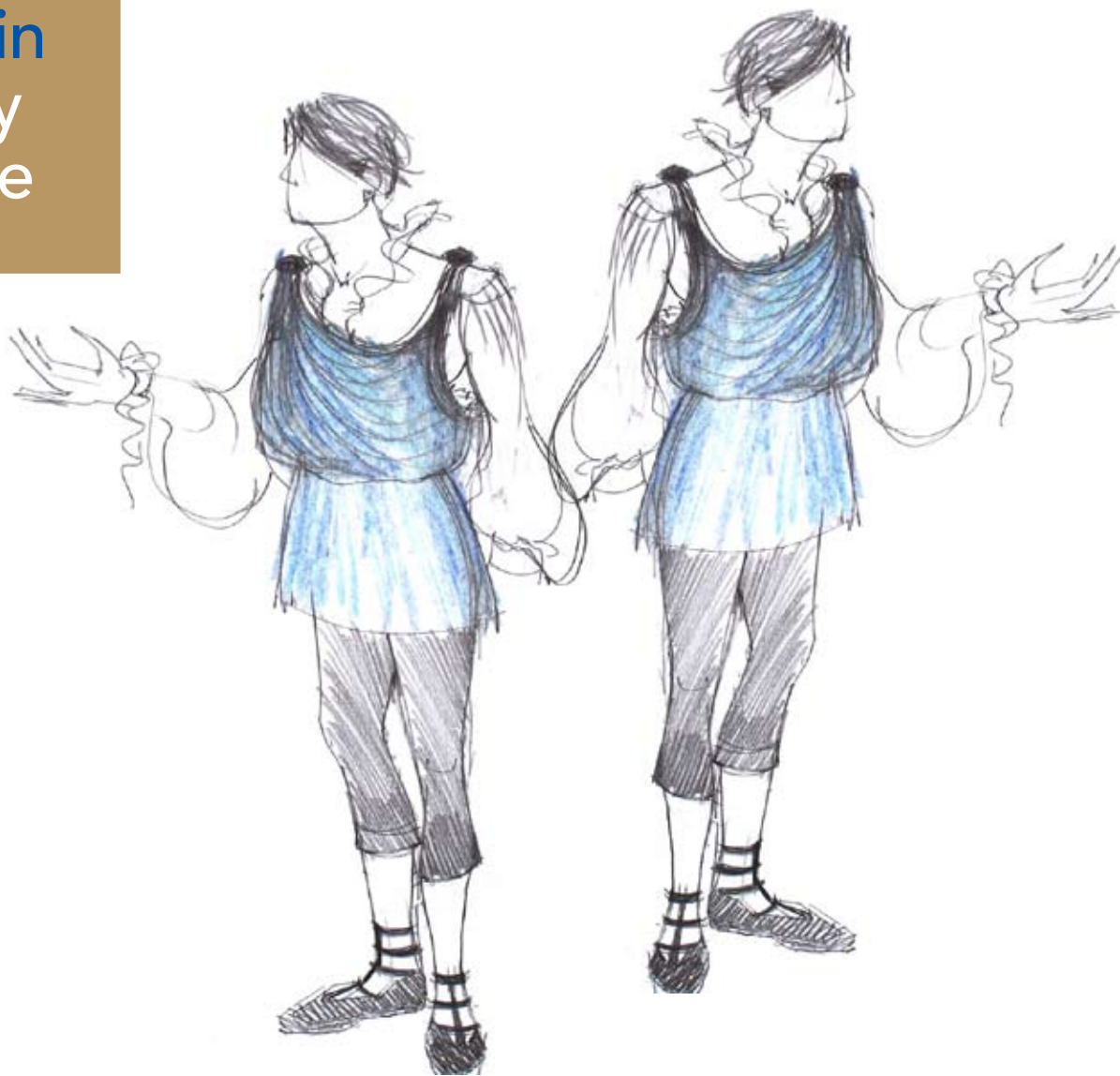


A Noise
Within
Study
Guide



The Comedy of Errors

Costume design by Angela Balogh Calin



The Heart of the Matter 10/11 SEASON

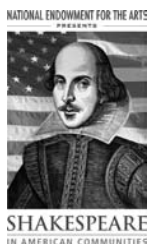
The Comedy of Errors

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FUNDING FOR A NOISE WITHIN'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IS PROVIDED IN PART BY:

The Ahmanson Foundation, Alliance for The Advancement of Arts Education, Anonymous, B.C. McCabe Foundation, The Capital Group Companies, The Catherine C. Demeter Foundation, Disney Worldwide Outreach, Employees Community Fund of Boeing California, Google, The Green Foundation, Kiwanis Club of Glendale, The Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation, Lockheed Federal Credit Union, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, Metropolitan Associates, The Michael J. Connell Foundation, Pasadena Independent Schools Foundation, The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation, The Rose Hills Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, The Steinmetz Foundation, WWW Foundation, The Wells Fargo Foundation.



A Noise Within's production of *Measure for Measure* is part of *Shakespeare for a New Generation*, a national initiative sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts in cooperation with Arts Midwest.



Cast of Characters



Costume design by Angela Balogh Calin

Solinus, Duke of Ephesus
Egeon, a merchant of Syracuse

Antipholus of Ephesus } twin brothers, and
Antipholus of Syracuse } sons to Egeon and Emilia

Dromio of Ephesus } twin brothers, and attendants
Dromio of Syracuse } on the two Antipholuses

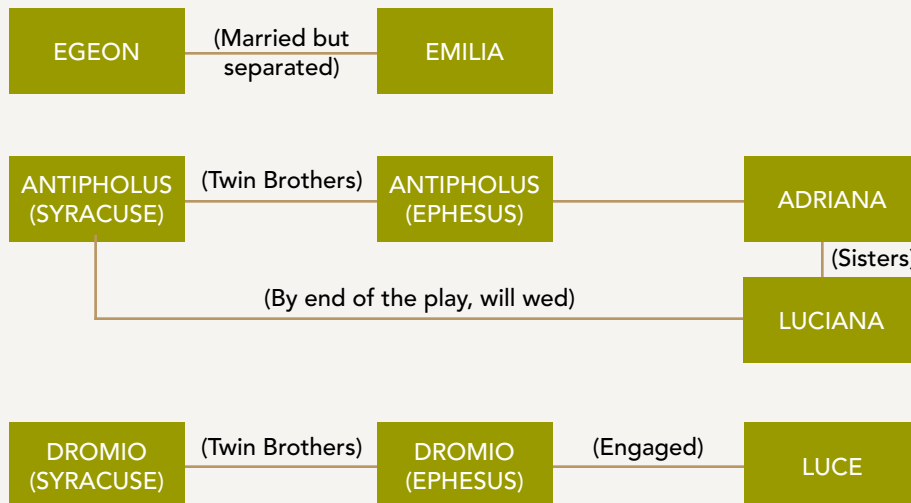
Balthazar, a merchant
Angelo, a goldsmith
First Merchant, friend to Antipholus of Syracuse
Second Merchant, to whom Angelo is a debtor
Pinch, a schoolmaster

Emilia, wife to Egeon, an abbess at Ephesus
Adriana, wife to Antipholus of Ephesus
Luciana, her sister
Luce, servant to Adriana (also known as Nell)
A Courtesan

Ephesus
Solinus
Antipholus of Ephesus
Dromio of Ephesus
Angelo
Pinch
Emilia
Adriana
Luciana
Luce/Nell
A Courtesan
First Merchant

Syracuse
Egeon
Antipholus of Syracuse
Dromio of Syracuse
Balthazar

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE COMEDY OF ERRORS



About the Play: Synopsis



Set design by Kurt Boetcher

CONDEMNED TO DEATH for violating travel restrictions, the Syracusan merchant Egeon relays his life history to Solinus, the Duke of rival city Ephesus. Twenty-five years prior, Egeon's wife Emilia bore twin sons, and the wealthy merchant purchased twin slaves for the two boys. While on a voyage home, a storm struck their ship and the family was separated. Egeon landed with one son and slave, and Emilia the others. Egeon explains that he came to Ephesus to find his lost wife and son, thus violating the law which restricts Syracusians from visiting Ephesus. Touched by the story, Solinus grants Egeon a one day stay of execution in order to raise the money required for his release.

Meanwhile, Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant Dromio search Ephesus for their missing twins. Antipholus of Ephesus is a successful merchant in the town, and his wife Adriana is the first to encounter the twin Antipholus. Naturally, she mistakes him for her own husband, and orders him home for dinner. The jealous Adriana grills the wrong Antipholus about why he seems to not recognize her. She is sure that he is unfaithful, and orders Dromio to keep out all those seeking to enter — which successfully discourages the rightful Antipholus of Ephesus from entering his own home some moments later as he returns for dinner. Affronted, Antipholus of Ephesus departs to dine with a courtesan. Adriana's sister Luciana attempts to instruct Antipholus of Syracuse how to continue

his presumed adultery without upsetting Adriana, but Antipholus surprises Luciana, whom she believes to be her brother in law, by proclaiming his love for her.

The near-misses and mistaken identifications increase as a gold chain commissioned as a present for Adriana by Antipholus of Ephesus lands in the hands of Antipholus of Syracuse. Antipholus of Ephesus, who refuses to pay for a chain he hasn't received, is arrested for lack of payment, and the funds that would buy his release likewise go astray — as the incorrect Dromio is given the gold to pay for the chain, and the craftsman goes uncompensated. Meanwhile, citing the many incomprehensible behaviors of the townspeople as evidence that they are witches, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse prepare to depart the city. On their way out, they encounter Adriana and the debt officer who threaten to capture them, and they take refuge in an abbey. Adriana begs Duke Solinus to intervene and remove Antipholus of Syracuse — thinking he is her husband — from the abbey.

Finally, the situation is resolved when the Abbess — who is none other than Emilia, mother of the twin Antipholi — reunites the twins and reveals herself to be Egeon's long-lost wife. The mistaken assumptions of this day's comedy of errors are all revealed, Egeon is pardoned, the twin brothers are at last reunited, and all ends happily. ❖

Shakespeare's Sources: *The Twin Menaechmi*

*Since Plautus is dead, Comedy mourns,
Deserted is the stage; then Laughter, Jest and Wit,
And Melody's countless numbers all together wept.*

—Plautus' epitaph

SCHOLARS HAVE LONG SPECULATED that Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* is in fact an adaptation of two of the plays from the famous ancient Roman playwright Titus Maccius Plautus (254-284 BCE) and it's easy to see why.

Plautus' plays *The Menaechmi* (also called *The Twin Menaechmi*) and *Amphytrion* share characters, setting, and plot devices that are extraordinarily similar to *The Comedy of Errors*. In *Menaechmi*, a set of twins are separated at birth and then reunited in a foreign land. Shakespeare doubles the pairs of twins in his work – and weaves a much more intricate fabric that provides for more mistaken identities. In *Amphytrion*, one key scene features an imposter who replaces him in his own home, and he is locked out while his wife lies inside with him. Because of these unmistakable similarities, it is widely believed that Shakespeare adapted Plautine works for *The Comedy of Errors* — relying on traditional forms of drama, but also expanding upon the model with additional twists and turns. Indeed, Shakespeare seemed to have liked the concept of twins separated at birth by shipwreck that he repeated in *Twelfth Night*, and questions of identity, which appear not only in *Twelfth Night* but also *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*.

Plautus' works are the earliest surviving works of Latin literature known, and his own sources were likely the ancient Greek comedies — notably those of Aristotle. The core element that links Plautus — and therefore Shakespeare — to Aristotelian drama is the concept of "unities". Unities were a concept that governed what Aristotle considered to be the ideal elements of a play. These were Unity of Time, Unity of Place, and Unity of Action. The ideal play, according to him, should take place within a 24 hour period — i.e. one day — in one location, and every incident in the play should contribute to the central plot, with no unrelated action. *The Comedy of Errors* cleaves closely to these unities — as all action does indeed occur within the space of a day, in one location, and each incident can be easily seen as necessary to further the plot. ❖

The Menaechmi

Two households, both alike in dignity,
In fair Verona where we lay our scene,
From ancient grudge to new mutiny,
Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean.

—Romeo & Juliet, Act I, scene I

TWO HOUSEHOLDS

SHAKESPEARE CHOSE to pit two closely related pairs opposite one another in several of his plays — most notably the two families in *Romeo and Juliet*. The idea that families could be quite similar and yet have extremely strong divided sensibilities continues to fascinate in modern times. In *The Comedy of Errors*, the Bard explores the complex and twisted relationships that develop between a pair of closely related regions — Syracuse and Ephesus.



The Temple of Artemis (Diana,) located in Istanbul, Turkey. The original structure was destroyed by a flood and reconstructed in the 7th Century BCE.

Syracuse

Located on the island now known as Sicily, Syracuse is the home of Egeon and Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse. Originally founded in 734 BC, Syracuse was known to be a picturesque locale, close to the bright blue Mediterranean Sea.

Ephesus

Located in modern-day Turkey, Ephesus is the location of the play. Its Temple of Diana is known as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, and would have been well-known to the Elizabethan audience. The Temple of Diana was a marble building featuring marble columns that reached over 120 feet high — a marvel during both the Elizabethan age and in modern times.



From Isaac Asimov's *Guide to Shakespeare*, a map of the Mediterranean during the time of Plautus, showing Syracuse. Ephesus would have been located on the coast of Pergamum.

A Feud?

In *The Comedy of Errors*, numerous Syracusean characters refer to their need to remain disguised while travelling in the town of Ephesus, citing a bitter feud between the two. Historically, Syracuse and Ephesus have had no known conflicts. In fact, *The Twin Menaechmi* by Plautus — the play upon which *The Comedy of Errors* is based — lists Syracuse and neighboring Epidamnum as the rivals of the story. It may be that Shakespeare changed Epidamnum to Ephesus in order to appeal to the Elizabethan audience, who would likely have been more familiar with the town because of the temple there. Located in the region now known as Turkey, Ephesus was accessible by both land and sea, the sail from Syracuse would have taken several days. Tropical storms on the Mediterranean — although not common — would have indeed been devastating, as the storm depicted in *The Comedy of Errors*. ❖

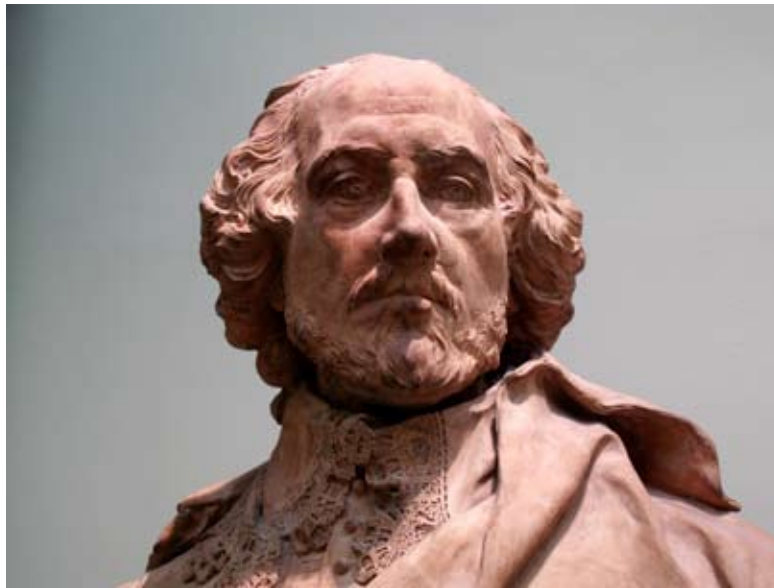


Statue, *Diana of Versailles*. The Louvre Museum, Paris. 1st -2nd Century, BCE.

TEMPLE OF DIANA

Created for worship of the Roman goddess Diana, the Temple of Diana in Ephesus attracted worshippers from afar. A virgin known as the "Lady of Ephesus," Diana was goddess of the hunt and the moon, and was the patron of virgins and women. Her Greek equivalent was Artemis.

Biography of William Shakespeare



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616), poet, playwright and actor, was born to Mary Arden and John Shakespeare in Stratford-Upon-Avon, England on April 23, 1564.

Although much is written about him, very little documentation of his life survives beyond the public records of his birth, death, marriage and financial transactions. Shakespeare probably attended the Edward VI Grammar School, where his studies would have been almost exclusively in Latin.

At age 18, he married Anne Hathaway (age 26), who gave birth to daughter Susanna, just six months after the wedding. In 1585, Anne gave birth to twins Hamnet (who lived only 11 years) and Judith. The years 1585-91 are considered the "lost years," for which there are no extant records relating to Shakespeare. Sometime in this period, however, he settled in London.

In 1592 he was listed as an actor with the Lord Strange's Players, for whom he wrote his first play, the highly successful *Henry VI, Part 1*, followed immediately by the sequels *Henry VI, Parts 2 & 3* in the same year. Over the course of 20 years, he wrote 148 sonnets, 3 long poems, and the 37 plays that are in continuous performance around the world today.

1599 marked the opening of the outdoor Globe theatre in which Shakespeare was a shareholder. Between 1610 and 1612, Shakespeare retired to Stratford, where he died in 1616 at age 52. He is buried in Stratford Parish Church.

Other plays by Shakespeare produced at A Noise Within include: *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Coriolanus*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Tempest*, *All's Well That Ends Well*, *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Winter's Tale*, *King Richard III*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Cymbeline*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Pericles*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar*. ❖

Shakespeare Timeline 1564-1623

1564

Conquistadores cross the Pacific ocean. William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and Galileo Galilei are born.

1565

St. Augustine, FL is founded, making it the oldest remaining European settlement.

1567

King James VI becomes King of Scotland.

1572

The St. Bartholemew's Day Massacre in Paris.

1577

Sir Francis Drake sets out on his voyage around the world.

1579

Sir Francis Drake lands in California and claims it for Queen Elizabeth I.

1582

Pope Gregory XIII implements the Gregorian calendar. William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway marry.

1583

Shakespeare's first child, Susana, is born.

1585

Shakespeare's twins, Hamnet and Judith, are born.

1587

A group of settlers arrive off Roanoke Island, VA to resettle the deserted colony. Mary, Queen of Scots, is beheaded. The Rose Theatre is founded in London.

1590-1591

Henry VI Parts II and III written.

1592

Henry VI Part I written. *Richard III* completed. *Comedy of Errors* possibly written.

1593

Plague epidemic rages in London, killing over 11,000 people. Christopher Marlowe murdered. *Titus Andronicus* probably written. *The Taming of the Shrew* is probably written.

1594

Shakespeare is an actor, playwright, and part owner of the Lord Chamberlain's Men. *Love's Labour's Lost* is written. *Two Gentlemen of Verona* possibly written. *Romeo and Juliet* most likely written. *Love's Labour's Won* written, which has since been lost.

1595

Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is performed for the first time. Shakespeare probably writes *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard II*.

1596

Cambridge University is founded. *King John* probably written. *The Merchant of Venice* first performed.

1597

Henry IV Part I most likely written.

1598

Shakespeare's name begins to appear on the title page of his plays. *Henry IV* Part II probably written.

1599

First performance of *Julius Caesar* and *Henry V* in London. Shakespeare most likely writes *Much Ado About Nothing*. Shakespeare probably authors *As You Like It*.

1600

Telescope invented by Dutch Opticians. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* completed.

1601

A Midsummer Night's Dream premieres in London. *Othello* possibly written. *Troilus and Cressida* most probably written. Shakespeare drafts *Hamlet*.

1602

First performance of *Twelfth Night*.

1603

Queen Elizabeth I dies and is succeeded by her cousin, King James I of England, uniting the crowns of England and Scotland. Plague in England. Shakespeare writes *All's Well that Ends Well*.

1604

Montreal, Canada is founded. Shakespeare's *Othello* is performed for the first time. *Measure for Measure* performed at court.

1605

The Gunpowder Plot. First public library established in Rome. The first part of Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is published. *King Lear* possibly written. *Macbeth* possibly written.

1606

Antony and Cleopatra possibly written.

1607

Jamestown, VA is founded and becomes the first permanent English Colony. *Timon of Athens* possibly written. *Coriolanus* possibly written.

1608

Quebec City, Canada is founded by the French. *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* possibly written.

1609

Galileo demonstrates the first telescope. Henry Hudson discovers the Hudson River. *Shakespeare's Sonnets* are published. *Cymbeline* written.

1610

The Winter's Tale possibly written.

1611

The King James Bible is printed for the first time in England. *The Tempest* is performed for the first time.

1612

Henry VIII written. *The Two Noble Kinsman* most likely written. *Cardenio* written (with John Fletcher).

1613

A fire destroys London's Globe Theatre.

1615

The second volume of Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote* is published.

1616

William Shakespeare dies and is buried in the chancel of the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford-upon-Avon.

1623

First Folio published.

The dates of Shakespeare's plays are a subject of continuing debate and should be taken as approximate.

Shakespeare's Verse and Prose

*dab-DUM, dab-DUM,
dab-DUM, dab-DUM,
dab-DUM*

MANY PEOPLE ARE "TURNED OFF" BY

Shakespeare as they find his works difficult to read and understand. It is hard to believe that people spoke the way his characters do. But with a little information, you too can speak the speech and talk the talk. Shakespeare wrote his plays in two forms: prose and verse.

PROSE

Prose is the form used by the common people in Shakespearean drama. It is also the form used when a character reads a letter out loud. There is no rhythm or meter in the line. It is everyday language and Shakespeare's audience would recognize it as their language. The members of the royal family rarely use prose speech, but the common citizens frequently use this type of speech. In *The Comedy of Errors*, it is often used by the bumbling citizens. Here, Dromio of Syracuse uses prose when he is negotiating with Antipholus of Syracuse and the Courtesan in Act IV, sc. III:

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

Master, if you do: expect spoon-meat, or bespeak a long spoon.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE

Why, Dromio?

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

Marry, he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil.

VERSE

The majority of Shakespeare's plays are written in verse, for two primary reasons: tradition and memorization. Since the beginning of theatre, plays had been written in verse. Shakespeare was one of the first playwrights to use both prose and verse when it suited him. Verse is easier to memorize than prose. Shakespeare uses verse to denote members of the nobility and the upper class. Shakespeare's noble characters may speak in verse, but the average noble did not. The verse form that Shakespeare uses is called blank verse. It does not contain rhyme, but each line has an internal rhythm and a regular rhythmic pattern, like a heartbeat. Shakespeare utilizes iambic pentameter. An iambic pentameter is a combination of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Pentameter means that there are five stressed syllables per line. For a ten-syllable line, iambic pentameter features the accent on alternating syllables, beginning with the second syllable. Like this:

dah-DUM, dah-DUM, dah-DUM,
dah-DUM, dah-DUM

Here is an example from *The Comedy of Errors*. Every line in this famous speech cleaves to a regular line pattern, except the last in this selection, which runs over:

ADRIANA

Aye, aye Antipholus, look strange and frown:
Some other mistress hath thy sweet aspects;
I am not Adriana, nor thy wife.
The time was once when thou unurged wouldst vow
That never words were music to thine ear,
That never object pleasing in thine eye,
That never meat sweet-favor'd in thy taste,
Unless I spake, or look'd, or touch'd, or carved to
thee.
(Act II, scene II.)

Shakespeare and his contemporaries enjoyed using other literary devices such as alliteration, in which the same sound is repeated in a line or group of lines; repetition, where the same word is repeated in the verse; and antanaclasis, the repetition of a certain word or phrase, but with a different meaning each instance.

Sometimes Shakespeare adjusted words to fit the verse. For example, if you have the word taken, it can be adjusted to fit two syllables:

ANGELO

I thought to have ta'en you at the Porpentine—
(Act III, sc. II)

Other times, words can be stretched to fit an extra syllable, as in the following example, which stretches the word glanced (normally one syllable,) to be spoken as glanc-ed.

ADRIANA

Alone, it was the subject of my theme;
In company I often glanced it;
Still did I tell him it was vile and bad.

The next quote is an instance where two words (it and is) were truncated in order to fit the verse.

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE

No, no, the bell; 'tis time that I were gone.
It was two ere I left him, and now the clock strikes
one.
(Act IV, sc. II)

Here, "is" and "it" are written together with an apostrophe so as to clearly indicate that the words are to be pronounced in one syllable. Part of the actors' homework when preparing for a Shakespearean role is to dissect each line, picking out the words that should

be stressed, truncating and elongating words when necessary, and working out where to breathe between lines. Surprisingly, Shakespeare makes this quite easy in the iambic pentameter. He places the most important words on the accent. Words like "the," "is," and "and" are on the unaccented portions.

Actors can tell by scanning a line (called "scansion") which words are important and how fast to say them. When two characters are speaking, they will finish the ten syllables needed for a line. This is called a shared line or split line.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE

Thou has no husband yet nor I no wife.

Give me thy hand

LUCIANA O, soft, sir! Hold you still.

I'll fetch my sister, to get her good will.

(Act III, sc. II)

Shakespeare's language may seem foreign to us today, but it is an older version of our language. Shakespeare and his contemporaries looked upon language as flexible and constantly evolving. He changed and borrowed words from other languages and invented some himself. He used verbs in both their antiquated and modern forms. Glossaries are available defining the archaic words and any editions of Shakespeare's plays contain a glossary or footnotes. However, the Oxford English Dictionary includes many obsolete words and gives examples of usage and when it was first used in literature. Most college and university libraries have a copy of the OED and it is also available on CD-Rom. ❖

Theatre Lore

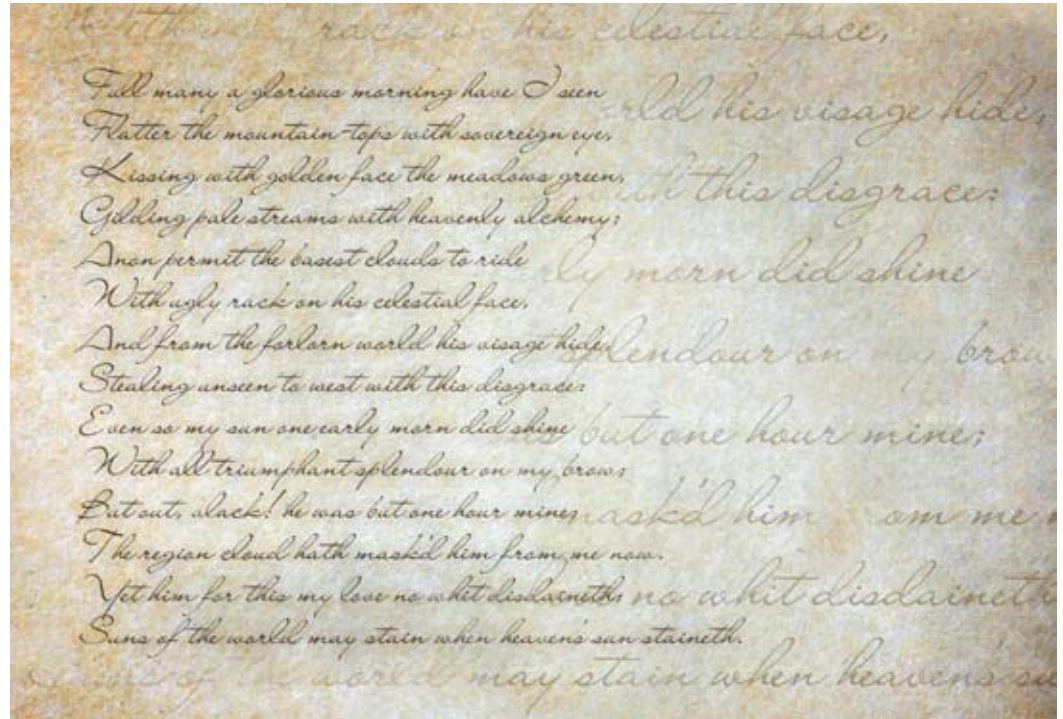
Why are actors called thespians?

In the sixth century B.C., a Greek chorus performer named Thespis was the first person in history to step away from the chorus and speak by himself, exchanging dialogue with the group and impersonating a character instead of simply reciting a story as the chorus had done before then.

Shakespeare's Words and Phrases

"Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

HAMLET, ACT III, SCENE III



WHEN SHAKESPEARE WAS WRITING HIS PLAYS, modern English was in a constant state of change. The language was absorbing words from other cultures, due to war, diplomacy and colonization. Many of Shakespeare's contemporaries lacked the vocabulary to express their ideas. So, writers such as Christopher Marlowe, Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser or Sir Philip Sidney invented, borrowed or adopted words from other languages. This process is called neologizing. It is estimated that between the years 1500 and 1659, 30,000 new words were added to the English language. Calculating the number of words invented by Shakespeare is difficult, but overlooking variations on already existing words of the day and compounds, it is estimated that Shakespeare coined approximately 600 words deriving from Latin alone. Some experts set the total number of words contributed by Shakespeare to be 10,000. Many of the words we use in our common, everyday language were invented by Shakespeare.

Words that appeared in print for the first time in *The Comedy of Errors*:

- 'Tis high time
- Something in the wind
- fortune-teller
- to gossip (first use as a verb; "gossip" was one's familiar friends)
- to hurry (first attestation as verb)
- rancorous
- sportive
- urging (first attestation as a noun)

Coined words found at <http://www.pathguy.com/shakeswo.htm>

CLASSROOM CONNECTION

■ Shakespeare coined words for his plays that were directly and immediately needed to tell his stories. Consider how the words Shakespeare coined for *The Comedy of Errors* connect to the themes of the play, and ask students to do the same.

■ Ask students to take two of the words coined in the play and describe how it interacts with one of its characters in order to theorize Shakespeare's need to coin those words. For example, how would the women in this play present the need to Shakespeare for creating the verb "to gossip?"

BERNARD LEVIN sums up the impact of Shakespeare's phraseology in the following from *The Story of English*. Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil. Viking 1986:

If you cannot understand my argument and declare "It's Greek to me", you are quoting Shakespeare; if you claim to be more sinned against than sinning, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you recall your salad days, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you act more in sorrow than in anger, if your wish is father to the thought, if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffered from green-eyed jealousy, if you have played fast and loose, if you have been tongue-tied, a tower of strength, hoodwinked or in a pickle, if you have knitted your brows, made a virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, danced attendance (on your lord and master), laughed yourself into stitches. Had short shrift, cold comfort or too much of a good thing, if you have seen better days or lived in a fool's paradise — why, be that as it may, the more fool of you, for it is a

foregone conclusion that you are (as good luck would have it) quoting Shakespeare; if you think it is early days and clear out bag and baggage, if you think it is high time and that that is the long and short of it, if you believe that the game is up and that truth will out even if it involves your own flesh and blood, if you lie low till the crack of doom because you suspect foul play, if you have your teeth set on edge (at one fell swoop) without rhyme or reason, then — to give the devil his due — if the truth were known (for surely you have a tongue in your head) you are quoting Shakespeare; even if you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I were dead as a door-nail, if you think I am an eyesore, a laughing stock, the devil incarnate, a stony hearted villain, the bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then — by Jove! O Lord! Tut, Tut! For goodness sake! What the dickens! But me no buts — it is all one to me, for you are quoting Shakespeare.

Other Words Coined by Shakespeare:

Accessible	Colorful	Foulmouthed	Majestic	Scuffle
Accommodation	Comply	Frugal	Metamorphize	Secure
Accused	Compromise	Full-grown	Mimic	Shipwrecked
Addiction	Courtship	Generous	Monumental	Skim milk
(Shakespeare meant 'tendency')	Countless	Gloomy	Motionless	Submerge
Admirable	Critic	Gnarl	Negotiate	Torture
Amazement	Dauntless	Gossip	Obscene	Tranquil
Assassination	Dislocate	Gust	Overgrowth	Undress
Bandit	Distasteful	Hint	Pageantry	Unmitigated
Birthplace	Distrustful	Hobnob	Paternal	Unreal
Blanket	Downstairs	Hurried	Pious	Unrivalled
Barefaced	Dwindle	Impede	Premeditated	Upstairs
Blushing	Embrace	Impartial	Priceless	Useful
Bet	Engagement	Invulnerable	Puking	Useless
Cater	Epileptic	Jaded	Radiance	Worthless
Champion	Eventful	Label	Reliance	Zany
Circumstantial	Exposure	Lonely	Restoration	
Clutch	Fashionable	Love Letter	Retirement	
Coldhearted	Fixture	Luggage	Revoltng	
	Flawed	Lustrous	Savagery	
	Fortuneteller	Madcap	Schoolboy	

The Search for Identity in Shakespeare's Plays

By Miranda Johnson-Haddad

The theme of identical twins and mistaken identities has proved a surefire comic hit for many centuries.

IN MANY OF HIS PLAYS, Shakespeare demonstrates an ongoing interest in the themes of twins and of mistaken identities, and nowhere are these concepts more clearly illustrated than in *The Comedy of Errors*, one of his earliest plays. In 1594 (the year when the play is thought to have first been performed), Shakespeare was still honing his skill as a playwright, and he wisely chose to tell a tale that would have been familiar to many members of his audience. From Plautus's *Menaechmi*, to the 1938 Rodgers and Hart musical *The Boys from Syracuse*, to *Big Business*, the 1988 film starring Lily Tomlin and Bette Midler as two pairs of identical twins separated at birth, the theme of identical twins and mistaken identities has proved a surefire comic hit for many centuries. Nevertheless, we would be wrong to dismiss *The Comedy of Errors* as merely a youthful exercise, for Shakespeare explores here many themes to which he will return again and again in his later plays.

"I to the world am like a drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop" says Antipholus of Syracuse to himself early in the play. That quest for one's other half, reminiscent of the quest of Plato's Androgyne for his or her other half, governs the actions of Antipholus of Syracuse, and of several other characters, for the remainder of the play. Many children dream of having a twin; there is both appeal and terror in the idea of having a *doppelgänger* or a double. Everyone longs to find his or her other half, but that longing is coupled with the fear of finding out that one is not unique. Antipholus of Syracuse observes

that "So I, to find a mother and a brother, / In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself." This loss of self is the other side of finding a twin. It is a measure of Shakespeare's genius that his twins, in rediscovering each other, rediscover (rather than lose) themselves, and that the result of such rediscoveries is great domestic happiness (marriages, reunions, and so on). The domestic felicity that results from the reunion of the Dromios and the Antipholi marks this play decisively as a comedy, although as in so many of Shakespeare's comedies, there is a darker threat lurking (in this case, the possibility that Egeon may lose his life). Yet in the end this play resolves as smoothly as do Shakespeare's late romances, which also feature shipwrecks, separations, long-delayed reunions, and yes, mistaken identities.

Shakespeare is clearly fascinated with the idea of mistaking one individual for another. We recall, for example, another famous pair of Shakespearean twins, Viola and Sebastian from *Twelfth Night*, who present a marvelous twist on the theme: brother and sister twins, who resemble each other so closely that they are mistaken for each other, and much gender-bending fun ensues. Elsewhere in Shakespeare characters don't have to be twins in order to be mistaken for each other, or for someone else, as in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*; several of the history plays; and, more bizarrely, in *Cymbeline*, in which Imogen mistakes a man's headless corpse for the body of her husband, Posthumus. Several of the comedies, including *Love's Labor's Lost* and *Much Ado About Nothing*,



Fun Fact

THE UKULELE rose to stardom during the period in which A Noise Within's version of *The Comedy of Errors* is set — the early 20th century. Tin Pan Alley music publishers relied heavily upon the much-maligned but easy-to-play instrument during this time, evoking images of tropical paradise in such tunes as "Aloha Oe" and others. The ukulele has enjoyed a resurgence in the early 21st century, as virtuoso players have brought its use into the mainstream with rapid-fire shred techniques and inventive combinations with other classical and rock instruments.



feature scenes in which the young male lovers disguise themselves and pretend to be other than they are in order to find out what the ladies really think of them. The so-called "problem comedies" (*Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*) feature bed tricks — surely the ultimate example of mistaken identity! More profoundly, in some of the tragedies certain characters are mistaken for an alternate version of themselves: Iago is mistaken by everyone in *Othello* for a good and honest fellow; similarly, in *King Lear*, the brothers Edgar and Edmund (whose very names suggest a kind of twinship) are mistakenly reviled and trusted, respectively, by their father, Gloucester. Lastly, we may note that several of Shakespeare's women, including Rosalind, Portia, Nerissa and Julia, succeed in their efforts to be mistaken for men. For many of these characters, the women in particular, mistaken or alternative identities provide a kind of license to behave in a different way from how they are usually required, or expected, to behave.

Nevertheless, although such examples of mistaken identity make for good theatre, the practical challenges of casting many plays, including *The Comedy of Errors*, are daunting, and audiences are required to suspend their disbelief if they are to appreciate and enjoy the play. The ending of *The Comedy of Errors* is always especially tricky to perform, as all the

characters encounter each other face to face for the first time, and directors over the years have come up with various ingenious solutions, some of which were perceived as being more successful than others. But isn't it also the case that every play requires a certain suspension of disbelief if we are to experience fully the delight, or the catharsis, that the play offers to provide? *The Comedy of Errors* reminds us, boldly, that all acting is about assuming an identity different from one's own, and that audiences are required to collude in the pretense that what transpires on the stage is reality. Two sets of identical twins, each so alike to his sibling that even the one's spouse can't tell them apart? Why not, Shakespeare seems to say. As easy to believe that as to believe that a young boy actor could convincingly portray a woman (as would have been the case in Shakespeare's England). If everything that transpires on the stage is a fiction that we are nonetheless being asked to take seriously, then why not write a play that calls attention to its own implausibility by reminding us that acting is all about deliberately mistaken identities? As is so often the case with Shakespeare, when we are able to lose ourselves in one of his plays, be it comedy, tragedy, romance, or all three at once, we may actually find ourselves again in one or more of his marvelous, unique, and uniquely human, characters. ❖

Adapting *The Comedy of Errors* at A Noise Within



The Comedy of Errors, Shakespeare's lively and mischievous comedy of mistaken identities, seemingly begs to be staged with some kind of conceptual treatment.

Michael Michetti has previously directed Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *As You Like It* and Moliere's *Don Juan* at A Noise Within. He is Co-Artistic Director of The Theatre @ Boston Court in Pasadena, and is the recipient of two Ovation Awards and four LA Drama Critics Circle Awards, among others, for his work.

I HAVE LONG BEEN A FAN of the early 20th century comics, those who grew out of the traditions of vaudeville and burlesque. A few of these comics went on to lasting fame due to their transition into film and early television (including Abbott and Costello, Burt Lahr, Milton Berle, W. C. Fields and Bob Hope), though most have fallen into obscurity.

American burlesque had its roots in the 19th century in Music Hall and Vaudeville, traditions that had been imported from Europe. But in America, the popular form of entertainment quickly formed its own traditions. American burlesque was rowdy and lowbrow and bawdy, with less manners and more spirit than its European cousins, and emphasized satire for the common man. In its raucous spirit and with its stock characters, American burlesque was akin to the earlier tradition of *commedia dell'arte*, the Italian improvised comedies which also featured stock characters and a similarly boisterous spirit.

In addition to the comics, burlesque also included many colorful novelty and specialty acts. And of course there were the dancers, suggestively dressed women who, through most of the long history of burlesque, performed "naughty" though not explicit dances.

The Comedy of Errors, Shakespeare's lively and mischievous comedy of mistaken identities, seemingly begs to be staged with some kind of conceptual treatment. Recognizing a natural union between the comic antics and winking sensuality of both American burlesque and *The Comedy of Errors*, I discovered my approach.

We're staging the play as though an American burlesque company in the 1920s is doing a production of *The Comedy of Errors*. Each of the characters in Shakespeare's play is performed by a stock member of this imaginary burlesque company: the "Top Banana" or head comic; the "Matinee Idol" or leading man; the "Ingénue" or young leading lady; the "Red Hot Mama," a female comic and singer; the Ventriloquist; the Drag Comic; the Strongman; and of course, the Burlesque Dancers.

I hope the marriage of *The Comedy of Errors* and the world of burlesque will enable us to mine the delights of Shakespeare's delicious comedy, and also expose audiences to the joys of a nearly forgotten era in American entertainment. ❖

—Michael Michetti

In the Classroom: Suggested Activities



Discuss: Before the Performance

After reading the play, do you think Adriana is justified in being suspicious of Antipholus? Consider these facts: he was having a nice gift made for her, but he also did have dinner with the Courtesan after being shooed away from his own house. Would you believe someone you trust, even if your eyes deceived you?

Shakespeare's play is based on Plautus' original work *The Twin Menaechmi* — but adds an additional set of twins to the plot. Why does Shakespeare do this? How does it affect the story?

Who are the "bad guys" in *The Comedy of Errors*? Are there any? What makes someone "bad?" Duke Solinus is an easy target, but what about the characters that break the law?

The theme of mistaken identity of twins is used in stories, movies, and television and has been a common plot line for centuries. Cite some of the many examples in modern media that feature the confusion of identical twins and switching places or bodies. What is the value in this kind of story? Is it actually believable in *The Comedy of Errors* that, for so long, people would have confused both sets of twins?

After the Performance Activity: High Status and Low Status

The Comedy of Errors features servants of very low social standing and nobles, who have high social standing. Often the humor that occurs between them are the result of physical "slapstick" violence and misunderstanding. Play this pair of games to experience some of how the characters may be feeling and acting, depending on their status.

High Status/Low Status Greeting

What to do: Pass around a slip of paper with either the word "low" or "high" on it. There should be about half of each. Then, ask students to mill around the room as a group, making individual handshakes and improvised introductions to each other. After 5 minutes, reconvene in a circle and ask the group to make observations. What kinds of physical changes did they make to convey that they were of high or low status? What about vocal differences? Play the game again, with roles reversed. Which status did they find easier to convey? Which brought to mind a more specific character?

High Status/Low Status Pantomime

What to do: Choose a pair of volunteers. One of the volunteers leaves the room temporarily, where they cannot hear the rest of the group. Discuss with the remaining volunteer which one of the pair of them will be low status and which will be high status, and what their occupation will be. Make the occupation as specific as possible. Some examples: Head chef and Sous chef, Military leader and Soldier, Dance Instructor and Pupil. Then, ask the volunteer outside to return to the room. In a silent pantomime, the volunteer who is aware of the occupation and status of the group is to communicate effectively through the use of gesture what their status and occupation is. After playing for a period of time, as the volunteer to guess the occupation and their status. Ask the class observing: What kinds of clues did the players give and take to tell them about their status and occupation? ❖

CA ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS, Grades 9 & 10: Vocabulary and Concept Development 1.1, 1.2, Literary Response and Analysis 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8, 3.10, Literary Criticism 3.11.

NCTE Standards Addressed: 1. Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works. 3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics). 6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

Visual Arts: Creating the World of *The Comedy of Errors*



Set design by Kurt Boetcher

THE TOPSY-TURVY SET DESIGN of *A Noise Within's The Comedy of Errors* reflects the near-misses and haphazard interactions between the pairs of twins, confused characters, and mixed up townspeople in the play. Set designer Kurt Boetcher's design influences were taken directly from the time period in which the play is set: the 1920s.

"This production of *The Comedy of Errors* transports the modern audience back in time to the 1920's, and is being performed by a troupe of vaudevillian performers which are archetypes from that period. Director Michael Michetti and I decided that this traveling troupe of entertainers has pulled what were once colorfully painted scenery flats out of storage in an old basement, so they're weathered, a bit grungy, and almost sloppily thrown together to create this troupe's comedic version of ancient Greek architecture for their version of Shakespeare's play. Scenic flats from the early 1900's were lightweight, flat walls typically made of fabric stretched taught across a wooden frame, and are painted to look as though they're three dimensional, similar to a pop-up book; This style of visual storytelling was very popular in the early 1900's and is rarely seen today, as stage designs have evolved into a much more cinematic style of storytelling. This design pulls visual influence from vaudeville, burlesque, and even a slight nod to the speakeasy lounges of the 1920s/30s."

Suggested Activities

1. Pop-up Book design: Using the online source listed below and other books and guides for basic pop-up design as reference, create a simple design for a scene from that uses a basic pop-up shape. Encourage the use of a simple square or V-fold design by demonstrating the technique first. A single element in the scene design can pop forward — such as the front door of a house, or a single figure or piece of furniture. When sharing pieces with the class, ask: What kinds of statements can be made about the importance of one element of the design by adding extra dimension in this way? What themes are emphasized — and which ones become less dominant? For a great list of references on making pop-up books, visit: <http://robertsabuda.com/popupbib.asp>. Or, visit this page of free downloadable patterns from author Robert Sabuda: <http://freebies.about.com/gi/o.htm?zi=1/XJ&zTi=1&sdn=freebies&cdn=hobbies&tm=4&f=10&tt=11&bt=1&bts=1&zu=http%3A//robertsabuda.com/popmakesimple.asp>

2. Collage: Gather representations of travelling performers such as minstrels, troubadours, vaudevillian actors, or circus performers as depicted in fine art. These can be depictions from various countries throughout the world, and across multiple time periods. Ask students to pick a central theme on which to focus in their collage — such as women in travelling performance, or the role of collapsible scenery in nomadic group performance in a particular country. As a group, ask students to share their artwork and articulate their perspective to the class, noting the ways in which the current social, economic, and political contexts influenced their interpretation of the images they selected. ❖

Music: Tin Pan Alley

A NOISE WITHIN'S production of *The Comedy of Errors* features the music of 1920s America, taking its inspiration from Vaudevillean influences and Tin Pan Alley. A live pianist plays underscoring for the numerous chase sequences, dumb-shows, and the silent movie illustrating Egeon's long soliloquy in which he tells the story of his family's separation. The resulting music for *The Comedy of Errors* transports the audience back to the time of vaudeville — of comedy acts and slapstick, of ventriloquists and burlesque dancers, ukuleles, tin whistles, cow bells, and wooden blocks — and makes the zany world come alive. Director Michael Michetti's vision of the music is that it provides *"underscoring and transitions between scenes, but most importantly it sets the stage for this troupe of actors we see in all sorts of predicaments in the play."*

Tin Pan Alley — the byname of 28th street between Broadway and 5th in New York City in the early 20th century — was the nexus of the music publishing world during a time when the American appetite for new songs and trendy arrangements was insatiable. Largely comprised of so-called "parlor" songs — piano arrangements for popular music intended to be played by amateur musicians in the everyday family home — sheet music papered the nation. Published by companies founded by music greats such as Warner Music and Irving Berlin, parlor music was responsible for numerous craze or fad dances and performers. Composer and pianist George Gershwin was a well-known music "plugger," and was paid to demonstrate the latest tunes in the publishing showroom for Jerome H. Remick and Company, one of the largest publishers. Pluggers were paid to popularize music directly to the general public in order to generate sales, and often brought their cache of sheet music on the road to church meeting houses, group homes, hotels, and other public gathering places.

It was Jerome H. Remick and Company who paid Gershwin \$5 at age 17 for his first song to be published: *When You Want 'Em, You Can't Get 'Em*.



When You've Got 'Em, You Don't Want 'Em. The title itself offers an excellent snapshot into the style of music that became the mainstay for Tin Pan Alley publishers. These were novelty songs based on everyday themes, and often were upbeat or mood-lifting. In fact, some critics have speculated that this somewhat sunny approach to popular music arose in relation to the American psyche's struggle to recover from the after-effects of World War I.

Suggested Activities

1. Popular Songs, Then versus Now: Ask students to bring in an example of contemporary pop music to play for the rest of the class. After playing a representative sample, identify several main themes that run concurrent through the songs. Do they feature issues of romance gone awry? Or troubles with finances, careers, and ambition? Do any of them feature themes of the culture of where the artist is from, or themes of national pride? Then, play a selection from 1920s popular music — Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and the like. (Choose from popular favorites such as "God Bless America," "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "Swanee River," "Give My Regards to Broadway," or "Hello, Ma' Baby, Hello Ma' Ragtime Gal.") Ask students to identify if any of those themes are still present in the songs they brought. Why are they related? How have the messages changed over time? How does popular music function in film? What about television or advertising?

2. Research and Report: Ask students to do a research project on a musical artist of their choice, focusing on the career trajectory of the artist. Begin with their early music education and end with their current endeavors. Ask students to include their first "big break," and how the artist began to be heard on a broader scale. (Did the internet play a factor in their success?) Analyze the musician's influences — for example, did a particular promoter "discover" the artist and promote their work? Did they join together to collaborate artistically with another more well-known artist? How is this similar to the ways in which Tin Pan Alley used song "pluggers" to promote music in the early 20th century? ❖

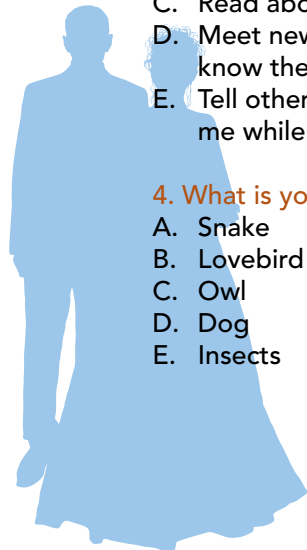
Just for Fun: Reproducible Quiz

Looking for Love?

FIND OUT WHICH SHAKESPEARIAN CHARACTER IS RIGHT FOR YOU!

Student Focus

VERONICA WICKLINE is a 10th grader at Polytechnic High School in Pasadena, California. Avidly enjoying all things Shakespeare, she contributed questions and answers to this quiz in conjunction with the A Noise Within Education Department. Veronica enjoys a wide range of activities, such as competitive Latin trivia, Lincoln Douglas debate, and (of course) acting. Veronica participated in Summer With Shakespeare and conservatory acting classes at A Noise Within for many years. She also wrote this bio.



1. Describe your perfect date.

- A. We would go out to dinner using fake identities and then go to a costume party as our "alter-egos"
- B. We would go camping in the forest and share our feelings for one another while roasting marshmallows
- C. We would spend the night discussing our thoughts on controversial topics
- D. We would have dinner with my family
- E. We would do whatever I wanted to do, from skydiving to getting floor seats at a basketball game

2. What is your favorite movie?

- A. *Spiderman*
- B. *The Notebook*
- C. *The Matrix*
- D. *The Parent Trap*
- E. *Mean Girls*

3. What do you like to do on the weekends?

- A. Throw water balloons at people and then hide
- B. Write poetry
- C. Read about religion and science
- D. Meet new people and get to know them
- E. Tell other people to do things for me while lying in my bed

4. What is your favorite animal?

- A. Snake
- B. Lovebird
- C. Owl
- D. Dog
- E. Insects

5. Who do you confide in?

- A. Nobody, I can only trust myself
- B. I tell everyone who will listen to me about everything going on in my life
- C. I talk to my teachers at school
- D. My older relatives
- E. I only tell people things if it will help me to blackmail them

6. If you were to throw a party, what would be the theme?

- A. A Masquerade Ball
- B. A Valentine's Day party where everyone would get paired up with someone they didn't know before and spend the night talking to them
- C. I would never throw a party
- D. It would be a mystery party where you would have to follow clues to find someone who was hiding
- E. It would be a party all about me

7. It is your one year anniversary.

What do you hope you will get as a gift from your significant other?

- A. A priceless family heirloom, like a ring or watch
- B. Beautiful flowers and chocolates
- C. A day at the spa together
- D. A big party with all of your family and friends
- E. A car or a new computer

8. Where is your dream honeymoon spot?

- A. Las Vegas
- B. Hawaii
- C. Europe
- D. Disneyland
- E. I'm never getting married because nobody is good enough for me

Theatre Lore

What is a raked stage?

Where do the terms upstage and downstage originate?

Historically, stages were built on inclines, with the backs of the stages slightly higher than the fronts. The incline was called a rake and helped those in the back of the audience see the action onstage. Eventually, theatres started placing seats on inclines instead of stages, but the terminology stuck. Downstage is the front of the stage, closest to the audience, and upstage is the back of the stage. Some theatres, like *A Noise Within*, still participate in the tradition of using raked stages.

What is a ghost light?

There is a superstition that if an emptied theater is ever left completely dark, a ghost will take up residence. In other versions of the same superstition the ghosts of past performances return to the stage to live out their glory moments. To prevent this, a single light called a ghost light is left burning at center stage after the audience and all of the actors and musicians have gone.

Now, those in the world of theatre know that a "dark" theatre is one without a play. There is nothing sadder to a dramatic artist than an empty house and a playless stage. Therefore, a light is left burning center stage so that the theatre is never "dark;" it is simply awaiting the next production.

9. What adjective best describes you?

- A. Mysterious
- B. Passionate
- C. Intellectual
- D. Inquisitive
- E. Convincing

SCORING

Count how many times you chose each letter. Depending on the letter you chose most often, you are most compatible with:

- A. **Portia** from *Merchant of Venice* or **Prince Hal** from *Henry IV, Part I*. You like someone who deceives others and likes to play tricks on their friends.
- B. **Hermia** from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or **Romeo** from *Romeo and Juliet*. You like someone who loves romance and would do anything for you.
- C. **Isabella** from *Measure for Measure* or **Hamlet** from *Hamlet*. You like someone who thinks about deep, philosophical questions and sometimes has to sacrifice their loved ones.
- D. **Antipholus of Syracuse** from *The Comedy of Errors* or **Viola** from *Twelfth Night*. You like someone who cares deeply about their family and having a relationship with them.
- E. **Lady Macbeth** from *Macbeth* or **Iago** from *Othello*. You like someone who knows how to get what they want and can manipulate other people.

Resource Guide



BOOKS ON SHAKESPEARE

- Asimov, Isaac. *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare*. Doubleday, 1978.
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- Slavitt, David R. and Bovie, Palmer, Ed. *Plautus: The Comedies (Complete Roman Drama in Translation, Vol. 1.)* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. Contains the secondary source material for "The Comedy of Errors," *Amphitryon*.

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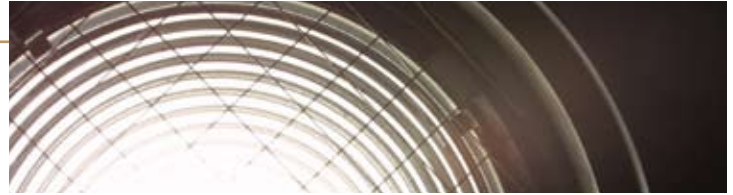
- The Folger Library—www.folger.edu
- Play Shakespeare: The Ultimate Free Shakespeare Resource—<http://www.playshakespeare.com>
- Tin Pan Alley: From the New York City Historic Districts Council: <http://hdc.org/blog/2008/11/14/a-brief-ish-history-of-tin-pan-alley/>
- The Women of Tin Pan Alley: From PBS American Masters Series: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/women-of-tin-pan-alley/about-the-women-of-tin-pan-alley/720/>
- Vaudeville: From PBS Masters Series: <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/episodes/vaudeville/about-vaudeville/721/>

FILM & RECORDINGS

- William Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. This BBC film production from 2000 stars Michael Kitchen. Available from Ambrose Video or at Amazon.com
- *The Boys from Syracuse*, starring Martha Raye and Allen Jones. Original cast recording and DVD available on Amazon.
- *Big Business*, starring Lily Tomlin and Bette Midler. Directed by Jim Abrahams in 1998.

POP-UP BOOKS

- Valenta, Barbara. *Pop-O-Mania*. Dial Books, 1997. ISBN: 0-8037-1947-7. \$16.99. 22 x 28 cm. 15 pages.
- Barton, Carol. *The Pocket Paper Engineer, Volume 2: Platforms and Props: How to Make Pop-Ups Step-by-Step*. Popular Kinetics Press, 2008. ISBN: 978-0962775222. 9.3x6.3 inches. 72 pages.



Being an Audience Member

Today, movies and television take audiences away from what was once the number one form of amusement: going to the theatre. But attending a live theatrical performance is still one of the most thrilling and active forms of entertainment.

In a theatre, observers are catapulted into the action, especially at an intimate venue like *A Noise Within*, whose thrust stage reaches out into the audience and whose actors can see, hear, and feel the response of the crowd. Although playhouses in the past could sometimes be rowdy, participating in the performance by giving respect and attention to the actors is the most appropriate behavior at a theatrical performance today. Shouting out (or even whispering) can be heard throughout the auditorium, as can rustling paper or ringing phones.

After *A Noise Within's* performance of *The Comedy of Errors*, you will have the opportunity to discuss the play's content and style with the performing artists and directors. You may wish to remind students to observe the performance carefully or to compile questions ahead of time so they are prepared to participate in the discussion.

Theatre Vocabulary

These terms will be included in pre- and post-performance discussions at *A Noise Within*.

blocking: The instructions a director gives his actors that tell them how and where to move in relation to each other or to the set in a particular scene.

character: The personality or part portrayed by an actor on stage.

conflict: The opposition of people or forces which causes the play's rising action.

dramatic irony: A dramatic technique used by a writer in which a character is unaware of something the audience knows.

genre: Literally, "kind" or "type." In literary terms, genre refers to the main types of literary form, principally comedy and tragedy. It can also refer to forms that are more specific to a given historical era, such as the revenge tragedy, or to more specific sub-genres of tragedy and comedy such as the comedy of manners, farce or social drama.

motivation: The situation or mood which initiates an action. Actors often look for their "motivation" when they try to dissect how a character thinks or acts.

props: Items carried on stage by an actor to represent objects mentioned in or implied by the script. Sometimes the props are actual, sometimes they are manufactured in the theatre shop.

proscenium stage: There is usually a front curtain on a proscenium stage. The audience views the play from the front through a "frame" called the proscenium arch. In this scenario, all audience members have the same view of the actors.

set: The physical world created on stage in which the action of the play takes place.

setting: The environment in which a play takes place. It may include the historical period as well as the physical space.

stage areas: The stage is divided into areas to help the director to note where action will take place.

Upstage is the area furthest from the audience. **Downstage** is the area closest to the audience. **Center stage** defines the middle of the playing space. **Stage left** is the actor's left as he faces the audience. **Stage right** is the actor's right as he faces the audience.

theme: The overarching message or main idea of a literary or dramatic work. A recurring idea in a play or story.

thrust stage: A stage that juts out into the audience seating area so that patrons are seated on three sides. In this scenario, audience members see the play from varying viewpoints. *A Noise Within* features a thrust stage.

About A Noise Within

A NOISE WITHIN'S MISSION is to produce the great works of world drama in rotating repertory, with a company of professional, classically-trained actors. *A Noise Within* educates the public through comprehensive outreach efforts and conservatory training programs that foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of history's greatest plays and playwrights.

As the only company in southern California working in the repertory tradition (rotating productions using a resident ensemble of professional, trained artists), *A Noise Within* is dedicated solely to producing classical literature from authors such as Shakespeare, Molière, Ibsen, Shaw, and Euripides.

The company was formed in 1991 by founders Geoff Elliott and Julia Rodriguez-Elliott, both of whom were classically trained at the acclaimed American Conservatory Theatre in San Francisco. They envisioned *A Noise Within* after recognizing a lack of professional, classical productions and education in Southern California and sought out and assembled their own company of actors to meet the need. All of *A Noise Within's* resident artists have been classically

trained, and many hold Master of Fine Arts degrees from some of the nation's most respected institutions, such as Juilliard, Yale, and the American Conservatory Theatre.

In its 17-year history, *A Noise Within* has garnered over 500 awards and commendations, including the Los Angeles Drama Critics' Circle's revered Polly Warfield Award for Excellence and the coveted Margaret Hartford Award for Sustained Excellence.

In 2004, *A Noise Within* accepted an invitation to collaborate with the Los Angeles Philharmonic for a tandem performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Hollywood Bowl.

More than 25,000 individuals attend productions at *A Noise Within* annually, and the company draws over 10,000 student participants to its education programs every year. Students benefit from in-school workshops, conservatory training, and an internship program, as well as subsidized tickets to matinee and evening performances, discussions with artists, and state standards-compliant study guides.

Study Guides

A Noise Within creates California standards-compliant study guides to help educators prepare their students for their visit to our theatre. Study guides are available at no extra cost to download through our website: www.anoisewithin.org. All of the information and activities outlined in these guides are designed to work in compliance with Visual and Performing Arts, English Language, and other subject standards as set forth by the state of California.

Study guides include background information on the plays and playwrights, historical context, textual analysis, in-depth discussion of *A Noise Within's* artistic interpretation of the work, interviews with directors and designers, as well as discussion points and suggested classroom activities. Guides from past seasons are also available to download from the website.



Study Guide Credits

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