

A BELL SHAKESPEARE AND STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA CO-PRODUCTION



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THE COMEDY OF ERRORS ONLINE LEARNING PACK

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ABOUT BELL SHAKESPEARE

“We know what we are, but know not what we may be.”

Hamlet (Act 4, Scene 5)

Since day one of Bell Shakespeare, education and learning have been at the core of our activities, hand in hand with everything we do. We are proud to present Australian theatre’s most comprehensive and wide reaching education programme, allowing students and teachers, young and not-so-young, across this great country, to experience Shakespeare the way it was meant to be experienced.

In 2013 our new troupe of Players will take to the road, touring the country to bring *Macbeth: Undone* and the brand new *Such Sweet Sorrow* to life, performing *Actors At Work* in your school. In Sydney and Melbourne Peter will direct Shakespeare’s classic romantic comedy *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. We’ll tour the country with Student Masterclasses, teacher Professional Learning and Artists in Residence. We’ll once again offer regional scholarships for students and teachers and a Regional Access Programme for our national tour of *The Comedy Of Errors*.

On our mainstage we will explore family – historically, tragically and comedically. We start the year with one of John’s favourite plays, *Henry 4*. John will direct and play the lord of misrule, Falstaff. We’ll then delve into love, betrayal, humiliation, despair and death in Racine’s masterpiece, *Phèdre*, directed by Peter. Finally, we will explore identity, madness and metamorphosis in *The Comedy Of Errors*.

Our 23rd year delivers one of the most rich and diverse seasons yet. Spanning the full spectrum, there is truly something to inspire all ages. We look forward to sharing it with you.

John Bell AO and Peter Evans
Artistic Directors

Bell Shakespeare highly values its partnerships with all the organisations that support our Learning Programme, including Foxtel; BHP Billiton; Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations; J.P. Morgan; Wesfarmers Arts; Macquarie Group Foundation; Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation; Pratt Foundation; Ian Potter Foundation; Scully Fund; Collier Charitable Fund; Australia Council for the Arts; Playing Australia; Arts NSW and Arts SA.

Bell Shakespeare Learning Initiatives 2012 to 2015 are supported by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.

ABOUT STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

State Theatre Company of South Australia is the state's flagship professional theatre company performing an annual season of classic and contemporary Australian and international theatre works at its main performance home – the Dunstan Playhouse. The Company is a major community and cultural resource for all South Australians and is vital to artistic life in the state.

State Theatre Company also plays an important role in the bigger picture of the Australian theatre scene, contributing touring productions and providing employment and career opportunities for artists and technical and administrative staff. We are committed to the development of new works for the stage and to the development of South Australian artists through our creative fellowship programs.

The date of establishment as the state theatre company dates to the State Theatre Company of South Australia Act of 1972, an initiative of Don Dunstan. Throughout our 40 year history, the Company has played a pivotal role in the careers of many of Australia's leading actors, writers and directors, attracting artists of the calibre of Neil Armfield, Ruth Cracknell, Judy Davis, Gale Edwards, Mel Gibson, Garry McDonald, Geoffrey Rush, Jim Sharman, Hugo Weaving, Jacki Weaver and John Wood.

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS Online Learning Pack contributors: Paul Reichstein (Resident Teaching Artist, Bell Shakespeare), Joanna Erskine (Head of Education, Bell Shakespeare).

COMPANY LIST

CAST

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE | Nathan O'Keefe |
| ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS | Septimus Caton |
| DROMIO OF SYRACUSE | Renato Musolino |
| DROMIO OF EPHEBUS | Hazem Shammass |
| ADRIANA | Elena Carapetis |
| LUCIANA | Jude Henshall |
| EGEON / DR PINCH | Eugene Gilfedder |
| DUKE / BALTHASAR | Anthony Taufa |
| ANGELO | Demitrios Sirilas |
| COURTESAN / EMELIA | Suzannah McDonald |

CREATIVES

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| DIRECTOR | Imara Savage |
| DESIGNER | Pip Runciman |
| LIGHTING DESIGNER | Mark Pennington |
| COMPOSER & SOUND DESIGNER | David Heinrich |
| PHYSICAL COMEDY CONSULTANT | Scott Witt |
| ASSISTANT DIRECTOR | Nescha Jelk |

CREW

| | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| COMPANY STAGE MANAGER | Kelly Ukena |
| DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER | Bridget Samuel |
| ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER | Kat Braun |
| HEAD ELECTRICIAN | Daniel Voss |
| HEAD MECHANIST | Daniel Murtagh |
| HEAD OF AUDIO | Andrew Howard |
| STAGING MENTOREE | Matthew Skerman |
| SET BUILT BY | STCSA Workshop |
| COSTUMES MADE BY | STCSA Costume |
| LIGHTING SUPPLIED BY | Chameleon Touring |

SYNOPSIS

Egeon, a merchant of Syracuse, and his wife, Emilia, have twin boys, both called Antipholus. They adopt another set of twin boys, both called Dromio, to serve their sons.

In a shipwreck, Egeon and one of his sons and servant are separated from his wife and the other Antipholus and Dromio.

Years later, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse set out to find their twin brothers who they have heard live in Ephesus. Anxious for their safety, Egeon follows them. All three arrive in Ephesus on the same day, but Egeon is arrested because Ephesus and Syracuse are at war. He has one day to raise the fine of 1,000 marks or he will be executed under Ephesian law.

Egeon desperately seeks his son, who is in turn desperately seeking his twin. Given there are two sets of twins in town, all sorts of confusions take place; but happily, things are sorted out at last, capped by the surprise appearance of Emilia, who has been hidden in Ephesus all this time.

HISTORICAL NOTE AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Comedy of Errors is one of Shakespeare's earliest works, written around the same time as *Richard III* and *The Taming of the Shrew*, and just before *Romeo and Juliet*. The first known performance is recorded to have taken place at Gray's Inn on the 28th of December 1594. No print version of the play exists before the First Folio of 1623.

The Roman playwright Plautus and his play *Menaechmi* are the main sources of Shakespeare's *The Comedy Of Errors*. Although not translated into English until 1595, it is widely assumed that Shakespeare had read the play in its original Latin because the similarities between Shakespeare's comedy and the Plautus piece are striking.

The main focus in Plautus' story is the discomfiting experience of the native twin, whereas Shakespeare chooses to concentrate on the newcomer, the Syracusan Antipholus. There are several references to Ephesus (the setting for Shakespeare's play) in the Bible. These include *Acts* 19:13–29, which refers to witchcraft and sorcery, and *Ephesians* 5:22–33, in which St. Paul discusses one of the play's main themes – marriage. In true Shakespearean style, a second set of twins – the Dromios – are introduced into the play, building further the possibilities of mistaken identities. The Dromio characters are taken from another play of Plautus, *Amphitruo*, a classical tragicomedy of love and deceit.

Perhaps Shakespeare's most important dramatic addition to the story is the father of the Antipholi, Egeon. The only two appearances of Egeon – first at the beginning of the play, then again at the end – allow Shakespeare to bookend the day from sunrise to sunset. Furthermore, Shakespeare uses Egeon at the opening of the play to create a sense of urgency and foreboding – Egeon will be killed at sundown if no one can pay his ransom. He also helps instil a sense of loss and grief into the story from the onset. The characters are in a state of struggle from the opening scene.

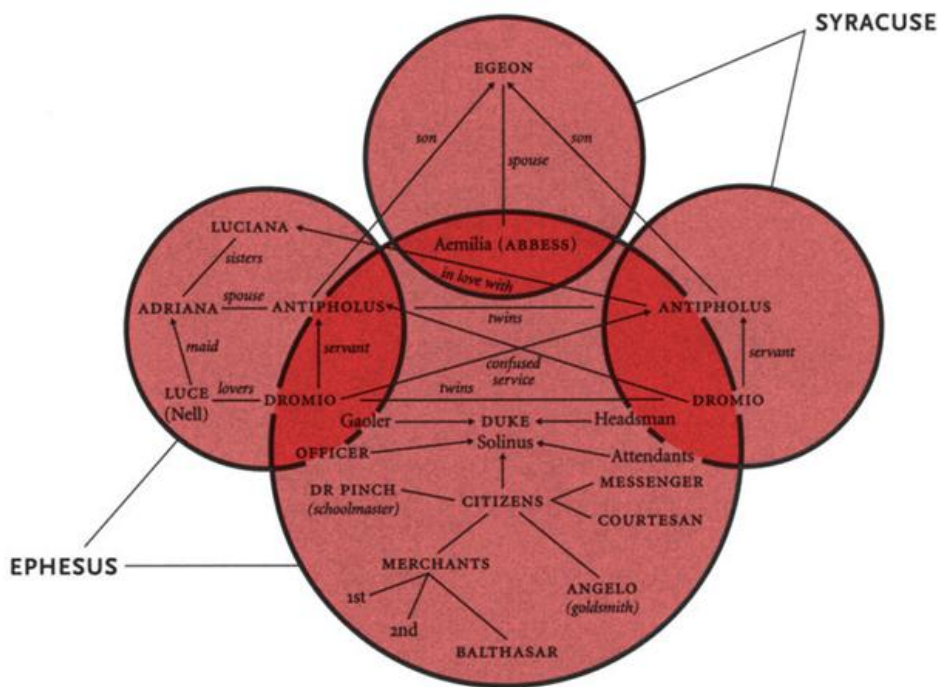
Regarding *The Comedy Of Errors*, Anne Barton, in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, notes that "Shakespeare seems to be wedded to the idea that happy endings must, to carry conviction, be won from a serious confrontation with morality, violence, and time" (p. 113).

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE

Shakespeare's plays were written in verse and prose. Most plays contain a mixture of both, although his early plays, including *The Comedy of Errors*, are written almost entirely in verse. Shakespeare used iambic pentameter as the basis for his verse. He didn't invent the form, but was certainly a master of it. Iambic pentameter is a rhythmic pattern of verse that closely resembles natural speech. The *iamb* is a unit of poetry containing two syllables – the first unstressed, the second stressed. Examples of iambic words are: today; forget; seduce; believe. *The Comedy of Errors*, like most of Shakespeare's early plays, is characterised by a strict adherence to regular iambic pentameter, with the occasional scene containing longer lines of verse.

The style of Shakespeare's mid-career plays and his later works stray from the path of strict iambic pentameter. He becomes much more creative and free in his writing, constantly switching between verse and prose, creating more challenging scripts for his actors. From his later plays we get the immortal characters of King Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth and Iago, who rely heavily on sophisticated verse to establish themselves as psychologically complex and challenging to readers, audience and actors alike.

CHARACTERS



Solinus, DUKE of Ephesus

EGEON, a merchant of Syracuse

Emilia, Lady ABBESS at Ephesus, and Egeon's wife

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESEUS (twin brother, son of EGEON and EMILIA)

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE (twin brother, son of EGEON and EMILIA)

DROMIO OF EPHESEUS (twin brother, bondsmen to the ANTIPHOLUS twins)

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE (twin brother, bondsmen to the ANTIPHOLUS twins)

ADRIANA, wife of Antipholus of Ephesus

LUCIANA, her sister

BALTHASAR, a merchant

ANGELO, a goldsmith

DOCTOR PINCH, a schoolmaster

FIRST MERCHANT

AN OFFICER

A COURTESAN

A MESSENGER

KEY CHARACTER PROFILES

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE

After being separated from his twin brother at birth, Antipholus of Syracuse sets sail at the age of 18 in search of his lost sibling. He is Egeon's son, a cautious traveller, wary of the possibility of magic and the supernatural and suspicious of the inhabitants of Ephesus, fearing they are all sorcerers. Attended on by his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, he has been searching for his brother for seven years. His disorientation escalates as he tries to understand the strange behaviour of the Ephesians. Is their accommodating nature and the gifts they bestow upon him to be trusted, or is he correct in suspecting that supernatural powers are at work?

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS

Antipholus of Ephesus is a respected merchant and the twin brother of Antipholus of Syracuse. Never knowing his father and brought to Ephesus by the former Duke Menaphon, Antipholus of Ephesus was initially raised in Corinth. Antipholus is married to Adriana and is the head of a large and bustling household. He is a favourite of the current Duke Solinus, and in contrast to his travelling twin he comes across as a much more settled, confident and established citizen. In the confusion and chaos of mistaken identities he has much to lose, given his reputation is one of honour and respect. Also followed and waited upon by a Dromio (this one of Ephesus) he has a tendency towards bad-tempered behaviour, often beating upon his servant in moments of rage.

DRAMIO OF SYRACUSE

Dromio of Syracuse is Antipholus of Syracuse's servant, known as a quick-witted fellow who maintains a good relationship with his master. An occasional beating takes place at the hands of Antipholus of Syracuse, but their bond is often expressed in moments of shared wit and impressive repartee. Throughout the story Dromio maintains a good-hearted nature, despite regular mistreatment at the hands of his master.

DRAMIO OF EPHEBUS

Dromio of Ephesus is Antipholus of Ephesus's servant. Adriana, the wife of Dromio's master, Antipholus, dishes out regular beatings, which he endures with patience, never complaining and making fearless escapes from time to time if the abuse gets too much. Although patient, Dromio is confused by the meaning behind the harsh treatment he receives and spends a lot of his time flummoxed by the many misunderstandings of the story in which he plays a part. Dromio of Ephesus is the twin brother of Dromio of Syracuse and both he and his sibling offer much to Shakespeare's exploration of mistaken identities, family and ultimate reunion.

EGEON

Egeon is at the heart of the play's representation of grief, loss and family. As the old man of Syracuse, he bookends the story, giving a sense of passing time. He leads a challenged life, having lost both his wife and one of his sons, Antipholus of Ephesus, to a storm. When he sneaks into the city to seek out his son, Egeon is recognised as a Syracusan and sentenced to death for crossing the border of Ephesus. He pleads with Duke Solinus, who allows him to roam the town in order to find someone to pay a suitable ransom by sundown in order to spare his life. Egeon is initially depressed, and his tales of woe touch the Ephesian ruler. But unbeknownst to Egeon, his searches for lost family members will soon prove fruitful as both of his twins are present in the town as well as his long lost wife, Emelia, who is now the Abbess of Ephesus.

ADRIANA

Adriana is presented in the play as a proto-feminist, angered that her husband – Antipholus of Ephesus – is paying attention to another woman as well as being generally frustrated by the inequality of gender politics in Ephesus: men are never as committed to relationships as woman and ultimately enjoy more social freedom. She feels wronged by her husband's desertions, but maintains that his interactions with the Courtesan are honest and respectable. She has a different perspective on gender roles than her sister, Luciana, and sees her sister as ill-informed and passive. Adriana is of wealthy birth and married her husband only at the Duke's entreaty. She is quick-tempered, somewhat tempestuous and beats her servants when they step out of line.

LUCIANA

In direct contrast to the beliefs of her sister, Adriana, Luciana tends to preach about the necessary subservience and patience women should offer the respective men in their lives. She dwells in Ephesus with both Adriana and Antipholus. Regardless of her seeming comfort and acceptance of what she considers a woman's place in society, she doesn't hesitate in confronting her brother-in-law or speaking harshly towards the servants.

COURTESAN

The Courtesan has a special relationship with Antipholus of Ephesus, counting him as one of her favourite clients, much to the annoyance of his wife, Adriana. She is an excellent conversationalist and has a wonderful mix of wildness and compassion, greatly pleasing to the men she encounters.

EMELIA

Emelia is the highly respected Abbess of Ephesus. Years ago she was shipwrecked and lost her husband as well as her twin sons. She offers yet another perspective on a woman's role in the play by commenting that wives should chide their husbands for spending time with other women, but expresses distaste for women who complain too much within their marriages.

DR PINCH

The schoolmaster Dr Pinch offers much towards the supernatural theme of the play, as a conjurer and exorcist employed by Adriana to cure the suspected madness of Antipholus of Ephesus. He is extremely lean, bearded, with deep-set eyes and a yellow cast to his face. Diagnosing both Antipholus and Dromio with supernatural possession, he states that the right cure is to have both of them tied up and left in a dark room. Antipholus and Dromio escape their imprisonment and torture Dr Pinch, setting his beard on fire then putting the flames out with filthy water.

DUKE

As the ruler of Ephesus, Solinus the Duke shows great commitment to the rules of the town, insisting that even if he wished to, he could never ignore the law. He rigidly upholds the immigration law, requiring that every Syracusan found within the boundaries of Ephesus pay a thousand marks if they are to legally travel as a merchant. He is a patron to Antipholus of Syracuse and the force behind his marriage to the rich and respected Adriana. He shows compassion and pity and acknowledges the strangeness of events unfolding in his town, linking them intelligently to Egeon's story of woe and struggle.

BALTHASAR

Balthasar is a merchant of Ephesus and a friend of the local Antipholus.

ANGELO

Angelo is a goldsmith of Syracuse who is commissioned by his friend, Antipholus of Ephesus, to create a fine gold chain. He is protective of his reputation and confused by his friend's actions, and finally convinced of Antipholus' madness.

THEMATIC CONCERNS OF THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

IDENTITY

The errors that the play's title speaks of are explicitly connected to mistaken identities. Antipholus of Syracuse perhaps faces the most pressing identity concern and feels tragically incomplete as an individual, feeling he has lost his 'other half' in the form of the twin brother he is searching for. He seeks to fill the void that he has always struggled with, hoping a reunion with his lost brother will provide a safe familial space in which he can fully know himself. The ultimate challenge he is faced with is trying to seek identity outside of his own self, looking for lost relatives who have become almost mythical in nature.

Characters in the play are so positive in knowing their own identity, but judgmental towards the identity of others, that they ignore all the hints pointing to how they're mistaken in their perceptions of those around them. The main crux of the identity concern is that this habit of being mistaken about other people forces some of the characters to question their notions of their own identity.

Relevant quotes

*So I, to find a mother and a brother,
In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself. (Act 1, Scene 2)*

In this quote Shakespeare explores the notion of personal identity being viewed through the perceptions of others. It is only partially realised by what we think of ourselves. Here Antipholus, rather than trying to assert his own identity, perhaps seeks it outside of himself.

*...he's master of my state.
What ruins are in me that can be found
By him not ruin'd? Then is he the ground
Of my defeatures. (Act 2, Scene 1)*

In a similar vein, the above quote shows just how strongly Adriana's sense of identity and her worth as a wife and a person is tied to Antipholus' perception of her.

APPEARANCES

Appearances are closely linked to other major concerns of *The Comedy Of Errors*, such as identity, isolation and family (particularly between the twins, which also lends to the heart of the play's comedy). Appearances in the story are almost always relied on to be false, allowing for the story to constantly return to mistaken identities as both a theme and narrative push behind the story's innate farcical nature. Other expressions of the nature of appearance exist in Adriana, who worries that her beauty is in obvious decline and that her husband will care less about her. Egeon also muses on appearance; deeply troubled that his grief has altered his and that perhaps his son won't recognise him in his ever-changed state of woe. The supernatural also plays on the idea of appearance as many characters attribute it to the strangeness of things in Ephesus, when really much of it has to do with the presence of two sets of twins who are yet to discover each other. Appearance is used in multiple situations in Shakespeare's story, and it is constantly the main drive behind the comedy, but it also speaks to the insecurities of the characters who face identity challenges on personal levels and who are in turn challenged by the truthfulness of what they see, often judging the people around them. At the story's resolution the characters realise that what they see is not always a truthful reflection of their respective realities and where their journeys have taken them.

Relevant quotes

EGEON

*A heavier task could not have been impos'd
Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable;
Yet, that the world may witness that my end
Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,
I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave. (Act 1, Scene 1)*

Though Egeon accepts his death sentence, he expresses great concern about being viewed as a common criminal. Though accepting of his fate, he wishes to maintain his appearance and his honour.

S. ANTIPHOLUS

*Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
Sleeping or waking, mad or well-advis'd?
Known unto these, and to myself disguis'd!
I'll say as they say, and persevere so,
And in this mist at all adventures go. (Act 2, Scene 2)*

Antipholus knows that all is not what it appears to be. There is a great divide between the reality of his situation and what he sees and hears before him. Antipholus of Syracuse decides that he will maintain the guised appearance around these strangers, even if it becomes of an act of self-deception.

THE SUPERNATURAL

The supernatural stands as the scapegoat of all that is inexplicable, implausible and lacking in reason in the play. There is no single occurrence in *The Comedy Of Errors* that cannot be explained by natural – if not somewhat bizarre – reasoning. Regardless there is a sense of distrust and fear by certain characters towards the idea of witchcraft and sorcery, which they attribute as the cause behind certain events unfolding in the way they do. In order to explain the strangeness of things, characters are quick to point the finger at the workings of fate, madness and superstitious ideas. Perhaps though, the figures in the play deemed to be somewhat supernatural are rather just as an excuse for characters to ignore the complex nature of the reality they all face, which is a chaotically woven series of events placing characters in unlikely and unexpected situations...a series of comedic errors.

Relevant quotes

S. ANTIPHOLUS

*Upon my life, by some device or other
The villain is o'erraught of all my money.
They say this town is full of cozenage;
As, nimble jugglers that deceive the eye,
Dark-working sorcerers that change the mind,
Soul-killing witches that deform the body,
Disguised cheaters, prating mountebanks,
And many such-like liberties of sin; (Act 1, Scene 2)*

This experience, expressed by Antipholus of Syracuse, highlights the idea that something is amiss in Ephesus and that sorcery and witchcraft are both at work.

S. DROMIO

O, for my beads! I cross me for sinner.

This is the fairy land. O spite of spites!

We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites.

If we obey them not, this will ensue:

They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue. (Act 2, Scene 2)

Much like his master, Dromio of Syracuse clearly invests a great belief in the supernatural forces that are often thought to be at work in Ephesus. Here he reaches for his rosary beads, feeling much less comfortable with the unseen forces than his master is.

FAMILY

The notion of family is an important thematic concern in *The Comedy Of Errors*. Many of the characters in the play seek to find a stronger sense of identity outside of their own personal experience by re-establishing blood ties with long-lost family members. A sense of family is particularly important to Egeon, Antipholus of Syracuse and Emelia, for whom losing a family unit becomes the great motivating force behind their thoughts and actions. Absence of family is the cause of the sense of isolation felt by the key players and although more often implied than explicitly articulated by individual characters, the resolution offered by Shakespeare relies mostly on the physical reunion of the broken families at the play's conclusion.

Relevant quotes

EGEON

My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,

At eighteen years became inquisitive

After his brother, and importun'd me

That his attendant-so his case was like,

Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name-

Might bear him company in the quest of him;

Whom whilst I laboured of a love to see,

I hazarded the loss of whom I lov'd. (Act 1, Scene 1)

Given that Egeon's son goes off in search of his brother, family appears to be part of his intrinsic value system. Moreover, the quest seems to be as much about finding himself as it is about locating his sibling, and perhaps through that quest for his other half he gets closer to knowing his own identity.

E. ANTIPHOLUS

I never saw my father in my life.

EGEON

But seven years since, in Syracuse, boy,

Thou know'st we parted; but perhaps, my son,

Thou sham'st to acknowledge me in misery. (Act 5, Scene 1)

Egeon has been pushed so far that initially he finds it hard to believe in even the possibility of meeting his son. In such an intense state of grief, Egeon worries that his son may not wish to recognise the father he sees before him and that perhaps for his son, love of family comes second to maintaining one's reputation.

ISOLATION

A sense of isolation felt by all characters seems to be a central concern of Shakespeare's tale. As a thematic discourse, the notion of being alone, trying to find oneself and trying to locate identity in and outside of family is perhaps the great motivation behind the character's actions. In the stories and struggles of Egeon and Antipholus of Syracuse we see isolation as the most motivating of forces and in both brothers a sense of personal identity is further challenged and confused as they search for their family members. Antipholus lacks self-knowledge and is constantly seeking something outside of himself to fill his inner void. On the other hand, Egeon is isolated from his family, which leads him to feelings of hopelessness.

Another sense of isolation exists between married couples as gender division and one's sense of place is challenged under the pressures of infidelity and unfaithfulness. The plays characters and their respective journeys are motivated by the idea that for each of them, ending isolation is the path to their ultimate happiness. This is reflected in Shakespeare's structuring of the play that begins with characters in the depths of loss and grief but ultimately leading them to happy (and comical!) resolutions in which reunions bring together lost siblings, husbands and wives. Isolation ends when people reunite and identity struggles resolve themselves.

Relevant Quotes

EGEON

*Thus have you heard me sever'd from my bliss,
That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd,
To tell sad stories of my own mishaps. (Act 1, Scene 1)*

Such a quote shows Egeon's sense of intense isolation, brought about by a suffering that is so great he ultimately embraces a death sentence. His sadness is so ingrained now that he feels his life is only prolonged in order for the telling of his own story.

S. ANTIPHOLUS

*If every one knows us, and we know none,
'Tis time, I think, to trudge, pack and be gone. (Act 3, Scene 2)*

This quote expresses the notion of being surrounded by a sea of people, yet experiencing great loneliness. Regardless of the company around him, Antipholus feels estranged from himself. Much like other questions of personal identity in the play being somewhat thwarted by mistaken identities in general, he realises that those who do know him, don't know the real him. Reality and perception are once again confused, creating a sense of isolation for Antipholus.

WOMEN AND FEMININITY

The women in *The Comedy Of Errors* have much to offer to the overall sense of the story's gender politics. There are vocal forces, expressing varied and contrasting opinions regarding relationships with men; relationships they both celebrate and suffer through. Perhaps one of their main reasons for existing in the story is to respond to the men that also inhabit the world of *The Comedy Of Errors*, making astute comments about what it is to be a woman within a marriage and within a male dominated society. Adriana is the play's most vocal of these voices, a head-strong woman often suffering at the hands of her husband's faithlessness, which in turn instils an unfortunate self-doubt. Luciana, the Courtesan, Emelia and even the kitchen maid lack the companionship of men, and they must learn how to deal with their impulsive needs in any case. The Courtesan is a woman undervalued by men in general, particularly because of her profession, but even Emelia the Abbess is confined to a life commitment to religion after her husband

Egeon was lost to her years earlier. These women don't know what to do without the men, and struggle with their actions and reckless choices. Although headstrong and somewhat independent, there exists a certain level of co-dependency within the male/female relationships featured in the play.

ADRIANA

Why should their liberty than ours be more?

LUCIANA

Because their business still lies out o' door. (Act 2, Scene 1)

Adriana expresses her distaste that men should have more freedom than women, but Luciana is perhaps more submissive, accepting that a woman's place is in the home and that this links to a feminine duty. They express two very opposing thoughts on the issue of male/female relationships and gender positioning in society and offer contrasting perspectives to the female voices in the play.

ADRIANA

Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine;

Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,

Whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,

Makes me with thy strength to communicate. (Act 2, Scene 2)

While appearing headstrong, Adriana nonetheless expresses a sense of reliance on her powerful husband, from whom she receives support. Once again, the quote above illustrates her sense of a common subordination experienced in her relationship with her husband. The image of a vine is also echoed in Psalms 128:3, but suggesting that a man should not be constrained by her wife (vine-like), but rather prosper by her company. Regardless, there is a strong sense of gender inequality in Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*.

SET AND COSTUME DESIGNS BY PIP RUNCIMAN

Diagram 1

Costume Design – “Antipholus of Syracuse”



Diagram 2

Costume Design – “Adriana”

ADRIANA



Diagram 3

Set Design

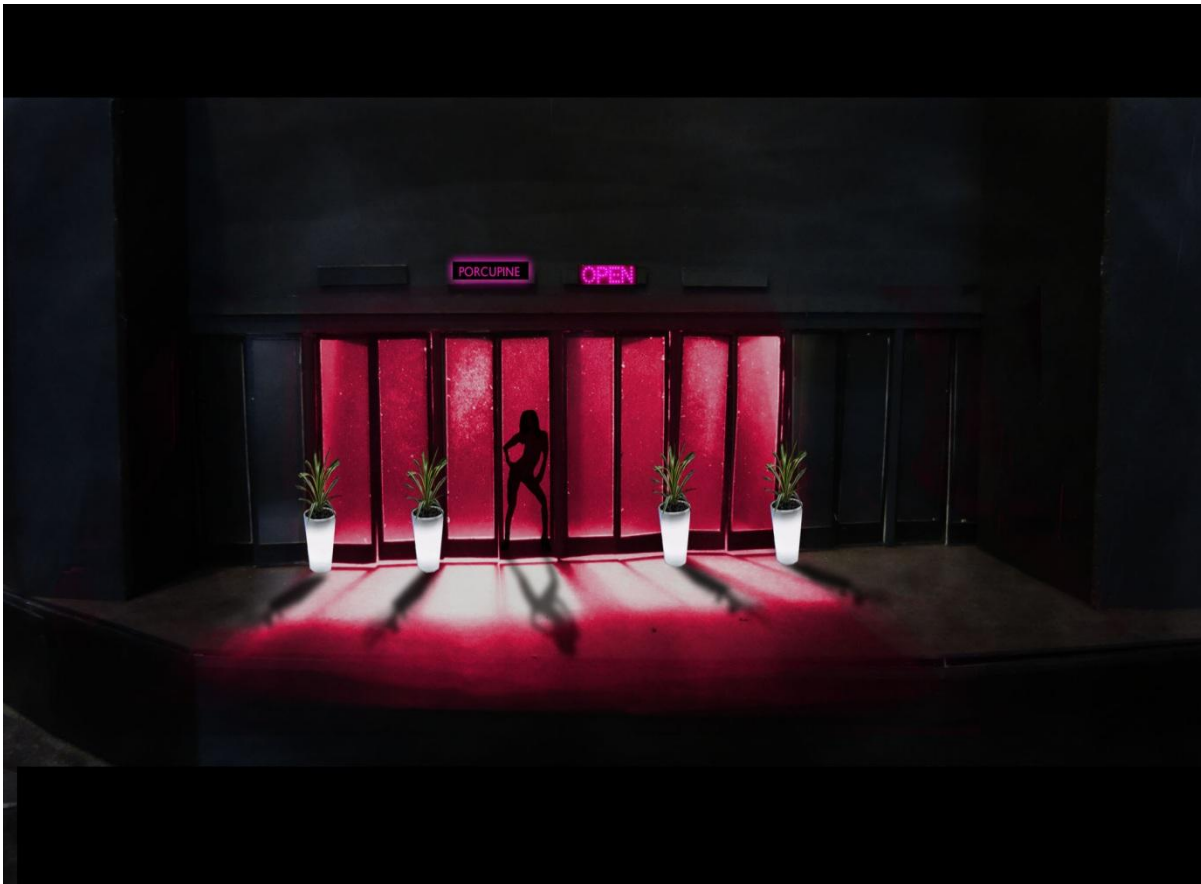


Diagram 4

Set Design

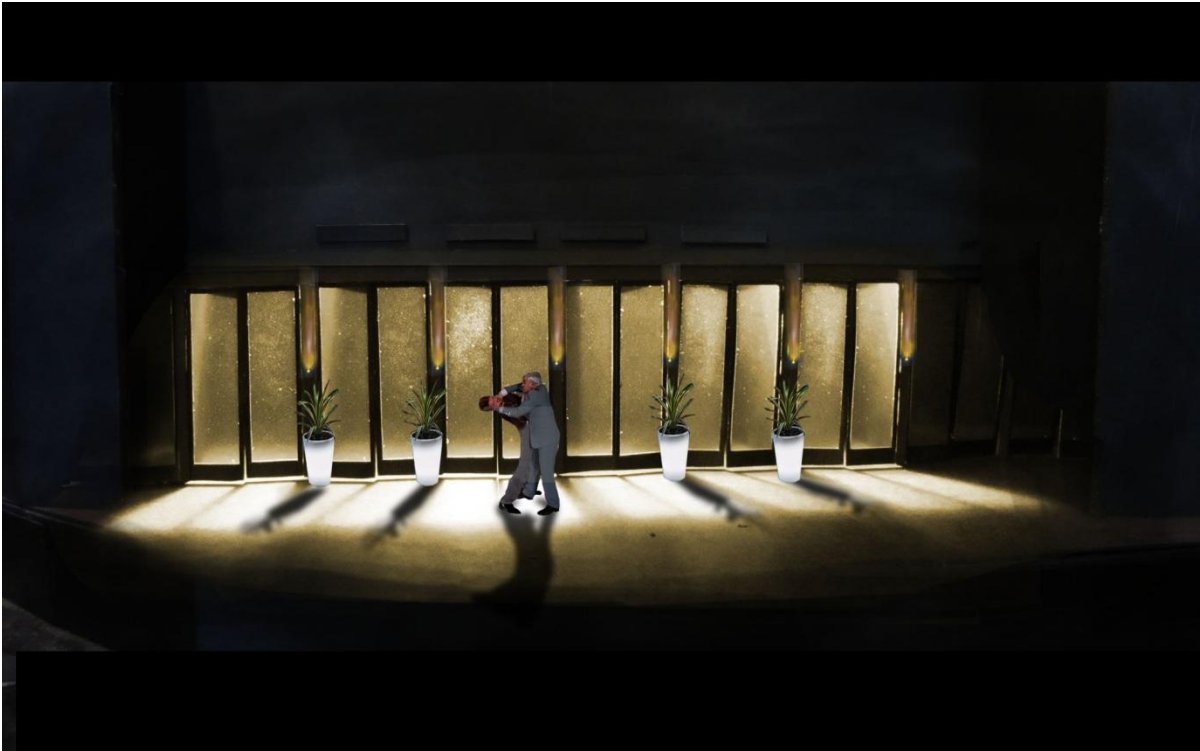


Diagram 5

Set Design



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR IMARA SAVAGE

Paul Reichstein, Resident Teaching Artist, in conversation with Imara Savage, Director of *The Comedy of Errors*.

What is the role of a director in creating a theatre production from pre-production, through rehearsals to the season of the play?

The director comes up with a vision for the play and finds the right group of collaborators, a creative team and actors who will help bring this to life. Through discussions with creatives in the lead up to rehearsals, this vision morphs and evolves until a design is settled on. Once in rehearsals the director works with actors on the floor to shape the work.

What, as a director, draws you to this story?

The pure entertainment and silliness of the story.

What is your history with the play?

I saw the Bell Shakespeare production years ago and thought it was hilarious. I have always been much more drawn to Shakespeare's tragedies so this is probably the most challenging of Shakespeare's plays for me personally!

***The Comedy Of Errors* is just one of Shakespeare's 'mistaken identity' plays. Why do you think Shakespeare was drawn to this theme and what do you think is has to say to us in 2013?**

There is a lot of fun to be had theatrically in mistaken identity. It's a great comic device, and especially useful for flat out farce.

What can you tell us about the design aspects of this production? What has been the inspiration behind the choices you have made?

I wanted a world that felt grounded in reality but was a heightened theatrical space that could tap into the surreal. I started looking at transitory spaces, red light districts and cities at night. The idea of setting it at night appealed to me on a design level as I was able to work with strong lighting installations. I was also aware that this show tours to 32 different theatres and I needed a design that could accommodate the touring components and changing venues.

What is the value in setting the play in a contemporary Australian setting?

I remember a very good director once saying to me, 'treat a new play as a classic and a classic as a new play'. That's not to say that you need to contemporise everything but it's always important to think about relevance.

***The Comedy Of Errors* has been described as one of Shakespeare's less mature writing accomplishments. What are your thoughts on this particular idea?**

I'd say yes, it *is* less mature because Shakespeare was in his twenties and it was one of his first plays. Plus it's a farce, so his lack of maturity probably served him well in this particular case.

How do you think *The Comedy Of Errors* differs from Shakespeare's other comedies?

It's a farce. It adheres to Aristotle's Classical Unities of time, place and action which is different to all his other plays.

Give us a snapshot of life in the rehearsal room. Is there a typical day for the cast and crew?

This rehearsal room will be different to others as so much of this play is about physical comedy. So the actors will have some slapstick workshops. I'll give them some ideas for scenarios and get them to create lazzi [set pieces of comic business]. There will also be some music rehearsals as well as the usual discussion of the text, choreography etc. With a play like this there isn't much value in sitting around, the actors just need to be up being physical and trying things out as soon as possible.

What are you most excited about in this production? What do you think audiences will be surprised by?

I'm personally looking forward to directing a farce, which is something I've never done before, and seeing what the actors bring to the floor. I've got a great cast and some really fabulous musicians in this cast so I'm looking forward to seeing how the music evolves.

FURTHER READING

TWISTS AND TWINS

(extract from *Shakespeare the Playwright*, Victor L Cahn.)

So dexterously manipulated is the plot of what is likely Shakespeare first comedy and so brisk its pace that we are liable to dismiss the work as frivolous and unfeeling. Such an attitude is unfair. The Comedy of Errors is an ingratiating play, hardly flawless, but on that reveals a budding genius, exploring themes and developing techniques that emerge triumphantly in later masterpieces.

The basic story comes from *The Menaechmi* by the Roman playwright Plautus, whose creative life extended from roughly 205 to 184 BC. Shakespeare's play involves Plautus' twin masters, who undergo confusions compounded by the presence of identical twin servants – a twist taken from another of Plautus' works, *Amphitryon*. *The Comedy of Errors* stays loyal to its classical antecedent by maintaining unities of time and place, but in more important ways, moves beyond the sheer farce that marks Roman Comedy.

First, the added characters of Egeon, Luciana and the Abbess contribute to a tension created by the mixture of both comic and dramatic episodes. In addition, the play has moments of intense romanticism as well as suspense that verge on the melodramatic. And the ending is a catharsis of sorts, wherein all conflicts resolve amidst universal joy.

Several other elements of this play return in subsequent comedies of Shakespeare. The mainspring of the plot is a 'shipwreck', after which a family is broken apart, then reunited. The language is suffused with references to dreaming and sorcery. The surrounding community is preoccupied with money, a devotion that invades private lives. Several characters suffer dilemmas in which they are left stranded, uncertain of their identity. Other characters undergo a metamorphosis, as the trials they endure lead to permanent changes of personality and values.

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The Comedy Of Errors

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