. A theatrical cannon, set off during the performance, misfired, igniting the wooden beams and thatching. According to one of the few surviving documents of the event, no one was hurt except a man whose burning breeches were put out with a bottle of ale.<sup>[6]</sup>

Like all the other theatres in London, the Globe was closed down by the [Puritans](#) in 1642 after it was rebuilt in 1614. It was destroyed in 1644 to make room for [tenements](#). Its exact location remained unknown until remnants of its foundations were discovered in 1989 beneath the car park of [Anchor Terrace](#) on Park Street (the shape of the foundations are replicated in the surface of the car park). Anchor Terrace is a [listed building](#) and only very limited excavation, consisting of three small trial pits, has been permitted within its walls. One original [pier base](#) was identified.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Layout of the Globe



Exterior of the modern reproduction of the Globe.

The Globe's actual dimensions are unknown, but its shape and size can be approximated from scholarly inquiry over the last two centuries.<sup>[8]</sup> The evidence suggests that it was a three-storey, open-air [amphitheatre](#) approximately 100 feet (30 m) in diameter that could house up to 3,000 spectators.<sup>[9]</sup> The Globe is shown as round on [Wenceslas Hollar's](#) sketch of the building, later incorporated into his engraved "Long View" of London in 1647. However, in 1988-89, the uncovering of a small part of the Globe's foundation suggested that it was a polygon of 20 sides.<sup>[10][7]</sup>

At the base of the stage, there was an area called the *pit*,<sup>[11]</sup> (or, harking back to the old [inn-yards](#), *yard*<sup>[12]</sup>) where, for a penny, people (the "groundlings") would stand to watch the performance. Groundlings would eat hazelnuts during performances — during the excavation of the Globe, nutshells were found preserved in the dirt — or oranges.<sup>[13]</sup> Around the yard were three levels of stadium-style seats, which were more expensive than standing room.



### Interior of the modern reconstruction

A rectangle [stage platform](#), also known as an 'apron stage', thrust out into the middle of the open-air yard. The stage measured approximately 43 feet (13.1 m) in width, 27 feet (8.2 m) in depth and was raised about 5 feet (1.5 m) off the ground. On this stage, there was a [trap door](#) for use by performers to enter from the "cellarage" area beneath the stage.<sup>[14]</sup>

Large columns on either side of the stage supported a roof over the rear portion of the stage. The ceiling under this roof was called the "heavens," and was painted with clouds and the sky.<sup>[7]</sup> A trap door in the heavens enabled performers to descend using some form of rope and harness. The back wall of the stage had two or three doors on the main level, with a curtained inner stage in the centre and a balcony above it. The doors entered into the "tiring house" (backstage area) where the actors dressed and awaited their entrances. The balcony housed the musicians and could also be used for scenes requiring an upper space, such as the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*.

## Notes

- <sup>^</sup> Nagler 1958, p. 8.
- <sup>^</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica* 1998 edition.
- <sup>^</sup> Measured using [Google earth](#)
- <sup>^</sup> Schoenbaum, pp. 648-9.
- <sup>^</sup> [Shapiro, James](#) (2005). *1599—a year in the life of William Shakespeare*. London: Faber and Faber. [ISBN 0-571-21480-0](#).
- <sup>^</sup> [Wotton, Henry](#); (quoted in Mulryne) ([1613-07-02](#)). *Letters to Edmund Bacon*. London: privately published 1661.
- <sup>^</sup> [a b c](#) Mulryne, J R; Shewring, Margaret (1997). *Shakespeare's Globe Rebuilt*. Cambridge University Press. [ISBN 0521599881](#).
- <sup>^</sup> Egan, Gabriel (1999). "[Reconstructions of The Globe: A Retrospective](#)". *Shakespeare Survey* **52** (1): pp1–16. [ISBN 0521660742](#). Retrieved on [2007-07-25](#).
- <sup>^</sup> [Orrell, John](#) (1989). "[Reconstructing Shakespeare's Globe](#)". *History Trails*. University of Alberta. Retrieved on [2007-12-10](#).
- <sup>^</sup> Egan, Gabriel (2004). "[The 1599 Globe and its modern replica: Virtual Reality modelling of the archaeological and pictorial evidence](#)". *Early Modern Literary Studies* **13**: 5.1–22. [ISSN 1201-2459](#). Retrieved on [2007-07-25](#).

11. <sup>^</sup> [Britannica Student: The Theater past to present > Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Theater](#)
12. <sup>^</sup> [Dekker, Thomas](#) (1609), reprinted 1907, [ISBN 0781271991](#). *The Gull's Hornbook*: "the stage...will bring you to most perfect light... though the scarecrows in the yard hoot at you".
13. <sup>^</sup> Thomson, Peter (1991). *Shakespeare's Theatre*. London: Routledge. [ISBN 0415051487](#).
14. <sup>^</sup> Nagler 1958, pp. 23-24.

## See also

- [Elizabethan Theatre](#)

## References

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