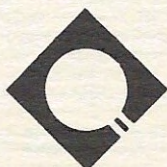


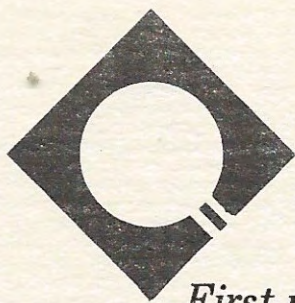
# The Merchant of Venice

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

OCT · NOV 1977



THE QUESTORS THEATRE COMPANY



# The Questors Theatre Company

*First performance Saturday 29 October 1977*

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## The **MERCHANT** of **VENICE**

by William Shakespeare

### Cast:

#### VENICE

The Duke

MICHAEL LANGRIDGE

#### *The Merchants:*

Antonio

PETER CARISS

Salerio

BRIAN RICH

Solanio

MARCUS MORTIMER

#### *The Venturers:*

Bassanio, Antonio's friend

PAUL RYAN

Gratiano

GATELY FREEMAN

Lorenzo

TIM HOWARD

#### *The Clowns:*

Launcelot Gobbo,  
Shylock's servant

BRIAN TAYLOR

Old Gobbo

BERNARD McLAUGHLIN

#### *The Jews:*

Shylock

COLIN PRONGER

Jessica, his daughter

SONIA KLAUBER

Tubal

MICHAEL LANGRIDGE

#### BELMONT

Portia

RUTH LISTER

Nerissa, her friend

FRANCES MARTIN

Balthasar

BILL WALL

#### *The Suitors:*

The Prince of Morocco

MICHAEL LANGRIDGE

The Prince of Arragon

BERNARD McLAUGHLIN

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Directed by SPENCER BUTLER

Set, Costumes and Lighting designed by PAUL DART

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There are five Acts, each with a different number of scenes of varying lengths. In this production there will be an interval of 15 minutes after Act III, scene three.

The production is set at the end of the sixteenth century and the action takes place in Antonio's house, Shylock's house, in the streets of Venice, and in Portia's house at Belmont, some miles from Venice.

The Ghetto — an Italian word meaning ‘foundry’ — was in fact a Venetian invention. The word ‘ghetto’ derived its later meaning from the fact that the first Jewish settlement was founded in Venice on a site where cannons were once cast. The idea of confining Jews within physical bounds was a typical example of Venetian expediency, designed to limit their presence while at the same time continuing to profit from them.

Recent history has made it utterly impossible for the most unsophisticated and ignorant audience to ignore the historical reality of the Jews and think of them as fairy-story bogeys with huge noses and red wigs. An Elizabethan audience undoubtedly still would — very few of them had seen a Jew — and, if Shakespeare had so wished, he could have made Shylock grotesquely wicked like *The Jew of Malta*. The star actors who, from the eighteenth century onwards, have chosen to play the role have not done so out of a sense of moral duty in order to combat anti-semitism, but because their theatrical instinct told them that the part, played seriously, not comically, offered them great possibilities..... Omit Antonio and Shylock, and the play becomes a romantic fairy-tale like *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. The world of the fairy-tale is an unambiguous, unproblematic world in which there is no contradiction between outward appearance and inner reality. ....W.H. AUDEN

Why should Venice, aside from its situation, be a place of enchantment? One appears to be confronted with a paradox. A commercial people who lived solely for gain—how could they create a city of fantasy, lovely as a dream or a fairy-tale?..... It cannot be that Venice is a happy accident or a trick of light... It occurs to me that, as with most puzzles, the clue to the answer lies in the way the question is framed. ‘Lovely as a dream or a fairy-tale.....’. There is no contradiction, once you stop to think what images of beauty arise from fairy-tales. There are images of money — gold, caskets of gold, caskets of silver..... A wholly materialistic city is nothing but a dream incarnate. Venice is the world’s unconscious: a miser’s glittering hoard, guarded by a Beast whose eyes are made of white agate, and by a saint who is really a prince who has just slain a dragon. ....MARY McCARTHY

Do you know the only thing that gives me pleasure? It’s to see my dividends coming in ..JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER

Stage Manager — TIM HAYWARD

Deputy Stage Manager — SUE TILSLEY

Assistant Stage Managers — LAURENCE TIGER, PAULETTE CIDERE,  
PHILIP DEAN, CARINA CHOY-WARRY, JOHN FORTH,  
CAROL KENNEDY, MONIQUE FARE, SUE BAKER

Wardrobe Supervisor — ROBERTA BUTLER

Properties — KATH HARRINGTON, assisted by ANN HELLYER

Set constructed by LAURENCE TIGER and PHILIP DEAN  
decorated by CATHERINE GRUBB

Lighting — MARTIN STONER, assisted by CHRIS HEARN

Sound — TIM WYBROW, assisted by DEREK LANCASTER

The costumes are from The Questors stock room with additions made by  
PAUL DART, ROBERTA BUTLER, MAGGIE PEACOCK,  
JOYCE PARFITT, JUDITH BLAKE, ANNA and RUPERT HORNSTEIN.

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THE MERCHANT OF VENICE was written in the period 1596-98, when Shakespeare was in his early 30's. On the most probable datings of his comedies, it followed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and preceded *Much Ado About Nothing*. It was first printed in Quarto in 1600.

The principal source of the story's two themes of love and money was an Italian tale, contained in a collection called *Il Pecorne*, written in the late fourteenth century. Most of Shakespeare's plot corresponds closely to the Italian version. Where Shakespeare's plot diverges most notably from that tale is in the scenes at Belmont where Portia's suitors have to choose between three caskets of gold, silver and lead. Shakespeare may have taken this idea, adding to his love story, from the Roman tales, *Gesta Romanorum*. In one episode, a king's daughter, seeking to marry the son of the Emperor of Rome, is required by the Emperor to choose between 'three vessels'. The first is made of gold, set with precious stones, and contains dead men's bones. On it is engraved: 'Who chooseth me shall find that which he deserveth'. She rejects it because "know not I what is within". The second is made of silver, filled with earth and worms, and engraved: 'Who chooseth me shall find that which his nature desireth'. She rejects it because "my nature desireth the lust of the flesh". The third vessel is made of lead, filled with precious stones, and engraved: 'Who chooseth me shall find that which God hath disposed for him'. This one she chooses, because "without doubt God never disposed any harm".

There were two main topical sources for Shylock. One was that in 1598 a rival playhouse had presented Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, which was acclaimed and played many times, most probably spurring Shakespeare to treat the same subject, particularly in portraying the Jewish villain with a daughter who turns Christian. The other would have been the execution at Tyburn, in 1594, of Dr. Roderigo Lopez, a Jewish physician of Portuguese origin. In 1586 Lopez had been appointed to attend on the Queen, who recommended him warmly to others. But he became implicated in political intrigue on behalf of certain Portuguese and Spanish interests, and fell foul of the Earl of Essex. Despite the Queen's attempts to intercede for him, he was tried and condemned on a trumped-up charge of plotting to poison her. Before being hanged, drawn and quartered, he is said to have cried "I am a Christian and I love the Queen", to which the crowd answered, "Hang him, for he is a Jew".

SPENCER BUTLER

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# WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

One of the great mysteries of English drama is the fact that so very little is known about the life of William Shakespeare. This is so, primarily, because there was no Shakespeare biography written until nearly 100 years after his death. During that 100-year span fact became mingled with legend — and what we do know has been pieced together from secondary sources or implied from his work.

Shakespeare was born on April 23, 1564 at Stratford-upon-Avon, into a prosperous family of wool and leather merchants. His father, John, was also a minor government official in the area. There is practically nothing known of his early life and childhood, and the next time that his name appeared officially was in 1582 when he married Anne Hathaway. Although there is no clear record of when, why, or how, Shakespeare became interested in the theatre, it is known that he spent the time between 1582 and 1587 as an actor, stage manager and 'provider of plays' for several acting companies near Stratford.

He left Stratford in 1586 and arrived in London the following year where he became the stage manager of 'The Theatre', which was at the time the only theatre in London. Soon after, he joined the acting company of 'The Theatre', and along with Richard Burbage and William Kemp performed at court in many plays.

1591-92 saw the production of his earliest works; several of the *Histories*; *Love's Labour's Lost*; *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Comedy of Errors*. In 1592 *Romeo and Juliet* was written, and then, in quick succession, *The Merchant of Venice*, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

One of the most important moves Shakespeare ever made came in 1598, when, with Richard Burbage and several other famous actors, he built the Globe Theatre. This gave him great financial security and a first-rate acting company to work with. It ushered in his greatest writing period. In 1599-1600 he wrote *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* and then moved on to the greatest plays of his career — the Tragedies: *Julius Caesar* in 1600, *Hamlet* in 1602, *Othello* in 1604, *Macbeth* in 1606, *King Lear* in 1607, *Anthony and Cleopatra* in 1608 and *Coriolanus* in 1609. All during this period he was writing his sonnets, 154 in all, which were published in 1609.

At the height of his fame and popularity, Shakespeare moved back to Stratford after the production of *The Tempest* in 1611. He continued to write, and travel to London until his death in 1616.

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## NEXT PRODUCTION

**HOME** by David Storey

'Home is where the heart is' may be your reaction to this tenderly-written piece by one of our most brilliant current playwrights.

*A play not to be missed and one to be remembered.*

November 26, 27, 29, 30. December 2, 3 at 7.45 p.m.

Members FREE, Guests £1.25, £1.00 & 75p

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## COMING SOON

*Christmas Production.....*

**TOAD OF TOAD HALL**

A delightful evergreen show for children of all ages!

In 1978.....

**ROSMERHOLM** by Henrik Ibsen

**ASHES** by David Rudkin

**OH! WHAT A LOVELY WAR**

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## EXHIBITION

During the run of *The Merchant of Venice* there will be an exhibition of the work of John Stacey in the Foyer.

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**The Questors Film Society**

presents the first film of its inaugural season:

**SUNDAY, BLOODY SUNDAY**

Starring PETER FINCH, GLENDA JACKSON

**Friday, November 4 at 11 p.m. in the Theatre.**

Film Society members only, Tickets 50p, guests 75p (one per member). Tickets must be purchased at least 3 hours in advance.

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## CHRISTMAS GIFT STALL

Do not leave without visiting the Christmas Gift Stall in the Foyer.

All proceeds to the Development Fund.

Gifts still needed.

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