

2020 Abstracts – London’s Indoor Playhouses
Leader: Christopher Highley, Ohio State University

Ben Jonson, John Marston, and the Rival Repertories
James P. Bednarz, Long Island University

One of the most important institutional changes that transformed the culture of playgoing in London at the end of the sixteenth century was the revival of commercial “private” theater, when, first, the Children of Paul’s in 1599 and then the Children of the Chapel in 1600 resumed the production of plays. We know very little about the scope of their repertories at inception, during those trying months when the companies apparently revived old plays as they solicited new material. But it was during this period that two dramatists, John Marston at Paul’s and Ben Jonson at Blackfriars, attracted attention by ridiculing each other personally and denigrating each other’s work. In doing so they converted these playhouses into forums that staged ideologically opposed interpretations of drama. Rather than aligning themselves with each other against the “public” theater, as Alfred Harbage had assumed in his influential chapter on “The Rival Repertories” in *Shakespeare and the Rival Traditions*, Jonson and Marston’s satire of each other’s work used Paul’s and Blackfriars to debate the question of the proper function of the drama they staged and the legitimacy of the writers who composed it. Their debate on what drama should and should not be constitutes one of the most significant critical controversies in early modern English theater. The point of this essay is to account for how, when Jonson began writing for the Children of the Chapel at Blackfriars in 1600, Marston at Paul’s became one of his principal targets through personal invective framed as a series of generalizations that excoriate the obscenity and plagiarism of contemporary private theater.

Conditions of Performance for the ‘Later Paul’s Boys (1599 – 1606)’
in St Paul’s Cathedral Almonry
David Carnegie, Victoria University of Wellington

I accept Roger Bowers’ argument (*Theatre Notebook* 54, 2000) that Paul’s Boys performed in the Almonry hall in the Cathedral precinct (not, as Reavley Gair proposed [*The Children of Pauls*, 1982], in a peculiar theatre-in-a-corner under the Chapter House). But, using both recent analysis of Early Modern seating space allocation and my own experience of directing in a theatre space very similar to that of the Almonry, I suggest that Bowers’ estimate of audience capacity of ‘no more than a few dozen’ is a grave underestimate. I have concluded elsewhere that about 200 people is more likely, but I now want to refine and extend those conclusions to questions of actor–audience relationship, especially in light of Paul’s playhouse being known to have such a small stage as to limit acting and costume options. If the hall was used for daily teaching and dining as well as intermittent performance, was the audience on the flat floor? Or might degrees or galleries have been temporary or permanent fixtures? If audience was also on the stage, what limitations or opportunities are implied. Does the supposed gallery over the screens passage meet the demand for an upper level in plays such as Dekker and Webster’s *Westward Ho?*

Indoor Theatres, Title Pages and The Marketing of Plays after 1660
Emma Depledge, Université de Neuchâtel

This paper explores the ways in which indoor theatres were used to market editions of plays published between the Restoration of the theatres in 1660 and the end of the seventeenth century. A number of pre-1642 plays that are known to have been performed after 1660 continued to appear in print with title pages advertising them as ‘acted with great applause...at the Black-Fryers’ long after that theatre ceased to exist. *Othello* and *Philaster* continued to be advertised as having been ‘*diuerse times Acted*, at the Globe, and Blacke-Friers’ even after reference to performances at contemporary theatres was added in the 1680s. What impact did anachronistic and inclusive – outdoor and indoor, old and new – adverts have on the ways in which pre-1642 plays were received in the second half of the century? Why might stationers have continued to use such theatre attributions so long after the playhouses concerned had closed? This paper will explore some possible answers.

‘Sir Henry Herbert and the Salisbury Court Playhouse’
Richard Dutton, Ohio State University

How did the Master of the Revels, Sir Henry Herbert, reconcile his holding of a one-ninth share in the Salisbury Court playhouse, with his wider remit to regulate and censor all the drama in and around London? Did anyone else see a conflict of interests here? Or was it just another example of early Stuart sleaze? This paper looks at these questions in the wider context of Caroline theatre. Following the major plague of 1625, only the King’s Men were left standing as a playing company, using both the Blackfriars and the Globe, and in many respects still self-managing. The remaining playhouses were effectively restocked by their all-powerful managers – Alleyn at the Fortune (though he died in 1626, his practices were continued by the trust he instituted at Dulwich College) but primarily Christopher Beeston at the Cockpit/Phoenix and the Red Bull. Beeston in particular made and unmade companies virtually at will, and Herbert obligingly sanctioned them. Jacobean requirements that they should have royal patronage all but broke down as new companies with ‘Revels’ in the title came and went; a royal title was sometimes loosely attached but no longer even received patents. Herbert was given an increasingly free hand to manage playing, which he did mainly by allying with the managers – and trying to maintain good relations with the King’s Men. Salisbury Court joined this tight circle in 1629, managed by Herbert’s own deputy, William Blagrave, and the veteran actor, Ricard Gunnell. Herbert probably received his share in return for making possible a new playhouse– an increasingly rare event, and not repeated before the Civil War. Looking at Herbert’s dealings with Beeston we see that Herbert was effectively shaping the theatrical world which would re-emerge in the Restoration, totally dominated then by just two managers (Davenant and successive Killigrews), who ironically enjoyed all the powers and revenues of the Master of the Revels, and denying Herbert himself the right to reclaim them.

David George, Urbana/Franklin University

I will write on the private London playhouses, their closures, what early Shakespeare plays are alleged to have been played in them, and the Gray's Inn revels or *Gesta Grayorum*. Gray's Inn functioned as a playing space from 20 December 1594 to about March 1595, where Shakespeare

could have seen the musical show of the Muscovites (who re-appear in 5.2. of *Love's Labours Lost*). The *Gesta* also included a performance of *The Comedy of Errors* on 28 December 1594. The aim of this paper is to look at how Shakespeare got re-started in London after the plague years of 1592-1594 forced all the London acting troupes to travel in the provinces.

Reconstructing a Lost Anti-playhouse Petition
Roze Hentschell, Colorado State University

This paper examines the sixth and final petition organized by the residents of St. Anne's Blackfriars against their neighborhood playhouse in February 1641. The petition, addressed to the newly restored House of Commons, no longer exists. I ask who might have organized the petition and what it might have contained. I also ask why two other parishes—St. Martin's Ludgate and St. Bride's—joined with St. Anne in presenting the petition. In exploring these questions, I place the 1641 petition in the context of previous Blackfriars petitions and within the culture of petitioning that was well established by the early 1640s. I also examine how urban problems and local politics in these specific parishes, as well as broader national developments, shaped the timing, content, and fate of the petition.

Northumberland House, a Forgotten London Playhouse of the Mid-Sixteenth Century
David Kathman, Chicago, IL

This paper will describe the history, ownership, and dimensions of Northumberland House, a large building in the northwest part of the City of London that hosted professional plays in 1543 and 1567 (and presumably in between). Its eventful history is traceable to the 14th century, when it was built as the London residence of the Percy family, including the earls of Northumberland; eventually Henry Percy, the ninth earl, leased the building in 1598 to royal printer Robert Barker, who printed the first edition of the King James Bible there. At the time of its use as a playhouse in the mid-16th century, Northumberland House was held by the crown after the sixth earl of Northumberland's attainder, and its complex leasing history during this period reveals interesting connections to commercial entertainment elsewhere in London. Various leases and maps allow for a tentative reconstruction of the building's size and dimensions, including the large indoor hall where plays were apparently performed.

A “very fine play house” in Interregnum Hyde Park
Christopher Matusiak, Ithaca College

A newsletter addressed to the royalist Sir Hugh Smith by his agent in London in the spring of 1659 pointedly notes that “there be plaies dayly acted at Hide Parke, in a very fine play house made of a great barne by Mr Dene for that purpose.” (Folger MS X.c.48) The report remains the only direct evidence to date that a seventeenth-century theatre ever existed in the greenspace west of London—and it raises a host of questions. Who was “Mr Dene”? Where precisely did his “very fine play house” stand? For whom was it intended? And how did it circumvent the interregnum's ongoing prohibition of stage-playing? This paper aims to bring this obscure enterprise into better focus, first by organizing evidence that positively identifies “Dene” and accounts for his acquisition of parkland formerly belonging to Charles I. Next, the geography of the park will be

explored to determine the probable location and physical features of the “great barne” that came to serve as a performance space. Finally, I will consider the wider social world of Hyde Park in the 1650s, profiling the sorts of clients Dene’s roofed venue clearly sought to attract on the eve of the Restoration.

**Working Title: “The Muses’s Colony’: London Topicality in Salisbury Court Plays”
Christi Spain-Savage, Siena College**

Built in 1629 in Whitefriars, Salisbury Court playhouse had a smaller audience capacity than its competitors, the Blackfriars and the Cockpit, and its company, according to Andrew Gurr, seemingly “ranged itself rather self-consciously behind the King’s and Queen’s men as a smaller-scale operation” (*The Shakespearian Playing Companies* 426). In fact, the prologue to Shackerly Marmion’s *Holland’s Leaguer*, staged in 1631 at the Salisbury Court, acknowledges this playhouse’s position with respect to the other two, lamenting, “To overtop us two great Laurels stand [...] The vastness of the globe cannot contain: / Th’ other so high, the Phoenix does aspire / To build in, and takes new life from the fire.” My paper for our seminar will investigate the Salisbury Court’s assumed lower status and “smaller-scale operation.” My early contention is that Salisbury Court plays, namely Marmion’s *Holland’s Leaguer* and Brome’s *The Sparagus Garden*, two quite successful plays with relatively long runs, capitalize on metatheatrical references and topical London events in order to bolster the success of the Salisbury Court and its offerings.

**The ‘Puritan Preacher’ and *The Puritan Widow*
Patrick Timmis, Duke University**

My paper, “The ‘Puritan Preacher’ and *The Puritan Widow*,” traces two competing attacks on London’s immorality and disunity that came from the St. Paul’s Cathedral churchyard during the Oath of Allegiance controversy (1606-1609): Thomas Middleton’s ‘city comedy’ *The Puritan Widow*, performed by the choirboy-actors of St. Paul’s, and William Crashawe’s Paul’s Cross sermon *Against the Papists and Brownists*. Paying special attention to the shared geography and shared audience of these two public performances, I argue that Crashawe’s condemnation of Middleton’s play cannot be attributed (as many scholars have done) to “Puritan” anti-sociability. A closer look at both Crashawe’s sermon and other writings reveal a churchman squarely in the Jacobean, Erastian mainstream. This leads me to reread *The Puritan Widow* as a deeply iconoclastic and anarchic play. Throughout the first four acts, however, Middleton is setting the stage to mend the windows even as he breaks them, culminating in a marriage which reconciles the godly and the worldly at the expense of a Catholic ‘Other.’ The play and the sermon, then, conclude with surprisingly compatible proposals for consensus-building in a Protestant, nationalist London.