

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



Blackfriars Stage Sitters and the Staging of *The Tempest*, *The Maid's Tragedy*, and *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

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From August 1608 when Richard Burbage signed the Blackfriars lease, the King's Men and their playwrights knew that the performance conditions they would face at the indoor venue would be very different from those at the Globe. In particular, they would have known that the most expensive place to sit at the Blackfriars was on the stage, a spot popular with young men about town. Those gallants would have taken up considerable space, sitting on moveable stools, wearing swords and feathered hats, and smoking long pipes. In what follows, therefore, I shall first summarize what is known about this aspect of early modern performance. Then I shall look at three King's Men's plays written in the context of the Blackfriars' acquisition—primarily *The Tempest* (1611), but also *The Maid's Tragedy* (1611) and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* (1613)—to call attention to elements that would have been effective in accommodating the physical presence of those onstage playgoers while also countering any competition from them for the attention of the majority seated offstage.

Theater historians have not ignored the stage sitters. Providing much of the known evidence, E. K. Chambers observes that “The practice of sitting on the stage itself first emerges about 1596,” and that it “was general by the seventeenth century, and was apparently most encouraged at the Blackfriars.”¹ Ann Jennalie Cook adds that “From at least the 1590s onward, some gentlemen preferred to occupy a stool upon the stage” and that “Once established, the custom of stage sitting became firmly entrenched.” She too

quotes a number of references on the practice and cites still more.² Despite the considerable evidence, however, the presence of gallants onstage and the effect of that presence are not always even noted. The practice is rarely given detailed consideration in modern editions, unless a play calls attention to it in a prologue—like some of Jonson’s (e.g., *The Devil Is an Ass*)—or is *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, in which Beaumont incorporated the stage sitters into the performance itself. And although the Blackfriars Playhouse in Staunton, Virginia, provides six or seven stools on either side of the stage, where playgoers are regularly invited to sit, being members of a modern audience they typically do their best to be unobtrusive. They seldom call attention to themselves the way the gallants seem regularly to have done. As noted by evidently annoyed contemporaries and aggrieved playwrights, stage sitters were often unruly and disruptive. They crowded out the players, displayed their clothes, smoked, talked amongst themselves, took others’ stools, came to blows, looked into the tiring house, criticized the play, and left before the end of the performance.

Probably the best-known description of this behavior is found in *The Guls Horne-booke*, with Dekker’s satiric advice on “How a Gallant should behaue himselfe in a Play-house”:

you shall disgrace [the playwright] worse then by tossing him in a blanket, or giuing him the bastinado in a Tauerne, if in the middle of his play . . . you rise with a skreud and discontented face from your stoole to be gone . . . : and, beeing on your feete, sneake not away like a coward, but salute all your gentle acquaintance, that are spred either on the rushes, or on stooles about you, and draw what troope you can from the stage after you . . .

Mary if either the company, or indisposition of the weather binde you to sit it out, my counsell is then that you turne plain Ape, take up a rush and tickle the earnest eares of your fellow gallants, to make other fooles fall a laughing: mewe at passionate speeches, blare at merrie, finde fault with the musicke, whew at the childrens Action, whistle at the songs.³

Jonson describes similar behavior in the dedication to *The New Inn*. The stage-sitting gallants came

To see, and to be seen: To make a general muster of themselves in their Clothes of Credit: and to possess the Stage against the Play: To dislike all, but mark nothing. And by their confidence of rising between the Acts, in Oblique Lines, make *Affadavit* to the whole House, of their not understanding one Scene. Arm’d with this Prejudice, as the *Stage-furniture*, or *Arras-cloaths*, they were there, as Spectators, away.⁴

However much exaggerated for satirical effect, these and other descriptions of the behavior of onstage gallants create a picture very different from the rather “purer” performance context that most of us imagine when we study early modern plays. Indeed, one wonders how the players, especially the boys’ companies, managed to get through all five acts without despairing or being completely upstaged. That they seem to have completed performances successfully shows that the performance conditions then expected and accepted differed greatly from today’s. In Keith Sturges’s view, the stage sitters “were a notable feature of the performance itself whether they sat still or engaged, as some of them must have, in the distracting behaviour of Dekker’s gull . . . : they contributed significantly to others’ experience of the play.”⁵ It might be argued that if they had regularly interfered with performances, there would be even more complaints and more frequent references in playtexts. It could equally be suggested that if their presence were a given, such comment would have been useless and superfluous, perhaps even counterproductive. It therefore seems reasonable to ask how the onstage playgoers might have affected or even helped to determine the way a play was written and performed.

The only documentary evidence about the number of playgoers accommodated on the stage is provided in Mark Eccles’s report of the 1609 testimony by Henry Outlaw, “That by the space of aboute fyftene wekes together in the first yere of the Kinges M^{tyes} Raigne in Englande’ [March 24, 1603, to March 23, 1604] [Henry] Evans, or others by his appointment, had received to the value of thirty shillings a week or thereabouts ‘for the vse of the stooles standinge vppon the Stage at Blackfryers’, for which he had never given any account to the sharers of the house.”⁶ Drawing on other evidence that “a stool could be hired for sixpence . . . or sometimes for tweldepence,” Eccles concludes, “If Evans hired out from thirty to sixty stools a week, the Blackfriars stage seems to have had room to hold quite a large number of seated spectators” (104). Eccles’s main point is that in order to accommodate so many stage sitters “there must have been more than one performance a week”; but even if there were only “three performances a week” (104) at the Blackfriars as early as 1603, as he suggests, there would have been between ten and twenty playgoers on stage each day.

Probably these stage sitters were permitted because they brought in extra income—playhouses were businesses, after all—but the gallants would have competed with the players for very limited space. Richard Hosley has estimated that the Blackfriars stage was twenty-nine feet wide.⁷ Andrew Gurr has suggested that the width was “not much more than twenty feet”⁸; he has also said there were “up to fifteen gallants sitting on stools on the stage” and

he would allow “a minimum of three square feet per well-dressed sprig, not to mention his obtrusive sword.”⁹ Sturgess shows fifteen places on each side of the stage, taking a total of seven feet and leaving a width of twenty-three feet for performance.¹⁰ Glynne Wickham has suggested that five feet on either side of the stage should be allowed for playgoers at the indoor theaters.¹¹ If even that amount were taken from each side of the Staunton Blackfriars stage, the width for performance would be only nineteen feet.

Attempts to illustrate the Blackfriars interior, which in the absence of contemporary drawings or architectural plans are necessarily speculative, have not been helpful. The “imaginative reconstruction” in Irwin Smith’s study of this venue relegates the onstage playgoers to an inset area on either side of the stage.¹² Richard Southern’s more familiar drawing of the playhouse was done to illustrate Hosley’s purely speculative idea that at the Blackfriars the onstage playgoers actually sat in galleries at the sides of the stage.¹³ The drawing by C. Walter Hodges of *The Tempest* 3.1 at the Blackfriars suggests that he accepted Hosley’s hypothesis. Certainly it shows no gallants on the stage sitting where, or behaving as, the contemporary evidence says they did.¹⁴

But once one accepts that there really were playgoers seated on the stage, trying to attract attention, it becomes necessary to speculate about how they might have affected a performance. Sturgess suggests that they “must have acted as a special form of stage-dressing, operating a kind of ‘alienating’ effect by which other spectators were reminded that they were witnessing a play event, and thus they had an influence on the kind of stage illusion it was possible to generate: they broke the picture-frame by their presence.”¹⁵ Tiffany Stern observes that “Blackfriars plays were performed on a small, crushed stage in the midst of spectators who took boxes around or stools on the stage itself” and suggests the consequent ways in which “Divisions between play world and real world were in the larger Blackfriars fiction, permeable.”¹⁶ While I agree that there must have been both explicit and implicit interaction between the onstage gallants and the players, I wonder if it actually worked as these comments suggest. Did playwrights (and players) try to accommodate the stage sitters’ presence by somehow incorporating them into the world of the play as Stern would have it, or by capitalizing on their real-world reality as Sturgess suggests? Or did they find ways to keep the two onstage worlds as separate as possible?

Whether by chance or design, there were many kinds of stage business in this period that would almost inevitably have focused attention onto the events and characters and away from the onstage antics of playgoers. Such practices might also literally have kept the gallants in their place on the periphery of the performance—although they were probably sometimes

incorporated into it *as audience*.¹⁷ Physical elements of early modern staging and performance, such as asides and soliloquies, fights with weapons, beds and banquets, discoveries, masques and dancing, and spectacular conclusions, could each in their own way have helped to control the gallants while also keeping everyone's attention on the players. My point is not that there was a cause and effect relationship between the fact of stage sitters and such staging methods, but that playwrights and players aiming to succeed might have found such conventional devices useful in solving this particular problem from within a play itself. Of course the gallants who had paid a premium to sit on stage and be seen would probably have resisted attempts to tame them, and might have literally pushed back, but that does not mean that experienced playwrights did not find subtle ways to exercise some control.

The Tempest was probably written with the Blackfriars in mind and was almost certainly performed there.¹⁸ But in an otherwise detailed description of how the play would have been staged at Blackfriars, Sturgess observes merely that at "stage left and right the action is closed in by the stage-sitters" and does not mention them again.¹⁹ Gurr's analysis of the play's first scene in performance at Blackfriars refers to practical details, but only briefly notes that onstage playgoers would have cramped the playing space.²⁰ *The Tempest*, however, includes some very effective methods for accommodating the physical presence of stage sitters while also countering any competition for the attention of the main audience. Might the presence of gallants help to explain how often events occur at stage center? The circle Prospero draws to enclose Alonzo and the other courtiers is only the final and most obvious instance of this staging technique. Much of the plot requires only that figures enter, move to midstage, interact, and exit. The action frequently includes properties that focus playgoer attention: Prospero's magic garment donned and doffed, the logs carried by first Caliban then Ferdinand, the cloak under which Caliban and Trinculo hide, the drawn swords of Antonio and Sebastian, the disappearing banquet, the "glistening apparel," and Prospero's magic staff. A significant number of figures also assume sitting, reclining, or kneeling positions at the center of attention. Miranda sits, sleeps, and kneels; Caliban and Trinculo are prone under a cloak; Alonzo, Gonzalo, and others sleep; Ferdinand kneels and sits.

Other devices would almost certainly have engaged and held the attention of playgoers, especially those onstage. Shakespeare's use of the unities of time, place, and action fosters a sense of immediacy. This impression of here and now is initiated in the first scene by the use of "thunder and lightning": effects that would have included everyone on stage and made the gallants feel as if they too were on the sinking ship. For the rest of the play, the repeated use of

“this island” or “this isle” adds to the creation of a single shared location, which would have been reinforced by the music from immediately above the stage. In addition, the frequent asides and private exchanges between characters would have encouraged playgoer involvement, and could easily have been directed to or staged near the gallants. Asides or secret conversations are often spoken by Prospero and his agent Ariel, but also by Antonio and Sebastian when they are plotting against Alonzo or mocking Gonzalo, by Miranda when she is disobeying her father to be with Ferdinand, and by others.

Before a performance began, the gallants with stools on the stage seem to have taken advantage of their location to preen, chat, and otherwise call attention to themselves. The act breaks that permitted the trimming of candles in the indoor playhouses would also have repeatedly given stage sitters the opportunity to stand up, move about, and leave the stage, so that after each break it would have been necessary for the players to regain their attention. This practical circumstance very probably had some influence on how each act began. Obviously, the storm scene with its special effects and anarchic confusion could have very quickly subdued the gallants and gained their attention (as it silences audiences today). The start of each subsequent act can be seen as potentially having a similar function: the opening of act 2 relieves any suspense about the fate of the shipwrecked nobles. Act 3 begins very differently, but when Ferdinand entered with a log, the gallants so like him in age and dress would almost certainly have paid attention to his soliloquy. And when Miranda entered to meet Ferdinand as Prospero watched, the stage sitters were again given inducements to settle down and pay attention. Act 4 starts with Prospero’s warning about self-control to Ferdinand, surely of particular relevance to the young men sitting nearby. The last act also begins with Prospero, whose first words—“Now does my project gather to a head”—probably always gain everyone’s attention. Several other more spectacular events also would have kept playgoers engaged. Near the midpoint comes the appearance and disappearance of the banquet, along with the courtiers’ drawn swords. The masque in 4.1, which was of course longer than the minimalist directions suggest, would have crowded the stage with figures—some in exotic costumes carrying symbolic props and others watching. And later in the same scene, did the “*divers spirits in shape of dogs and hounds*” (4.1.249 stage direction) that chase Caliban, Stephano, and Trinculo offstage also nip at the gallants on the way out?

At the end of the play, Prospero’s metadramatic epilogue could have effectively discouraged early departures. Indeed, Prospero’s control over the island is mirrored by the control exercised by the player, probably Richard Burbage, over the stage and audience.²¹ Prospero develops and maintains this

control by being the dominant physical presence throughout the play and by speaking many more lines than any other character—often seen and heard only by the playgoers. His dominance is most obviously symbolized by the circle he draws to enclose the captive nobles, but the banquet in act 3 and the masque in act 4 are other instances of a technique that would almost certainly have had the practical effect of drawing attention towards the show at the center and away from the show-offs on the margins. Furthermore, although most apparent in the masque scene where Ferdinand and Miranda are specifically an audience for the performance, there are additional occasions when characters are observed by others. Prospero watches as Ferdinand and Miranda fall in love (1.2), Ariel watches Antonio and Sebastian watching the sleeping Alonzo and Gonzalo while plotting to murder them (2.1), Prospero watches Miranda disobey him to meet Ferdinand (3.1), Prospero and the nobles watch the comeuppance of Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano (5.1), and, finally, all watch as Prospero discovers Miranda and Ferdinand playing chess (5.1). Each occurrence of this technique would implicitly have linked the audience within the play to the audience without, especially those on the same stage as the watching characters.

The Maid's Tragedy was written and performed just as the King's Men had begun to use the Blackfriars playhouse,²² and *The Two Noble Kinsmen* “must have been one of the few King's Men plays to be written specifically for Blackfriars” after the Globe burned in 1613.²³ Certainly Beaumont and Fletcher each had previous experience writing for a boys' company at the indoor venue before writing for the King's Men and knew what to expect from playgoers sitting on the smaller Blackfriars stage. Like *The Tempest* both these plays contain staging elements which, if looked at with stage sitters in mind, can be seen as useful for gaining and keeping control over potentially rambunctious gallants. Most notably, perhaps, there is a spectacular event at or near the beginning of all three: a storm at sea, a wedding masque, and a bridal procession. Each event is unique, extended, and elaborate and would have required maximum stage space while at the same time capturing the attention of every playgoer. In addition, as with the masque in *The Tempest*, the performances within the play in the first acts of the other two plays have audiences of players seated near or amongst the onstage playgoers. With as many as sixteen players and possibly the same number of gallants on the Blackfriars stage for such scenes, built-in methods of crowd management would seem to have been not optional but mandatory.

The masque in *The Maid's Tragedy* has first Night then Neptune “rise” and later “descend,” presumably through the trap, and another figure comes “out of a rock”; there are three songs, each with masquers dancing (1.2.117.2,

173.1, 212.1–254.1). Just before the masque begins, Calianax says “Make room there!” (1.2.104). In the context of the play, he is making way for the entrance of the King and his train, but such a command could also have been directed to the onstage gallants to make room for actions that would have placed considerable demand on very limited stage space. Other similar demands on space in this play include a banquet scene (4.2), with a table and nine figures seated around it talking and drinking for 227 lines. Presumably such a scene would have put the gallants literally in their place outside the world of the banqueters at the same time as it engaged their interest in what was being done and said around the table. The same would have been true in 5.1, when during more than a hundred lines Evadne ties the King to his bed before stabbing him repeatedly. Not only does this murder provide an attention-getting start for the final act, it is unlikely that the gallants would have wanted to compete with it. Furthermore, the banquet and bed would each have created a central focus for action towards which all eyes would have been directed, as would the uses of the trap in the first-act masque and of the upper level in 5.2. When reading a play it is easy to forget the physical requirements and effects of such visual business, but in performance they tend to dominate the scenes in which they occur.

Even more than *The Maid's Tragedy*, Fletcher and Shakespeare's *The Two Noble Kinsmen* is concerned with chivalric ideals such as honor, friendship, and allegiance and is replete with the rituals belonging to a duel, prayer, wedding, and funeral. The long first scene begins with music and an elaborate wedding procession with costumes, props, and symbolic actions that would surely have engaged playgoer attention. For most of this scene at least sixteen players are onstage, some of whom kneel during extended exchanges watched by the others. Scenes that would have filled the stage with players and business recur in this play, raising the question of how the behavior of the onstage gallants would have been affected by the repeated use of a device that seriously limited their seating space and competed with their attempts to attract attention. In 1.4 a victorious Theseus enters with a procession that includes Palamon and Arcite on hearses, which is met by three queens who fall to their knees. The scene ends with the exit of the hearses, but scene 5 begins with their reentry “in a funeral solemnity.”²⁴ Near the end of act 3, when playgoer attention might be expected to wander, Theseus and his courtiers enter and sit to listen to the Schoolmaster, then watch the villagers dance a morris that would have taken considerable time to perform. This impinged on not only the audience within the play but also, almost of necessity, on the stage sitters who shared the stage. Scene 6 is tense and busy, involving first the arming of Palamon by Arcite, then of Arcite by Palamon. They swordfight, pause, and fight again until interrupted by the entrance of Theseus with others, who watch as Emilia

and Hippolyta kneel and beg him to intervene. The start of act 5 is even more theatrical than the beginning of the play—as Lois Potter notes, it would probably have been “a spectacular processional entrance to music” with each side entering from separate stage doors and “elaborately costumed and armed” (5.1.7, stage direction note). The scene includes ritualized actions, vows before an altar, music, sounds, and other effects, followed by the grand entrance and bridal dumb show (5.1.136). To imagine the onstage gallants as part of this scene is not only to become aware of how they would have been forced to the sides of the stage and into the background, but also to wonder if this was one of the scene’s intended effects.

When studying *The Two Noble Kinsmen* with the stage sitters in mind, it also becomes apparent just how many different kinds of business it includes and how varied the action is. In addition to the events already described, the upper level is used for a long exchange, then the action is divided between the upper and main levels (2.2), and there are soliloquies, especially by the Jailer’s Daughter, that could have been very effectively addressed to the onstage gallants (2.4, 2.6, 3.2, 3.4). Sizeable properties include a table and chairs, a bush, two hearses, an altar, and a block or scaffold; each prop becomes a focal point involving events at or around it.

Finally, like the other two plays, *The Two Noble Kinsmen* concludes with an exciting scene that fills the stage with players and interesting business. As already noted, in Shakespeare’s play the unwinding of the plot is complex and the epilogue a surprise. In *The Maid’s Tragedy* the ending cannot be predicted until it happens, especially where Melantius, the most problematic character, is concerned. And although a reader of Chaucer would have known that Arcite would die, allowing Palamon and Emilia to marry, Fletcher and Shakespeare seem to have done everything possible to create suspense and tension, with the buildup to the execution of Palamon before the arrival of the messenger who announces Arcite’s fatal accident. Those onstage playgoers who made a habit of ostentatiously leaving before the end of a play might have hesitated to interrupt these conclusions, and doubtless would have been unpopular with the rest of the audience had they done so.

These three plays were written and performed at the beginning of a period of more than thirty years during which theatrical practices and staging conventions changed very little. At the same time, new outdoor and indoor playhouses were built to accommodate those plays and the playgoers who attended them. With many of the specific references to stage sitters coming from this period,²⁵ it is clear that this practice was one that continued—sometimes outdoors at the Globe, Red Bull, and Fortune,²⁶ and regularly on the indoor stages of the Blackfriars, Cockpit/Phoenix, and Salisbury Court playhouses.²⁷ Although it is theoretically possible to make too much of the presence of onstage playgoers

and their attention-seeking behavior, the reality is that the whole matter and the problems it raises have generally been either elided or avoided. Perhaps, though, if we gave these playgoers even some of the disproportionate attention they seem to have sought and received at the time, we would be better able to paint a literally fuller and therefore more accurate picture of early modern plays in performance on a stage shared with playgoers. Although we might not like having them onstage any more than did their contemporaries, they could not be ignored then and should not be now.

Notes

1. E. K. Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923), 2:535–37.
2. Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576–1642* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 150–55.
3. Thomas Dekker, *The Guls Horne-booke* (London, 1609), E4^r–4^v.
4. Ben Jonson, *The New Inn: or, The Light Heart* (London, 1631), Aaaaa1^r (I have reversed the italics and roman of the original).
5. Keith Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Playhouses* (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), 41.
6. Mark Eccles, “Martin Peerson and the Blackfriars,” *Shakespeare Survey* 11 (1958): 104.
7. Richard Hosley, “The Second Blackfriars Playhouse (1596),” in *The Revels History of Drama in English*, vol. 3, 1576–1613, ed. J. Leeds Barroll, Alexander Leggatt, Richard Hosley, and Alvin Kernan (London: Methuen, 1975), 210.
8. Andrew Gurr, “*The Tempest's* Tempest at Blackfriars,” *Shakespeare Survey* 41 (1989): 96.
9. Andrew Gurr, “Maximal and Minimal Texts: Shakespeare v. the Globe,” *Shakespeare Survey* 52 (1999): 79.
10. Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Playhouses*, 40–41.
11. Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300–1660*, vol. 2, 1576–1660, *Part II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 180–81.
12. Irwin Smith, *Shakespeare's Blackfriars Playhouse* (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 307. This arrangement is to “accommodate the gallants without permitting them to obstruct the traffic of the stage”; but Smith also notes that “the fashionable gentleman’s chief reason for sitting on the stage was to display his finery to public view” and he quotes Dekker’s instruction to his gallant to become part of the scenery by “spreading [his] body on the stage” (309).
13. Richard Hosley, “A Reconstruction of the Second Blackfriars,” *Elizabethan Theatre* 1 (1968): 80–82.
14. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. David Lindley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5. Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

15. Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Playhouses*, 41.

16. Tiffany Stern, "Taking Part: Actors and Audience on the Stage at Blackfriars," in *Inside Shakespeare: Essays on the Blackfriars Stage*, ed. Paul Menzer (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 46, 48.

17. In Stern's view, "The fact that the audience was crammed into the same world as the actors and equally visible will also have shaped productions. Unsurprisingly, the story of stage and audience frequently meld [sic] together, and Blackfriars plays often have internal events—masques, songs, dances—that call for a 'staged' audience of actors" ("Taking Part," 47).

18. See Gurr, "The *Tempest's* *Tempest*," 92–93. Noting that "the first recorded performance was at court" in November 1611, Lindley believes that "Whilst it is conceivable that this was its 'opening night', it would have been unusual if the play had not already been performed publicly by the King's Men" ("The *Tempest's* *Tempest*," 1).

19. Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Playhouses*, 78.

20. Gurr, "The *Tempest's* *Tempest*," 96, 97.

21. "The role was almost certainly written for Burbage. In 1611 he was at the height of his powers, the greatest actor of his generation, aged 37 or 38, who had played most of Shakespeare's tragic leads" (Sturgess, *Jacobean Private Playhouses*, 75).

22. "The title-page of Q1 (1619) states that the play had been 'divers times acted at the Blackfriars'. . . . Although there is nothing to rule out the possibility that its first performance was at the Globe, it is more likely that the play was written for the Blackfriars and received its first performance there" (Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, *The Maid's Tragedy*, ed. T. W. Craik [Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1988], 3). Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

23. John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter (Walton-on-Thames, UK: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1997), 59.

24. John Fletcher and William Shakespeare, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, ed. Lois Potter, 1.5.0.2. Subsequent quotations are from this edition.

25. For later references see Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 7 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 6:7–8.

26. See Leslie Thomson, "Playgoers on the Outdoor Stages of Early Modern London," *Theatre Notebook* 64 (2010): 3–11.

27. Evidence that playgoers sat on the stages of these indoor playhouses includes the Heminge and Condell reference to sitting "on the Stage at *Black-Friers*, or the *Cock-pit*" (*Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies* [London, 1623], A3^r). A payment to Salisbury Court playhouse dated September 14, 1639, is described as compensation for lost income because stage sitting had been stopped: "And one dayes p'ffitt wholly to themselves every yeare in consideration of their want of stooles on the stage, w^{ch} were taken away by his M^{ts} comand" (quoted in Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage*, 6:8). The royal order itself is lost, but as Bentley says, "the context suggests that it was recent" (8), an indication that stage sitting existed almost until the closing of the theaters.