



BRITISH THEATRE

Royal Mail First Day Cover



Mr D Bertenshaw



BRITISH THEATRE

Since the Middle Ages companies of players used to perform outdoors on trestle stages or in the homes of patrons. In 1576 James Burbage founded London's first permanent public playhouse, The Theatre.

In 1982 the story of British theatre continues with the opening of the Barbican Centre: permanent London home for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the London Symphony Orchestra.

The plays of Shakespeare had continued to draw audiences since Elizabethan times but it was not until 1877 that the foundation stone was laid for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon which opened in 1879. In 1960 the company took the Aldwych as its London headquarters and, honoured by the Queen in 1961, the Royal Shakespeare Company is now one of the best-known in the world.

The first Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, was built in 1732, as a playhouse, sharing the great names of the British stage with Drury Lane. In 1945 it was decided to make the present building, opened in 1858, the national home of ballet and opera. Wales created its National Opera in 1948 followed by the Scottish Opera in 1962. The Sadler's Wells opera became the English National Opera at the London Coliseum in 1974.

The first 'real pantomime' which was a great success and included the name Harlequin in the title was the 'Necromancer, or Harlequin Doctor Faustus', performed at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, December 1723.

Suzanne Wolstenholme

The subject of Historical Events was chosen by the Conference of European Postal Administrations as the

theme for the 1982 'Europa' stamps, and these stamps represent the interpretation of this theme by the British Post Office. The CEPT symbol is incorporated in this design.

The stamps were designed by Adrian George, printed in photogravure on unwatermarked phosphor coated paper by Harrison and Sons (High Wycombe) Limited. Format vertical: size 30 x 41mm, perforations 14 x 15, number per sheet 100, gum PVA Dextrin.

The first day cover was designed by Keith Bassford.

Further details about British postage stamps and philatelic facilities can be obtained from the British Post Office Philatelic Bureau, 20 Brandon Street, Edinburgh EH3 5TT.