

Shakespeare in the Restoration Theater

Paper #2: *London Stage* Mini-research Paper/Presentation (2-3 pages, plus discussion of findings)

Note: before this paper is assigned, students spend a class period in the library getting acquainted with The London Stage through a kind of scavenger hunt group activity.

Were you to really become a dramaturge, this would be part of your process for writing up the information in the playbill. Use the index of the *London Stage* to help you track your play or actor through the century. As you dig through the *London Stage* to pursue details about your assigned character/actor, think about the following questions:

- What expectations did you have about what the actor would be like, what other roles they would play, etc? (how might you cast them today, for example). Did your actor ever play parts in more traditional Shakespearean fare?
- What did you find about the role's endurance? Did your character get cut? What difference would that make to the play overall? How quickly did actors cycle through it? Did one "own" it for years, or was it played by new company members, etc?
- What kind of longevity did you find the play itself to have? With what changes? What might those signal about changing *mores* or class or taste, etc?
- If you find cuts, look carefully in the script at the sections that were deleted – what happens to the language of the play? Or, were there expansions of some sort? What about "mixed media" additions like music or dancing?
- Notice what was showing at other theatres on performance nights. What seemed to be the main competition for this play? Were there other Shakespearean plays (adapted or inspired by) up against it, or was this a case of Shakespeare vying with more modern productions?
- **Based on the research you have conducted, what additional insight have you garnered into how we might understand the play?** (this is your basic argument for the paper, backed up by the details you unearthed)

NOTE: please make sure to check a timeline of some sort (I'll put some links on Blackboard) to see if there might be a historical reason for upsurges in performances of this play. What issues does the play contain that might appeal at certain historical moments?