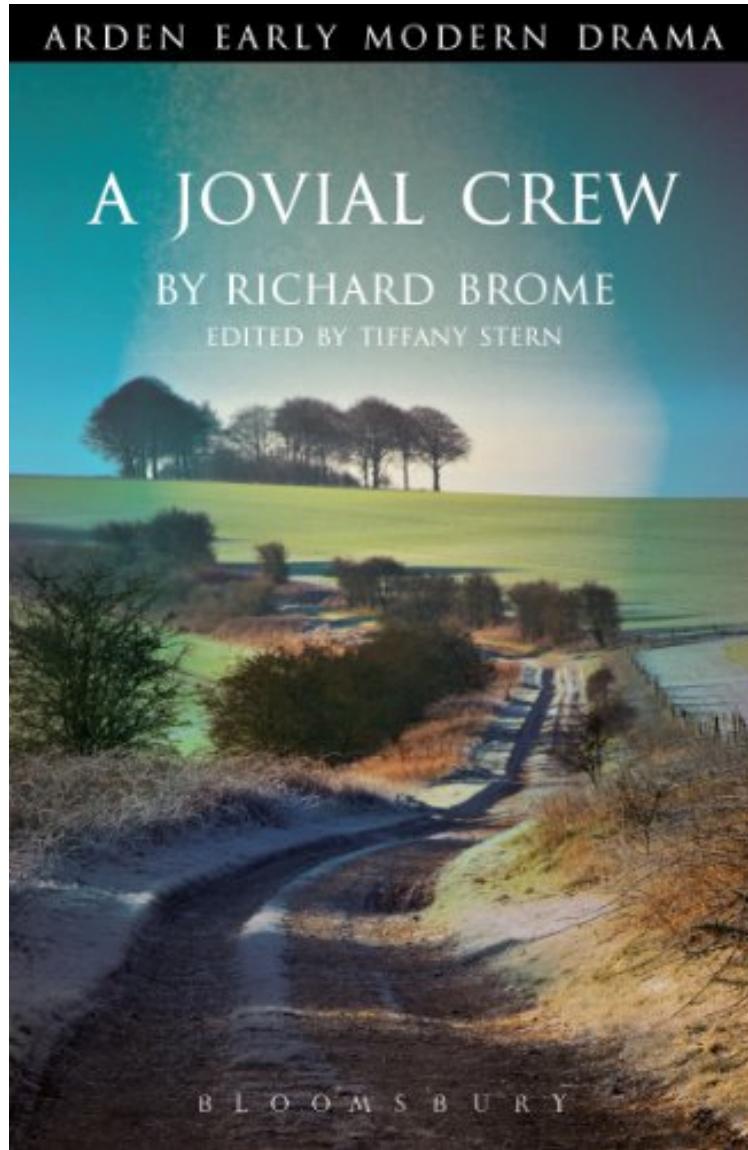


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## A Jovial Crew (Arden Early Modern Drama)

*Richard Brome*

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**Richard Brome : A Jovial Crew (Arden Early Modern Drama)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Jovial Crew (Arden Early Modern Drama):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Charming play, well annotated; good Kindle editionBy James M. RawleyThis is a charming play, which happens to be the last play produced before the Puritans closed the theaters in 1642 and thereby also ended the whole "Elizabethan" period, which included Jacobean plays written under King James, like Shakespeare's King Lear and Othello, and Carolinian plays, written under King Charles, like this one. It's a musical comedy, with many delightful songs. The heroes and heroines, and there are lots of both, think that beggars

lead the best lives: they don't have to work, roam merrily through the fields, beg a meal when they need to, and otherwise take all their time off and just have fun. So the heroes and heroines, middle class kids all, decide to become beggars themselves. They immediately find out it's not such a good life after all. Some people hit them with sticks instead of giving them money, and others refuse to let them sleep in their barns, which forces them into the frozen open air. What disillusionment! And now let's have a dance. Fortunately, the father of the principal faux beggar is a very sweet guy named Oldrents. As Oldrent's friend Hearty asks him: Do you not liveFree, out of law or grieving any man? Are you not th'only rich man lives unenvied? Have you not all the praises of the richAnd prayers of the poor? Did ever anyServant or hireling, neighbor, kindred, curse you, Or wish one minute shortened of your life? Have you one grudging tenant? Will they not allFight for you? Do they not teach their children, And make 'em, too, pray for you morn and evening, And in their graces too, as duly asFor King and realm? ... Your great love and bountyProcures from heaven those inspirations in 'em. ... Where'er you pass, "Heaven bless our landlord, Oldrents." Oldrents at last not only forgives his children and servants for wandering off, but gives lots of money, a good living, to some of the beggars the kids have run into on the way. It seems that Oldrent's grandfather tricked them out of money years ago, and forced them to beg -- so now the grandson can help them out too, along with his own children. If that's not charmingly sentimental, what is? And what a treat to read what is in a way the very last specimen of the theater that produced Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Ben Jonson. Brome was Ben Jonson's apprentice -- and least Ben Jonson said he was, even after the period when Brome's plays became more successful than Jonson's. This new Arden edition has excellent notes, a good introduction, and so on: the usual expert Arden thing. A reader couldn't do better. The Kindle version, in landscape, is beautiful: good line numbering with no margin problems, and excellent hyperlinked notes. There's a slight tendency to restart unexpectedly, but it's forgivable considering the complexity of the electronic presentation. Reading this play on a Kindle is like traveling through time and ending up a happy beggar in a beautiful country. 1 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Are they kidding? By MACLEARA Jovial Crew???? It's no wonder there are no reviews here. I have taken two courses in Renaissance and Jacobean drama and have taught it in college and have never heard of this play. If they're going to publish a play from this time - why not Middleton's "The Changeling"? Why not Marston's "The Dutch Courtesan"? Why not Jonson's "Volpone"? What of Tourneur's "The Revenger's Tragedy"? Who's minding the store there at Arden????

A Jovial Crew, or the Merry Beggars, is a comedy about four noble lovers who join the beggar community for a pastoral life of dance and song. Or is it? Whilst maintaining its unremitting good humour, A Jovial Crew shows that the literary depiction of beggar life, and real beggar life, are profoundly different. Daily aspects of life in the beggar world – poverty, dirt, licentiousness – come as a surprise to the well-born, who are ultimately led to question their own values. The last production mounted before theatres were closed for the English Civil War, A Jovial Crew's exploration of class, commonwealth, kinship and kingship shows an intense engagement with contemporary politics. This edition, with dedicated sections on music and language in the play, argues that A Jovial Crew also offers a nostalgic farewell to English theatre. It explores Brome's attitude to performance and print, and follows A Jovial Crew from its first, Caroline staging, to its later manifestations as a Restoration comedy, an eighteenth-century opera, and a twentieth-century proto-Marxist tragicomedy.

The general sense one has from this Arden edition is that it finally refocuses and steadies a work that has been in flux from the moment it was written. Brome himself even included updates and rewrites to include more contemporary allusions when the play was published ten years later. Which isn't to say that Brome has fallen into complete obscurity ... [I]n producing this handsome edition, another punctuation mark in theatrical history is emphasised and how lucky we were that it was a comma rather than a full stop. -- Stuart Ian Burns The Hamlet Weblog About the Author Richard Brome (c.1590-1653) was an English dramatist of the Caroline era who wrote for all the major acting companies and theatres. His career as a playwright was put on hold during one of the longest periods of theatre closure. When theatres reopened during the Restoration, a handful of Brome's plays were performed and republished, and the most successful of these was A Jovial Crew. Tiffany Stern is Professor of Early Modern Drama and Fellow of University College at the University of Oxford, UK.