18TH CENTURY

THEATRE (EUROPE)
BACKGROUND

- International trade
- Move away from wool to other other fabrics (cotton, silk)
- Textile industry- boom in looms
- Wars- Spanish Succession, Austrian Succession, Seven Years’ War, French and Indian War
- Growth in trade- colonist powers - profit (England, France, Spain, etc.)
- Developments in learning and philosophy
- Political thought- Rousseau’s The Social Contract
THE ARTS

- late 17th century, early 18th century characterized by Baroque style

- an emerging middle class

- late 18th century - Rococo period - leading to Romanticism

- emergence of the modern director
DIDIER DIDEROT

Dramatist


devops a form called “drame” or drama

form that deviates from “neoclassical” ideas

Middle-class Tragedy

Middle-class Morality - rewarding the virtuous, punishing the wicked

Pitted good against evil
PLAYWRIGHTS

- George Lillo - *The London Merchant*

- Denis Diderot - playwright & theorist - *Discourse on Dramatic Poetry, The Paradox of Acting, Encyclopedia*
DIDEROT

- theory of acting: an audience is more affected by an actor using “craft” than by the actor feeling the emotions of the character

- concept of a new genre: that focused on the middle class, domestic situations, combining comedy and serious elements

- concept of a 4th wall
BALLAD
OPERA
COMIC OPERA

ENGLISH DEVELOPMENTS
BALLAD OPERA

- no sung dialogue
- spoken dialogue alternated with songs set to popular melodies
- characters drawn from the lower class (Beggar’s Opera)
- social & political satires
COMIC OPERA
opéra comique

- developed in France (originally)
- from pantomimes
- in response to monopoly of form by Comédie Française and the Opéra
- characters from commedia dell’arte
- started out similar to Ballad Opera (satire)- eventually- became more sentimental- possibly origin of French Melodrama
SENTIMENTAL COMEDY

- popular form in England - 18th century
- still produced today
- similar to Restoration Comedy
- differs as it reaffirms middle-class morality
- similar form in France - called Comédie Larmoyante (tearful comedy)
RICHARD BRINSLEY SHERIDAN

- best-known writer of Sentimental Comedy
- writer (playwright), theatre manager, politician
- born in Ireland, raised in London—his father was an actor
- *School For Scandal* (1777)
- witty, ridicule of follies of society
SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

- written for Drury Lane (Theatre)
- recognizable character types
- comic love intrigues
- two brothers: Joseph Surface - a scheming hypocrite, Charles Surface - good-hearted, financially extravagant
- both brothers court Maria - wealthy ward of Sir Peter Teazle
- Charles truly loves Maria, Joseph tries to seduce Sir Peter Teazle’s young wife
- Other characters - Sir Benjamin Backbite, Crabtree, Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candor
PLOT

- Sir Oliver Surface (Uncle of Joseph and Charles) returns from India to test which nephew is worthy of his fortune

- Charles is proved to be worthy, Joseph is not

- Good characters are rewarded, unworthy or wicked are punished
THEATRE & GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

- England, France, independent states in Germany
RESTRICTIONS, REGULATIONS, LICENSES

- in England - restrictions back to Elizabeth I - who restricted the subject matter
- licenses necessary for theatrical companies, plays
- 1737 - Parliament - Licensing Act - restricted Theatre to Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres, requiring licensing for all plays
- unlicensed theatres/performances were “coupled” with other services... as a way around the law
- theatrical popular entertainment - not regulated - another loophole
COVENT GARDEN

- opened December 7, 1732
- presented entertainment: tumblers, pantomimes with animals, contortionists, revivals of old plays
- licensed to present legitimate drama
- still a theatre today- major renovations/expansion in 1998-1999
FRENCH THEATRE RESTRICTIONS

❖ France’s legitimate theatre: Comédie Française, Opéra, Comédie Italiennne

❖ unofficial theatre- Boulevard Theatres

❖ many types of musical theatre/entertainment- to get around “monopolies” given by government

❖ All government restrictions on theatre lifted during the French Revolution (1791)
The School For Scandal (1777)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lBbSIqQLzYw