

Theatre and acting records relating to Shakespeare



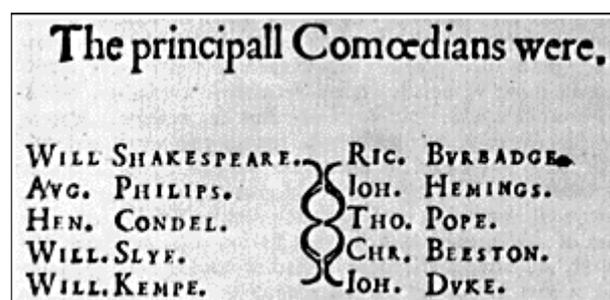
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On 15 March 1595, an entry in the accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber reads: "To William Kempe, William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage, servaunts to the Lord Chamberleyne, upon the Councille's warrant dated at Whitehall XVth Marcij 1594, for two severall comedies or enterludes shewed by them before her majestie in Christmas tyme laste part viz St. Stephen's daye and Innocents daye..." (Public Record Office, Pipe Office, Declared Accounts No. 542, f. 207b). (Public Record Office, Pipe Office, Declared Accounts No. 542.)

1598 *Palladis Tamia*, subtitled "Wits Treasury", written by the minister Francis Meres contains the first critical account of the poems and early plays of Shakespeare. (It was listed in the Stationers Register 7 September 1598.)

As Plautus and Seneca are accounted the best for Comedy and Tragedy among the Latines: so Shakespeare among English is the most excellent in both kinds for the stage; for Comedy, witnes his Getlemē of Verona, his Errors, his Lone labors lost, his Lone labours wonne, his Midsummers night dreame, & his Merchant of Venice; for Tragedy his Richard the 2. Richard the 3. Henry the 4. King Iohn, Titus Andronicus and his Romeo and Iuliet.

1598, in the initial presentation of Ben Jonson's *Every Man In His Humour*, "Will Shakespeare" was a "principall Comoedian".



About 1601, students in Cambridge put on a play called *The Second Part of the Return from Parnassus*, part of a series of plays that satirised the London literary scene.

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In this play, two characters named "Kempe" and "Burbage" appear, representing the actors Will Kempe and Richard Burbage of the Chamberlain's Men.

At one point Kempe says:

"Few of the university [men] pen plays well, they smell too much of that writer Ovid, and that writer Metamorphosis, and talk too much of Proserpina and Jupiter. Why, here's our fellow Shakespeare puts them all down, aye and Ben Jonson too. O that Ben Jonson is a pestilent fellow, he brought up Horace giving the poets a pill, but our fellow Shakespeare hath given him a purge that made him bewray his credit".

This whilst not strictly evidence establishes that some people were aware of Shakespeare as being a writer and his being a rival to Ben Jonson.

On 13 March 1602, John Manningham of the Middle Temple recorded in his diary "Vpon a tyme when Burbidge played Rich. 3. there was a citizen greue soe farr in liking with him, that before shee went from the play shee appointed him to come that night vnto hir by the name of Ri: the 3. Shakespeare overhearing their conclusion went before, was intertained, and at his game ere Burbidge came. Then message being brought that Rich. the 3.d was at the dore, Shakespeare caused returne to be made that William the Conquerour was before Rich. the 3. Shakespeare's name William. (Mr. Curle.)" (British Library, MS. Harley 5353).

1592 Groats-Worth of Wit a pamphlet by Robert Greene, has an attack on Shakespeare: "for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a country".

This criticism was placed with the Stationers' Registrar on 20th September, 1592.

Tiger's heart wrapped in a Player's hide" is an allusion to the following line:

O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide! from Henry VI, part 3 (1.4.137)

December 1592, three months after the death of Robert Greene, his publisher and printer, Henry Chettle issued a public apology for the 'Groatsworth of Wit' and to the "Upstart Crow",

17th and 18th May 1603, two identically worded warrants were written for letters patent authorizing "William Shakespeare...and the rest of their Associates freely to use and exercise the Arte and faculty of playinge Comedies Tragedies histories Enterludes moralls pastoralls Stageplaies and suche others like as theie have already studied or hereafter shall use or studie aswell for the recreation of our lovinge Subjectes as for our Solace and pleasure when wee shall thincke good to see them duringe our pleasure...".

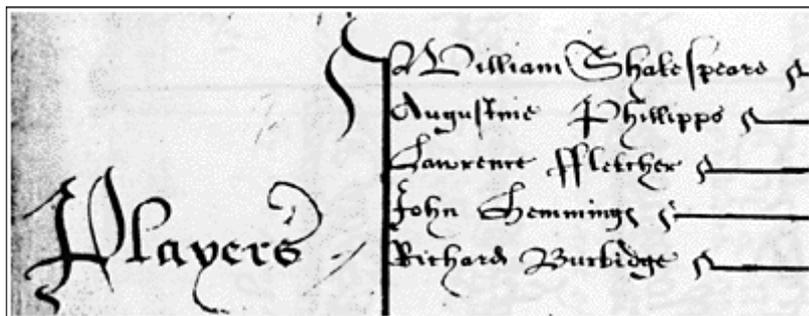
(Public Record Office, Privy Seal Office, Warrants for the Privy Seal, P.S.O. 2/22; Chancery, Warrants for the Great Seal, C. 82/1690.)

On 15th March 1604, the account of Sir George Home, Master of the Great Wardrobe, lists the names of "Players" who were given four yards of red cloth apiece for the investiture of King James in London.

They are "William Shakespeare, Augustine Phillipps, Lawrence Fletcher, John Hemmings, Richard Burbidge, William Slye, Robert Armyn, Henry Cundell, and Richard

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Cowley." Here Shakespeare appears first among his fellows.



On 24th May 1604 The royal patent names the following players, in this order: Lawrence Fletcher, William Shakespeare, Richard Burbage, Augustine Phillips, John Heminges, Henry Condell, William Sly, Robert Armin, Richard Cowley, "and the rest of their associates...".

(This is the same as on 19th May 1603.)

William Drummond, alias Drummond of Hawthornden (1585-1649), was a reader and collector of poems and play quartos (among other books).

He recorded his reading of Shakespeare for the year 1606.

In 1611 Drummond compiled a list of the books in his library, attributing both "Venus & Adon." and "the rap of Lucrece" to "Schaksp". He made a major donation of books to the University of Edinburgh, the list of his bequests was printed in 1627.

Books from Drummond's library which survive today in the Edinburgh University Library include two Shakespeare quartos:

Love's Labors Lost (1598)

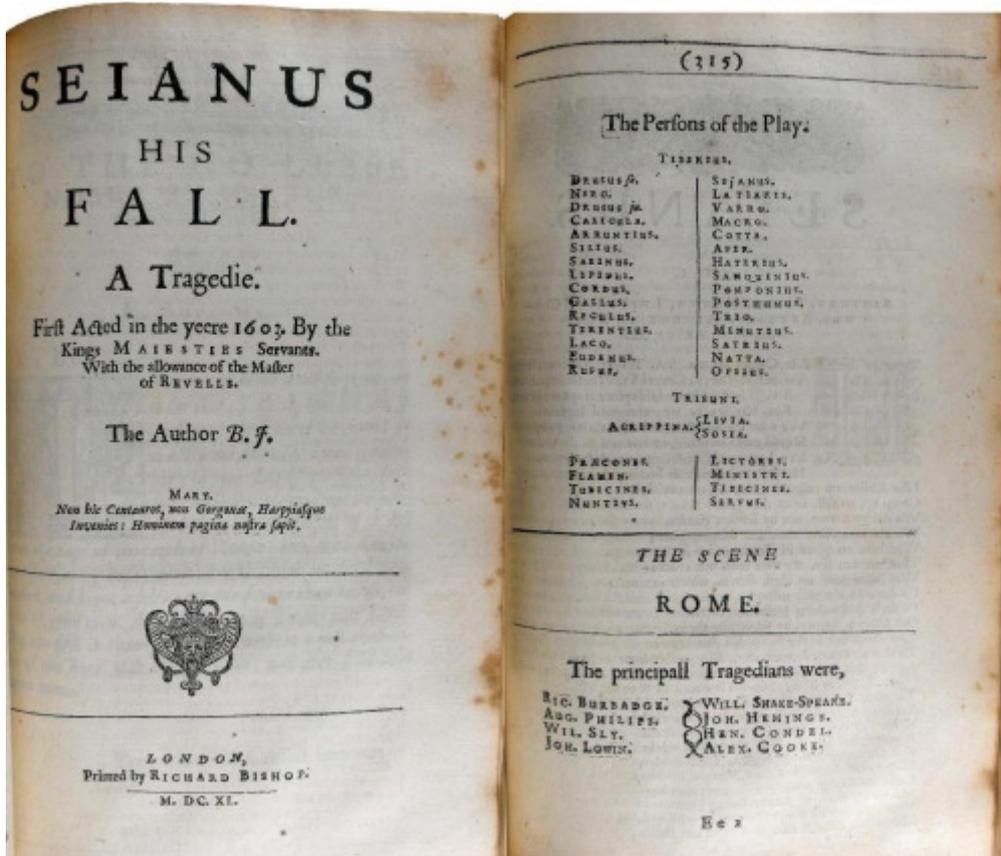
Romeo and Juliet (1599)

No author is named on the title-page of this quarto of Romeo and Juliet, so Drummond supplied the name in his own hand:

Wil. Sha.

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The 1616 Folio of Ben Jonson's Works contains cast lists for his plays.
The cast list for Jonson's *Seianus his Fall* performed in 1603 includes Will Shake-Speare



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The First Folio includes William Shakespeare in names of principal actors

