

THE BUSINESS OF ENGLISH RESTORATION THEATRE, 1660–1700

Deborah C. Payne's groundbreaking study traces the historical origins of a dilemma still bedeviling theatre companies: how to reconcile audience demand for novelty with profitability. As a solution, English acting companies in 1660 adopted an unprecedented theatrical duopoly. Implicit in its economic logic were scarcity, prestige, and innovation: attributes that, it was hoped, would generate wealth and exclusivity. Changes to playhouse architecture, stagecraft, dramatic repertory, and company practices were undertaken to create this new, upmarket theatre of "great expences." So powerful was the promise of the duopoly and so enthralling the wholesale transformation of the theatrical marketplace that management – despite dwindling box office receipts – resisted change for thirty-five years. Drawing upon network and behavioral economic theory, Professor Payne shows why the acting companies clung to an economic model inimical to their self-interest. Original archival research further bolsters this radically new perspective on an exciting and crucial period in English theatre. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS



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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009398213

DOI: [10.1017/9781009398244](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009398244)

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI [10.1017/9781009398244](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009398244)

First published 2024

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Payne, Deborah C., author.

TITLE: The business of English Restoration theatre, 1660–1700 / Deborah C. Payne,
American University, Washington DC.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge ; New York : Cambridge University Press, 2024. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2023039721 | ISBN 9781009398213 (hardback) |
ISBN 9781009398244 (ebook)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Theater – Production and direction – England – History – 17th
century. | Theater and society – England – History – 17th century.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC PN2592.I3.P76 .P36 2024 | DDC 792.09409032–dc23/eng/20231102
LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2023039721>

ISBN 978-1-009-39821-3 Hardback

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