

62 Henri Misson describes the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1698

Henri Misson: *Memoirs and observations in his travels over England*, translated by John Ozell (London: D. Browne, 1719), pp. 219–20

There are two theatres at London (a third is lately opened), one large and handsome, where they sometimes act operas and sometimes plays; the other something smaller, which is only for plays. The pit is an amphitheatre,¹ filled with benches without backboards and adorned and covered with green cloth. Men of quality, particularly the younger sort, some ladies of reputation and virtue, and abundance of damsels that hunt for prey, sit all together in this place, higgledy-piggledy, chatter, toy, play, hear, hear not. Farther up, against the wall, under the first gallery and just opposite to the stage, rises another amphitheatre, which is taken up by persons of the best quality, among whom are generally very few men. The galleries, whereof there are only two rows, are filled with none but ordinary people, particularly the upper one.

¹ The use of the word amphitheatre in French does not necessarily imply a semi-circular shape. In the French theatre of the period it was used to describe either a standing pit or a space of tiered seating behind the front boxes.