

# Regional Identity in the Theatre, 1860-1900: Exploring the Rise of Regional Repertoire Companies and Their Impact on British Drama

The period from 1860 to 1900 saw a significant growth in the number of regional theatre companies in Britain. These companies were often based in provincial towns and cities, and they played an important role in the development of British drama. They provided a platform for new plays and playwrights, and they helped to raise the standards of theatre production outside of London.



## The Politics of the Pantomime: Regional Identity in the Theatre 1860-1900: Regional Identity in the Theatre

1860–1900 by Mark Bradbeer

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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There were a number of factors that led to the growth of regional theatre companies during this period. One factor was the increasing availability of

leisure time for working-class people. As a result of the Industrial Revolution, working hours were reduced and wages increased. This gave people more time and money to spend on leisure activities, including theatre.

Another factor that contributed to the growth of regional theatre companies was the development of the railway network. This made it easier for actors and companies to travel to different parts of the country, and it also made it possible for audiences to travel to see performances in other towns and cities.

Regional theatre companies faced a number of challenges. One challenge was the competition from London theatres. London was the center of the British theatre industry, and it attracted the best actors, playwrights, and directors. Regional theatre companies often had to compete with touring companies from London, and they sometimes had difficulty attracting audiences.

Another challenge that regional theatre companies faced was the lack of funding. These companies were often dependent on ticket sales for their income, and they sometimes struggled to make a profit. This made it difficult for them to invest in new productions and to hire the best actors and directors.

Despite the challenges they faced, regional theatre companies played an important role in the development of British drama. They provided a platform for new plays and playwrights, and they helped to raise the standards of theatre production outside of London. They also helped to

create a sense of regional identity, and they contributed to the development of a distinctively British theatre culture.

## **Case Studies**

The following are some case studies of specific regional theatre companies that were active during the period 1860 to 1900:

- **The Theatre Royal, Manchester:** The Theatre Royal, Manchester, was one of the most important regional theatre companies in Britain during the 19th century. It was founded in 1840, and it quickly became a leading venue for the performance of Shakespeare and other classical plays. The Theatre Royal also played an important role in the development of new plays and playwrights. Many of the leading playwrights of the Victorian era, including W.S. Gilbert, Arthur Wing Pinero, and Oscar Wilde, had their plays premiered at the Theatre Royal, Manchester.
- **The Liverpool Playhouse:** The Liverpool Playhouse was founded in 1866, and it quickly became one of the leading regional theatre companies in Britain. The Playhouse was known for its innovative productions of Shakespeare and other classical plays, as well as for its commitment to new plays and playwrights. The Playhouse also played an important role in the development of British music hall and variety theatre.
- **The Birmingham Repertory Theatre:** The Birmingham Repertory Theatre was founded in 1913, and it quickly became one of the leading regional theatre companies in Britain. The Rep was known for its commitment to new plays and playwrights, and it produced many of

the leading plays of the 20th century. The Rep also played an important role in the development of British theatre design.

These are just a few examples of the many regional theatre companies that were active in Britain during the period 1860 to 1900. These companies played an important role in the development of British drama, and they continue to play a vital role in the British theatre landscape today.

The growth of regional theatre companies in Britain during the period 1860 to 1900 was a significant development in the history of British drama. These companies provided a platform for new plays and playwrights, and they helped to raise the standards of theatre production outside of London. They also helped to create a sense of regional identity, and they contributed to the development of a distinctively British theatre culture.



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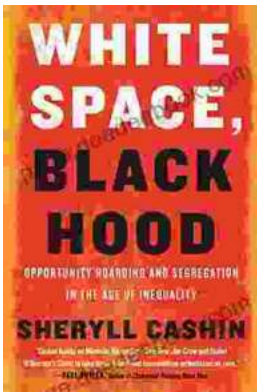
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