the Comedy of errors

teacher handbook

chicago shakespeare theater
on navy pier

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This Teacher Handbook grew out of a team effort of teachers past and present, Chicago Shakespeare Theater artists, interns, educators, and scholars. Chicago Shakespeare Theater gratefully acknowledges the groundbreaking and indelible work of Dr. Rex Gibson and the Cambridge School Shakespeare Series, whose contributions to the field of teaching have helped shape our own work through the years.

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Artistic Director
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Executive Director

Chicago Shakespeare Theater is Chicago's professional theater dedicated to the works of William Shakespeare. Founded as Shakespeare Repertory in 1986, the company moved to its seven-story home on Navy Pier in 1999. In its Elizabethan-style courtyard theater, 500 seats on three levels wrap around a deep thrust stage, with only nine rows separating the farthest seat from the stage. Chicago Shakespeare also features a flexible 180-seat black box studio theater, and a Teacher Resource Center. In 2017, a new, innovative performance venue, The Yard at Chicago Shakespeare, was built, expanding CST's campus to include three theaters. The year-round, flexible venue can be configured in a variety of shapes and sizes with audience capacities ranging from 150 to 850, defining the audience–artist relationship to best serve each production. Now in its thirty-third season, the Theater has produced nearly the entire Shakespeare canon: *All's Well That Ends Well, Antony and Cleopatra, As You Like It, The Comedy of Errors, Cymbeline, Edward III, Hamlet, Henry IV Parts 1 and 2, Henry V, Henry VI Parts 1, 2, and 3, Henry VIII, Julius Caesar, King John, King Lear, Love's Labor's Lost, Macbeth, Measure for Measure, The Merchant of Venice, The Merry Wives of Windsor, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, Othello, Pericles, Richard II, Richard III, Romeo and Juliet, The Taming of the Shrew, The Tempest, Timon of Athens, Troilus and Cressida, Twelfth Night, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, The Two Noble Kinsmen,* and *The Winter's Tale.* Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago's Jeff Awards have honored the Theater year after year, including repeated awards for Best Production and Best Director, the two highest honors in Chicago theater. Since Chicago Shakespeare's founding, its programming for young audiences has been an essential element in the realization of its mission. Team Shakespeare supports education in our schools, where Shakespeare is part of every required curriculum. As a theater in a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to life for tens of thousands of middle and high school students each year. Team Shakespeare's programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of main stage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year of one of the "curriculum plays." Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools. The Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, DC, honored that vision with the prestigious Shakespeare Steward Award, and as a recipient of the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, the department's work in education was celebrated at the White House in 2014. The 2019-20 Season offers student matinees for three of Chicago Shakespeare Theater's full-length productions: in the fall, David Seidler's *The King's Speech* directed by Michael Wilson; in the winter, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet directed by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines; and in the spring, Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, adapted and directed by Daryl Cloran and conceived by the Bard on the Beach Shakespeare Festival. Also this winter, a 75-minute abridged version of *The Comedy of Errors* will be performed for student and family audiences at the Theater on Navy Pier and will then tour to Chicago Public Schools for the last two weeks of its two-month run. ∎

SHAKESPEARE'S
the Comedy of Errors

"Error"—that worrisome word we try to avoid whenever humanly possible—came to us from the Romans' word meaning "to go astray, to wander."

The Comedy of Errors is a comedy like no other Shakespeare wrote again. It is, without question, (unless *we're* possibly in error...) his fastest, wackiest, dizziest play—the consequence of having not just one, but two sets of identical brothers, and all four completely clueless that their twins are in same town, at the same time, and causing total confusion.

Remember the last time you realized that you were totally clueless? About a math problem you couldn't solve. Or finding your way around a new school. Or maybe about somebody's feelings for you. When we're clueless—as we all inevitably are from time to time—we're inclined, like the characters in Shakespeare's *Comedy*, to wander. From place to place looking for family. Away from home looking for love. Maybe even toward people we think we know but really don't.

Shakespeare gets us to laugh at all those errors that they— and we sometimes—make. In fact, he makes us laugh a lot at them. So, welcome to the world of Shakespeare's play, completely devoted to the comedy of human error!

LIVING ART: CREATING COMMUNITY IN THE PLAYHOUSE

[Theatrical performance] is essentially a sociable, communal affair. This is important. To resist this is, I think, to ruin one of the very important parts of the theatrical experience. Let the play and let the fact that temporarily you are not your private self, but a member of a closely fused group, make it easy for the performance to 'take you out of yourself.' This, I suggest, is the object of going to a play… to be taken out of yourself, out of your ordinary life, away from the ordinary world of everyday.

–TYRONE GUTHRIE, 1962

As a living art, a play is performed for a group of people who gather and, at each performance, create a unique and singular audience, experiencing a story together as a community—just as you will soon at Chicago Shakespeare Theater. Drama not only tells stories about human communication, it *is* human communication. Different from television or film, theater creates a two-way communication between the actors and their audience. You are not simply on the receiving end of this communication: the audience is also a participant. Here at Chicago Shakespeare Theater, you become part of the story.

During Shakespeare's time, playhouses were gathering places for Londoners from all walks of life to experience a story, together. Because most of Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed outdoors in daylight, the actors and the audience could see each other. The audience was part of the performance—they didn't sit in a darkened theater as they typically do today. In Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theater, the actors and their audience are so close together that the actors can see almost everyone in the audience—and they can hear everyone. Sitting this close to the stage and actors, the audience becomes part of the world of the play.

You know Sir Patrick Stewart from *Star Trek: The Next Generation*—but Stewart spent most of his illustrious career on stage. He said once that most "audiences don't understand how essential they are to the experience, and what an impact they can have on it." Theater can't exist without an audience. Actor

How can you help us give you the best performance we can?

- **Please, no talking during the performance.** It distracts the actors as well as the people sitting nearby.

- **Respond naturally to our play.** Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry, and even gasp—but as a natural response to the story, and not in order to distract attention from the stage.

- **Please leave all "noisemakers"**—food, gum, cell phones, smart watches, etc.—back at school or on the bus. In a quiet theater, wrappers, munching—and even a phone's vibration—are heard by all, the actors included.

- **No photographs of any kind, please.** Flashbulbs can make the actors lose their focus and can be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, as is text-messaging.

Cristina Panfilio, who played Helena in Chicago Shakespeare's recent production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, explained to students at a performance: "I never find myself until the audience shows up." Film and Broadway actor Jason Robards once said, "An audience is really another performer in the play." We are used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing a role—and a leading one, at that.

Because theater is art that lives and breathes, each performance is guaranteed to be unique—because each audience and what it brings is unique. The success of a live performance depends upon its audience and their honest responses. When an audience is unengaged, the story is less dynamic and compelling. And when the actors experience a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. We hope you'll enjoy your role as a member of this storytelling community—and will help us create a dramatic experience that you'll always remember. ∎
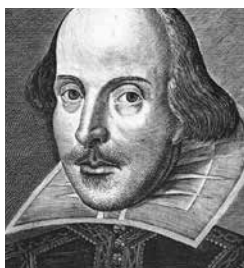
BARD'S BIO

The exact date of William Shakespeare's birth is not known, but his baptism (traditionally held three days after a child's birth) was recorded on April 26, 1564. His father, John Shakespeare, was a tanner, glover, grain dealer, and prominent town official of the thriving market town of Stratford-upon-Avon. His mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a prosperous, educated farmer. Though the records are lost, Shakespeare undoubtedly attended Stratford's grammar school, where he would have acquired knowledge of Latin and the classical writers, training in rhetoric and analysis of texts, and gained a smattering of arithmetic as well as instruction in the articles of the Christian faith. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

At the age of eighteen, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, eight years his senior. They had one daughter, Susanna, followed by twins, Hamnet and Judith. Hamnet, Shakespeare's only son, died at age eleven. From 1585, the year in which the twins were baptized, until 1592 when he is first referred to as a dramatist in London, we know nothing of Shakespeare's life. Consequently, these seven so-called "lost years" are filled with legend and conjecture. We may never know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of the theater. The first reference to Shakespeare as an actor and playwright appears in 1592 and was made by Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, who attacked Shakespeare as an "upstart crow" for presuming to write plays (when he was only a mere actor) and for copying the material of established dramatists.

By the early 1590s Shakespeare emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright, and part-owner of one of London's leading theater companies for nearly twenty years. Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and a playwright, but also a shareholder in a new theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men, which soon became one of London's two principal companies. With the accession of James I in 1603, the company's name changed to the King's Men, and it thrived until the Commonwealth closed the theaters in 1642.

During his career, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated on what most scholars now agree upon as thirty-eight plays. His earliest plays—including *Love's Labor's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Richard III*, *King John*, and *The Taming of the Shrew*—were written between 1589 and 1594. Between 1594 and 1599, Shakespeare wrote both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Julius Caesar* as well as other plays, including *Richard II*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Twelfth Night*. His great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*—were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last plays traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*. The earlier histories, comedies, and tragedies made way for Shakespeare's final dramatic form—the plays commonly termed "romances" or "tragicomedies" for their blending of the comic and tragic forms. Written between 1606 and 1611, the romances include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These were the plays of a playwright no longer bound by the constraints of his earlier forms.

Although some quarto versions of the plays were printed in Shakespeare's lifetime, there is no definitive extant evidence to suggest that he directly oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after his death, that his complete plays were published in the First Folio. However, we do know that Shakespeare did oversee the publication of two narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets during his lifetime. Shakespeare retired ca. 1611 to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616. ∎
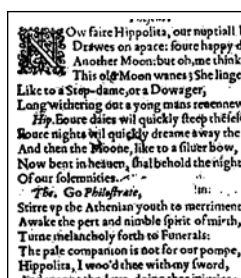
THE FIRST FOLIO

Throughout much of the Renaissance, plays did not occupy the same high cultural status that we attribute to them today. In fact, theatrical texts were not viewed as "literature" at all. When a play was published (if it was published at all) it was printed inexpensively in a small book, called a "quarto," the sixteenth-century equivalent of our paperbacks. It was not until 1616, the year of Shakespeare's death, when a contemporary English poet and dramatist, Ben Jonson, published his own plays in a large-format book called a "folio"—the format traditionally reserved for the authoritative texts of religious and classical works. Jonson sought

to challenge the pervasive understanding of theatrical texts as holding little literary value, that plays began to be understood as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture for many years.

During Shakespeare's lifetime, only half of his plays were ever published, and those were printed as quartos. He did, however, oversee the publication of two narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets. It was not until seven years after the playwright's death that two of his close colleagues decided to gather his plays for publication in a move of threefold significance: as a gesture of homage to a long-time friend and colleague; as a promotion of the King's Men as a theater company of the highest cultural prestige; and as a financial venture with lucrative potential.

In 1623 what is now known as the First Folio, a book containing thirty-six of Shakespeare's estimated thirty-eight plays, was published. Modern textual scholars maintain that the First Folio was likely compiled from a combination of stage prompt books and other theatrical documents, the playwright's handwritten manuscripts (no longer extant), and various versions of some of the plays already published. Shakespeare's First Folio took five compositors two-and-one-half years to print. The compositors manually set each individual letter of type, memorizing the text line by line to increase efficiency as they moved down the page. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the compositors frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected, but due to the high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, and each is slightly different. Chicago's Newberry Library contains an original First Folio in its rich collections.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater traditionally utilizes the First Folio as the basis for its play scripts. The First Folio still serves as a manual for many Shakespearean actors nearly 400 years after its publication because the editors of the First Folio took theatrical documents as their basis for printing. Its punctuation, capitalizations, variant spellings, line breaks, and rhetorical structures all give clues to actors and directors about what words to emphasize and about what ideas are important—helping them to break open and examine the language. In Shakespeare's own theater company, with only a few days to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues

were essential and provided information for members of the entire company. Today, these textual clues still help modern actors make the language easier to break apart—even though they're speaking language that's 400 years "younger" than ours. ■

This is the book that gave us Shakespeare (or most of Shakespeare)… But the way it presented Shakespeare was carefully calculated to make a collection of theatre works look plausible as what we would now call works of literature. The book not only gives us the texts; it gives us Shakespeare as a cultural icon.

–JOHN JOWETT, 2007

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Elizabeth I–daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn–ruled England for forty-five years, from 1558 to 1603, in a time of relative prosperity and peace. "Few monarchs," says Shakespeare scholar David Bevington, "have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently." He maintains that "[her] combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary," and resulted in a monarchy that remained secure in the face of religious and political threats from many sides. In choosing not to marry, Elizabeth avoided allying herself and her throne with a foreign country or an English faction which may have threatened her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout early modern Europe–the period that spans the timeframe from after the late portion of the Middle Ages (*ca.*1500) through the beginning of the Age of Revolutions (*ca.*1800)–governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords, but the rule of monarchs like Queen Elizabeth I was still absolute, just as it had been understood in earlier historical periods. The monarch was seen as God's deputy on earth, and the divine right of kings (the theory that the monarch derives his/her power to rule and authority from God alone) was a cherished doctrine. It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against both.

The politics of religion constantly threatened Elizabeth's reign, even though it was one of the most secure that England had known for hundreds of years. As the daughter of Henry VIII's marriage following his divorce from Catherine of Aragon, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and thus an illegitimate monarch. Upon her ascension to the throne, Elizabeth I inherited the rule of a country that, in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, was engaged in the process of attempting to make sense of its own history. Religious power changed hands during the early modern period with astonishing rapidity.

Literary critic Stephen Greenblatt reminds us that within living memory, England transformed from a highly conservative Roman Catholic State (in the 1520s Henry VIII fiercely attacked Martin Luther and the pope awarded him with the title "Defender of the Faith"). England then shifted first to a wary, tentative Protestantism; subsequently to a more radical Protestantism; later to a renewed and militant Roman Catholicism; and then, with Elizabeth and James, to Protestantism once again. The English were living in a world where few people had clear memories of a

time without religious confusion. Under Elizabeth, England had returned to Protestantism, and the Church of England's government was held under the direct authority of the crown (and England's conforming Protestant clergy).

In addition, Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. The country withdrew from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World were just beginning. There was a period of internal economic development as Elizabeth ignored the counsel of her advisors and kept out of war until the attempted invasion by Spain and the Great Armada in 1588. England's economy was still based in agriculture, and its farmers were poor and embittered by strife with rich landowners who "enclosed" what was once the farmers' cropland for pastures. Uprisings and food riots were commonplace in the rural area surrounding Stratford-upon-Avon, where Shakespeare grew up. London, then the largest city of Europe, was a city of contrasts: the richest and the poorest of England lived there, side by side. While many bettered themselves in a developing urban economy, unemployment was

The "Renaissance" vs. "Early Modern"

You'll see the period from 1500 to 1700 called the Renaissance in many places. But in this handbook—and in contemporary scholarship, the period is referenced instead as "early modern." Why the shift? It was French historian Jules Michelet who in 1858 first used the term "renaissance" to describe the artistic, political, and cultural revolution that swept through Europe following the Medieval period. In French, "renaissance" means "rebirth," descriptive of Europe's rapid change as it emerged from the widespread famine and mortality to its focus, upon other endeavors, on art and culture. But as it looks *back* to the era preceding it, the term "renaissance" doesn't capture just how much this period relates to *modern* times, and to us. The key advancements of this period—the age of exploration and the standardization of written English, as just two examples—make a different kind of sense as we connect them forward to events that have happened, and continue to happen, still shaping our world today.

During the early modern period, the world became increasingly global as ship manufacturing spiked to accommodate a new international market. Countries, once isolated, were linked together through trade, and the age of exploration expanded the vision of the world further. From the early modern period, we hold on to the vision of an economically, politically, and philosophically connected world.

The early modern period ushered in dramatic changes to literacy. The invention of the printing press (*ca.* 1440) necessitated the standardization of spelling and sentence structure, and the English language was transformed. And though Shakespeare's language might sound old to our ears, it is far closer to our contemporary English than it is to Middle and Old English—which are actually taught to this day as foreign languages at university. It can take a bit of work, persistence, and practice to unlock some of Shakespeare's language, but in his words we see the language that evolved directly into the English we know and use today.

a serious problem. As England eventually began what would be a long transition from an economy based mostly in agriculture to one of increased reliance upon trade and the manufacture of goods, both cities and social structures would evolve rapidly—it was a time of change and social mobility. For the first time in English history, a rising middle class aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

As Elizabeth had no heir, the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation's peace throughout her reign, and Elizabeth I died childless in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. Ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), James I was famously responsible for overseeing a new translation of the English Bible—the 1611 King James Version—which, with its powerful syntax, remains a legacy of this fertile time, just as Shakespeare's canon has. But national peace was never quite secured, and the reign of James I was troubled with political and religious controversy. James's son, Charles I, would be beheaded in the English Civil War of the 1640s for tyrannically abusing what he believed was his divinely ordained power. ■

THE EARLY MODERN ENGLISH THEATER

A time of historical transition of incredible social upheaval and change, the English Renaissance provided fertile ground for creative innovation. The early modern period stands as the bridge between England's very recent medieval past and its near future in the centuries commonly referred to as the "Age of Exploration," or the Enlightenment. When the English Renaissance is considered within its wider historical context, it is perhaps not surprising that the early modern period produced so many important dramatists and literary luminaries, with William Shakespeare as a significant example.

Because of its unique placement at a crossroad in history, the early modern English period served as the setting for a number of momentous historical events: the radical re-conception of the English state, the beginnings of a new economy of industry, an explosion of exploration and colonialism, and the break with

Andy Truschinski as Antipholus of Ephesus, Brian Hammon as Dromio of Syracuse, and Tiffany Scott as Adriana in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

traditional religion as the Church of England separated from the Catholic Church. It is perhaps this last example of cultural upheaval—the changes brought from Continental Europe by the Protestant Reformation—that provides us with a useful lens to examine the culture of theater in England during this period, in particular.

It is held by scholars today that Shakespeare as a boy would have witnessed in his hometown the acting troupes that were still traveling from town to town—the early modern successors to a long heritage of English theater carried over from the Middle Ages. Troupes often enacted important stories from the Bible, staged tales of mystery and miracles, or presented their audiences with the stories of the lives of saints and heroes of the faith.

These companies would travel in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, stage, and storage for their props and costumes. They would pull into a town square, into an inn yard, or the courtyard of a country estate or college, and transform that space into a theater. People gathered around to watch, some standing on the ground in front of the players' stage, some leaning over the rails from balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

But during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as the Protestant Reformation gained surer footing in England, the theater was caught between conflicting ideas about the value and purpose of drama. Many officials of the Protestant Reformation were determined to outlaw these traveling performances for their strong Catholic sensibilities; and even as late as 1606 James I passed legislation to remove all treatment of religious matters from the English playhouses.

But as the stories enacted in the newly constructed public theaters became more secular, public officials scorned the theater as immoral and frivolous. The theaters just outside London's walls came to be feared as places where moral and social corruption spread. The authorities frequently shut them down during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries when the city was menaced by the plague and, frequently too, by political rioting. When the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word of a new play before it could be staged. But the practical enforcement of such measures was often sketchy at best, and playing companies themselves found plenty of ways around the strictures of the theatrical censors.

A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, in the decade prior to Shakespeare's own arrival on to the London theater scene. Burbage skirted rigid restrictions governing entertainment in London by placing his theater just outside the city walls, in a community with the unglamorous name of "Shoreditch." Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council of London by setting up shop in Shoreditch. His neighbors were other businesses of marginal repute, including London's brothels and bear-baiting arenas. Actors in Shakespeare's day were legally given the status of "vagabonds." They were considered little better than common criminals unless they could secure the patronage of a nobleman or, better still, the monarch.

Shakespeare and his fellow actors managed to secure both. They provided popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth I's court as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and they continued to enjoy court patronage after James I came to the throne in 1603, when they became the King's Men. Their success at court gave Shakespeare and his fellow shareholders in the company the funds to build the new Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe then joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city's jurisdiction as one of the first public theaters in England.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers—a full house could accommodate as many as 3,000 people. The audience typically arrived well before the play began to meet friends, drink ale, and snack on the refreshments sold at the plays. An outing to the theater was a highly social and communal event and might take half the day. It was more like tailgating at a football game, or going with friends to a rock concert, than our experience of attending theater today.

Affluent patrons paid two to three pence or more for gallery seats (like the two levels of balcony seating in Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theater), while the "common folk"—shopkeepers, artisans, and apprentices—stood for a penny, about a day's wages for a skilled worker. The audience of the early modern playhouse was a diverse and demanding group, and so it is often noted that Shakespeare depicted characters and situations that appealed to every cross-section of early modern English society. Audience appeal was a driving force

for the theater as a business venture, and so during this period most new plays had short runs and were seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows and, because of the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

There was, of course, no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic. Since early modern English plays were written to be performed without scene breaks, a throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action or lowered from a pulley above. For example, when stage directions in *Macbeth* indicate that "a banquet is prepared," the stage keepers likely prepared the banquet in full view of the audience. From what scholars can best reconstruct about performance conventions, Shakespeare's plays were performed primarily in "contemporary dress"—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare's time—regardless of the play's historical setting. Company members with tailoring skills sewed many of the company's stock costumes, and hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy often provided the elegant costumes for the play's nobility. Because women were not permitted to act on the English stage until 1660, female roles were performed by boys or young men, their male physique disguised with elaborate dresses and wigs. The young actors were readily accepted as women by the audience.

After an extremely productive creative period spanning about 100 years—often called the "Golden Age" of the English theater—the Puritans, now in power of the government, succeeded in 1642 in closing the theaters altogether. The public theaters did not reopen until the English monarchy was restored and Charles II came to the throne in 1660. A number of theaters, including the Globe, were open long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. The fire, combined with the eighteen years of Commonwealth rule—the so-called Interregnum ("between kings")—led to the loss of many of the primary sources that would have provided us with further evidence of the staging traditions of Shakespeare's theater. The new theater of the Restoration approached plays, including Shakespeare's, quite differently, often rewriting and adapting original scripts to suit the audience's contemporary tastes. It is left to scholars of early modern English drama to reconstruct the practices of Renaissance theater from clues left behind. ∎

COURTYARD-STYLE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's unique performance space reflects elements of both the first public playhouses in London and the courtyards of inns temporarily transformed into theaters, in which the young Shakespeare might first have acquired his love of the stage. The interior of the Globe playhouse, opened in 1599, was simple, and similar to that of Chicago Shakespeare Theater—a raised platform for the stage surrounded by an open, circular area, with seating on three levels, one above the other. Both theaters use a thrust stage with an open performance area upstage; basically, the entire performance space is in the shape of a capital "T." With the audience seated on three sides of the thrust stage, the play is staged in the middle of them. An architect for Chicago Shakespeare Theater describes the experience of theater staged in this way: "You're the scenery. You're the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front, and out of, you."

If you think about a more traditional theater's proscenium arch "framing" what is (not literally) a two-dimensional stage picture behind it, the thrust stage by contrast creates a three-dimensional picture for an audience that surrounds it on three sides. The people sitting in the side seats have the closest interaction with the performers, and the performers with them. The play unfolds between the audience members seated along the sides, and the actors draw upon the responses of the audience (laughter, gasps, nervous shifting in chairs when tension mounts) as they perform. As an audience member, your facial expressions and body language serve both as the focal point of the actors' energy and the backdrop for the other audience members seated across from you. Architect David Taylor and his company, Theatre Projects Consultants, worked closely with Chicago Shakespeare Theater to design this courtyard theater. "It's important that we don't lose the performer among the faces, but it's essential to understand that every single face is a live piece of scenery reflecting and framing what's going on," Taylor explains. "That's the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design."

"The backdrop and the scenery for Shakespeare is the human race," Taylor notes, "so we're putting Shakespeare into its proper context by making human faces the backdrop for those sitting in any seat in the theater." According to Taylor:

> This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience. The courtyard experience was about leaning out of windows. It was about throwing open the windows in the courtyard when the stage was brought through on a cart and leaning out and interacting.

Audience members seated in the galleries at Chicago Shakespeare Theater are encouraged to use the "leaning rails" to watch the players below—like those watching from an inn's balconies centuries ago when traveling troupes set up their temporary stages.

The actors and the audience share the experience of seeing and interacting with one another. Taylor thinks that actors benefit tremendously from the courtyard design: "They're not looking at people sitting in straight rows, disconnected from everybody around them in big seats. There's a sense of community in the space, a sense of embracing the performer on stage." Actors are always fed by the energy generated from their audience. The design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater offers a feast of feedback to the actors on its stage.

Other theaters have been modeled upon the Elizabethan experience of courtyard theater, perhaps most notably the Royal Shakespeare Company's Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Swan served as a model for Chicago Shakespeare's Courtyard Theater. Besides their deep thrust stages that were designed to create an intimate relationship between actors and audience, prominent architectural elements in both theaters are the brick walls that surround the audience and natural wood that creates a feeling of warmth. Brick is an aesthetic choice but, due to its particular design, it also serves as an acoustic choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls helps diffuse sound, sending it in different directions throughout the theater. The sound, lighting, and rigging systems are all state-of-the-art. Chicago Shakespeare Theater's design accommodates a wide array of possibilities for structuring and using the performance space. ■

Ross Lehman and Timothy Edward Kane in the 2008 Chicago Shakespeare Theater production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Rendering for original costume design by Ana Kuzmanic Chicago Shakespeare Theater 2005 production, directed by David H. Bell

TIMELINE

1300

1326 Founding of universities at Oxford and Cambridge

1348 Boccaccio's *Decameron*

1349 Bubonic Plague kills one-third of England's population

1387 Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*

1400

ca.1440 Johannes Gutenberg invents printing press

1472 Dante's *Divine Comedy* first printed

1492 Christopher Columbus lands at Cuba

1497 Vasco da Gama sails around the Cape of Good Hope

1500

1501-4 Michelangelo's *David* sculpture

1503 Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*

1512 Copernicus' *Commentarioulus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around the sun

1518 License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorens de Gominzot

1519 Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world

Conquest of Mexico by Cortez

1522 Luther's translation of the New Testament

1531 Henry VIII recognized as Supreme Head of the Church of England

1533 Henry VIII secretly marries Anne Boleyn, and is excommunicated by Pope

1539 Hernando de Soto explores Florida

1540 García López de Cárdenas "discovers" Grand Canyon

1541 Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

1558 Coronation of Queen Elizabeth I

1562 John Hawkins begins slave trade between Guinea and West Indies

1564 Birth of William Shakespeare and Galileo

1565 Pencils first manufactured in England

1570 Pope Pius V excommunicates Queen Elizabeth

1573 Francis Drake sees the Pacific Ocean

1576 Mayor of London forbids theatrical performances in the City

Burbage erects first public theater in England (the "Theater" in Shoreditch)

1577 Drake's trip around the world

1580 *Essays* of Montaigne published

1582 Marriage license issued for William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway

Daughter Susanna Shakespeare christened

1585 Christening of son Hamnet and twin Judith

1587 Mary Queen of Scots executed

1588 Destruction of the Spanish Armada

1592 Shakespeare listed with the Lord Chamberlain's Men

1593-4 Plague closes London playhouses for 20 months

1595 Coat of arms granted to Shakespeare's father, John

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS *ca.* 1592-1595

COMEDIES
Love's Labor's Lost
The Comedy of Errors
The Two Gentlemen of Verona
A Midsummer Night's Dream
The Taming of the Shrew

HISTORIES
Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3
Richard III
King John

TRAGEDIES
Titus Andronicus
Romeo and Juliet

SONNETS
Probably written in this period

1596 Death of son Hamnet, age 11

Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*

1597 Shakespeare, one of London's most successful playwrights, buys New Place, one of the grandest houses in Stratford-upon-Avon

1599 Globe Theatre opens, as home to the Lord Chamberlain's Men, with Shakespeare as part-owner

1600

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS
ca. 1596–1600

COMEDIES
Much Ado About Nothing
The Merry Wives of Windsor
As You Like It
Twelfth Night

HISTORIES
Richard II
Henry IV Parts 1 and 2
Henry V

TRAGEDIES
Julius Caesar

PROBLEM PLAYS
The Merchant of Venice

1602 Oxford University's Bodleian Library opens

1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth, coronation of James I

Lord Chamberlain's Men become the King's Men upon endorsement of James I

1603–11 Plague closes London playhouses for at least 68 months (nearly 6 years)

1605 Cervantes' *Don Quixote Part 1* published

1607 Marriage of Susanna Shakespeare to Dr. John Hall

Founding of Jamestown, Virginia, first English settlement on American mainland

1608 *A true relation of such Occurrences and Accidents of Note as hath passed in Virginia* by John Smith

Galileo constructs astronomical telescope

1609 Blackfriars Theatre, London's first commercial indoor theater, becomes winter home of the King's Men

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS
ca. 1601–1609

COMEDIES
Troilus and Cressida

TRAGEDIES
Hamlet
Othello
King Lear
Macbeth
Antony and Cleopatra
Timon of Athens
Coriolanus

PROBLEM PLAYS
All's Well That Ends Well
Measure for Measure

1611 "King James Version" of the Bible published

1613 Globe Theatre destroyed by fire

SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS
ca. 1609–1613

ROMANCES
Pericles
Cymbeline
The Winter's Tale
The Tempest
The Two Noble Kinsmen

HISTORIES
Henry VIII

1614 Globe Theatre rebuilt

1615 Galileo faces the Inquisition for the first time

1616 Judith Shakespeare marries Thomas Quinney

Death of William Shakespeare, age 52

1618 Copernican system condemned by Roman Catholic Church

1619 First African slaves arrive in Virginia

1623 The First Folio, the first compiled text of Shakespeare's complete works published

1625

1625 James I dies, succeeded by Charles I

1633 Galileo recants before the Inquisition

1636 Harvard College founded in Cambridge, Massachusetts

1642 Civil War in England begins

Puritans close theaters throughout England until the Restoration of the monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II

1648 English Civil War

Oliver Cromwell demands end of allegiance to the king

1649 Charles I beheaded

England declared a Commonwealth

1651 Charles II flees to France

1658 Oliver Cromwell dies, succeeded by son Richard as Lord Protector

1659 Richard Cromwell resigns

1660 Parliament invites Charles II to return to England

1661 Coronation of Charles II

First London theater with proscenium arch opens (Lincoln's Inn Theatre)

The Comedy of Errors

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ANTIPHOLUS

ADRIANA

LUCIANA

DROMIO

COURTESAN

BALTHASAR

SOLINUS, Duke of Ephesus

EGEON, a merchant from Syracuse, father to the Antipholus twins

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE, twin son of Egeon and Emilia

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS, twin son of Egeon and Emilia

ADRIANA, wife to Antipholus of Ephesus

LUCIANA, Adriana's sister

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE, servant to Antipholus of Syracuse, twin to Dromio of Ephesus

DROMIO OF EPHESUS, servant to Antipholus of Ephesus, twin to Dromio of Syracuse

LUCE "NELL", Adriana's kitchen-maid

COURTESAN, mistress to Antipholus of Ephesus

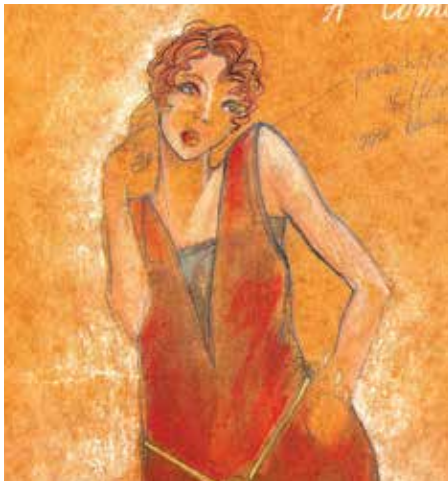**BALTHASAR,** a merchant

ANGELO, a goldsmith

DR. PINCH, schoolmaster (and a conjurer)

ABBESS, head nun

…PLUS, assorted messengers, jailer, and officers in the City

◄ Costume Designer Ana Kuzmanic created these artistic renderings for the original 2005 production of David H. Bell's adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*
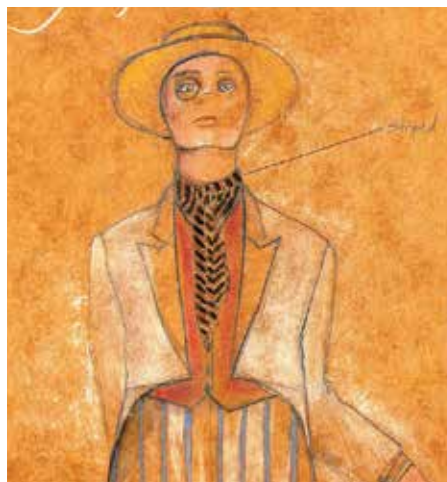
THE STORY

Far, far away from his home in Syracuse, Egeon has sailed the seas for five years in search of his son. Arriving now in Ephesus—a place where Syracusans are strictly forbidden—Egeon is arrested on sight and sentenced for execution that very night—unless he can pay an impossibly large ransom. Egeon tells his sad story to all who have gathered here...

Many years ago, a tragic shipwreck at sea tore his young family apart. With his infant son (named Antipholus) and his infant attendant (named Dromio), Egeon was rescued and returned to Syracuse; but his wife—along with the identical twins of his son and attendant—were never seen again. Eighteen years later, Antipholus, accompanied by Dromio, set out from Syracuse in search of his twin. And for the past five years, Egeon has combed the world to find them, finding himself now in Ephesus and under arrest.

As luck—or fate?—would have it, though, Egeon's son and servant also arrived that very day in Ephesus, of all places. And by another strange coincidence, it is right here in Ephesus that Antipholus's identical twin (also named Antipholus) has been living for all these years with his attendant (also named Dromio). Everybody in town—including Antipholus of Ephesus's own wife—confuses one brother for the other. And for one wacky, nerve-racking day in Ephesus, mistaken identities, mishaps, and misadventures turn the once-predictable life of Ephesus totally topsy-turvy.

With each passing hour as the Syracusan visitors grow ever more convinced that this strange land is bewitched, the citizens of Ephesus draw their own, equally off-base conclusions. All hope of sanity seems lost—until an Abbess with knowledge of life beyond the cloistered walls amazes us all. ■

ACT-BY-ACT SYNOPSIS

ACT I

A merchant from Syracuse named **EGEON** is arrested as soon as he sets foot in Ephesus, a town that Syracusans are strictly forbidden to enter. For his crime, Egeon is sentenced to pay with his life, but the **DUKE** asks the traveler to first tell them his story. Egeon recounts that, twenty-three years before, he and his family were shipwrecked. Losing his wife and one of their identical twin sons in the storm, Egeon returned to Syracuse, accompanied by his one surviving infant son, Antipholus, and their infant servant, Dromio.

Eighteen years later, **ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE** left his father and their home and went in search of his missing brother, bringing with him his servant, **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**—who, incidentally, also lost his identical twin brother in that same shipwreck. For the past five years, Egeon has been searching the world over for word of either of his sons, a journey that has now brought him to Ephesus. Egeon says that he is ready for his woes to end, but the Duke grants the stranger just one day to gather a ransom of 1,000 marks; Egeon will only escape execution if he can gather that enormous sum of money.

On that very same day, Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant Dromio also arrive in Ephesus, where they are warned by a merchant to keep their Syracusan origins secret, lest they end up like the merchant apprehended earlier. Antipholus sends Dromio with his 1,000 marks back to their inn for safekeeping. Left alone, Antipholus contemplates his long search for his missing twin, when he is interrupted by **DROMIO OF EPHESUS**. As it happens, those two long-lost brothers of Antipholus and Dromio are also named Antipholus and Dromio— and are residing here in Ephesus! Mistaking Antipholus of Syracuse for his own master, Antipholus of Ephesus, Dromio pleads with him to return home to his wife. The traveler regards the person he takes for his servant warily and asks him why he is not guarding the money. Dromio of Ephesus denies knowledge of any money, and Antipholus of Syracuse strikes out at him. Dromio takes to his heels, leaving Antipholus to remark on the reputation of Ephesus as a town filled with magic and sorcery, before he rushes back to the inn to secure his money.

Daniel Cantor as Egeon and Melody Betts as Egeon's wife Emilia in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

ACT II

ADRIANA, wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, complains bitterly to her sister **LUCIANA** about her husband's absence. The two sisters argue over the proper behavior of a husband and wife: Luciana (the younger of the two and still unmarried) urges wifely obedience, while Adriana asserts that she should maintain her voice and independence in matrimony. Dromio of Ephesus returns home to tell his mistress of the beating he has just received from the man he takes for his master, but Adriana sends him right back out again to bring her husband home for lunch. Adriana mentions her husband's affinity for other women's company, but Luciana dismisses her sister's concerns as unfounded jealousy.

Antipholus of Syracuse comes upon Dromio of Syracuse and scolds him for what he believes to be the servant's earlier misbehavior. Dromio proclaims his innocence, and the frustrated Antipholus beats him. When Adriana and. Luciana come upon the two in the street, Adriana scolds the man she takes for her husband for all his gallivanting. The Syracusans are taken aback and claim no knowledge of the women or their accusations. Intrigued by their insistence, and attributing it the town's reputation for sorcery, Antipholus allows the sisters to take them back to Adriana's home.

ACT III

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS invites his friends, the goldsmith **ANGELO** and the merchant **BALTHASAR**,

to dinner at his house, but when they get there, Dromio of Syracuse—serving as the bouncer under orders from Adriana—refuses them entry. Antipholus is furious and causes such a scene that Adriana and the kitchen-maid, NELL, inquire what all the hubbub is outside. Neither woman believes Antipholus of Ephesus's claims, and he is turned away from his own home. Enraged, he yells out that he will visit the Courtesan, and decides that after Angelo delivers the gold chain he meant to give Adriana as a gift, he will now give it to the Courtesan instead.

After some private time spent with Adriana, Antipholus of Syracuse tells Luciana that he neither recognizes Adriana as his wife, nor cares for her, and professes instead his love for Luciana. Luciana is shocked that the man she takes to be her brother-in-law would say such things to her and runs off, leaving Antipholus in the house, more baffled than ever.

Dromio of Syracuse is in a tailspin himself after his encounter with the rotund kitchen-maid Nell, who is claiming him as her husband. Antipholus, fed up with the "magical" nature of the town, sends Dromio to collect their things and prepare for their departure post haste. He explains away his attraction to Luciana as supernatural. Angelo comes along and gives him the gold chain that was intended, of course, for Antipholus of Ephesus. Antipholus of Syracuse protests that the chain is not his, but accepts the expensive jewelry in the end.

ACT IV

Accompanied by a collections officer, a merchant is looking for Angelo the goldsmith to demand that he immediately repay a debt. Angelo says that he can repay his debt as soon as he receives the money Antipholus of Ephesus owes him for the gold chain. But when they come upon Antipholus of Ephesus, he claims to have not yet received the chain from Angelo and sends Dromio off to buy a rope to use on his wife for barring him from their home the night before. Vehemently insisting that he will pay the goldsmith just as soon as he receives the chain, Antipholus is arrested. When Dromio of Syracuse returns looking for his master so they can escape the town, Antipholus of Ephesus, seeing Dromio without the rope, orders him to find Adriana immediately to bail him out of jail.

Adriana and Luciana discuss Antipholus of Ephesus's infidelity as Dromio of Syracuse returns to the house to

ask for money to bail out the man he assumes, of course, to be his master, who is now in custody of the law. The women take him for Dromio of Ephesus and send him back to Antipholus with the money.

On his way to the jail, Dromio of Syracuse runs into his master and tries to give him the money. Antipholus of Syracuse knows nothing about it and again blames the situation on this bewitched place. The Courtesan sees them in the street and asks about the gold chain Antipholus is now sporting around his neck. Hadn't he promised it to her? When he refuses to give it to her, she tells him to return a ring she once gave him. The men think she is a demon and run away. The Courtesan goes to tell Adriana that her husband is utterly mad.

Dromio of Ephesus encounters his master in the officer's custody. Antipholus of Ephesus sees that he now has the rope, but no bail money. He turns the rope on Dromio, who complains bitterly about his constant abuse. Adriana, Luciana and the Courtesan arrive with **DR. PINCH**, a schoolmaster with skills he claims can cure madness.

Completely beside himself, Antipholus strikes out at Adriana, prompting him and Dromio to be restrained with the rope and taken to Adriana's house for Pinch's treatment. When Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse return, everyone flees in fright, thinking the men are the escaped prisoners seeking revenge.

ACT V

As the goldsmith Angelo converses with a merchant about Antipholus's odd behavior, he sees Antipholus of Syracuse sporting the gold chain around his neck that he denied ever receiving. Angelo accuses him of theft, and as Antipholus and the merchant draw swords, Adriana, Luciana, and the Courtesan step in to stop the fight. The women ask for help recapturing the pair of men they think have escaped. Antipholus and Dromio run away, taking refuge in a priory.

Adriana follows them and demands their extradition from the **ABBESS.** The Abbess refuses. The Duke appears and Adriana appeals to him. The Duke has with him the unfortunate Egeon who, without the ransom, is slated for immediate execution. Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus, having escaped the clutches of Pinch, arrive on the scene. Antipholus appeals to the Duke to prevent his wrongful incarceration. Everyone is enraged at

someone, charging each other with various infractions. The Duke is overwhelmed by the confusion and sends for the Abbess. Seeing Antipholus of Ephesus, whom he takes for his other son, Egeon asks him for the ransom money to save his life; Antipholus, seeing no more than a deranged old man, refuses him.

The Abbess appears with Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, and the crowd is stunned by the realization that these four men are two sets of identical twins, whose identities are finally clarified. The brothers are reunited, and the Abbess—who happens to be Emilia, Egeon's wife—joyously recognizes her reunited sons, their servants, and her long-lost husband. ∎

Timothy James Gregory as Antipholus of Syracuse and Lisa Dodson as Adriana in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 1998 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW: SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES

The Comedy of Errors, like most of Shakespeare's plays, was based in part on previously published works that he could have read as a schoolboy or heard as a young actor/playwright in London. Written early in Shakespeare's career, the plot was based largely on the work of Plautus, one of the most famous comic playwrights of ancient Rome. One hundred and thirty plays were attributed to Plautus, though his admirers and peers estimated only about twenty were actually the writer's work.

Plautus did not begin his writing career until he was forty-five years old. As a young man, he traveled with an amateur acting troupe that specialized in farce. He served in the Roman army for a short time, and worked as a merchant. Once he began writing, he focused his plays on situations and characters he knew well—merchants and marketplaces, soldiers and the military—and wrote mostly comedies, a genre he knew intimately from his days touring with the acting company. Colloquial and lively, his plays were performed in conjunction with other public events, like chariot races or circuses. Plautus wrote neither to enlighten his audience nor to explore complex characterization, but rather to entertain the Roman populace in the liveliest fashion.

The Menaechmi was written near the middle of Plautus's playwriting career. The play tells the story of a merchant of Syracuse who was the father of identical twin sons. In their childhood, one of the boys, named Menaechmus, was accompanying his father on a long trip when he was kidnapped and stolen away to Epidamnus. He was raised there and eventually married a wealthy—and nagging—wife. Menaechmus develops a relationship with a courtesan, to whom he gives countless gifts, all stolen from his wife.

> **Shakespeare also gives Antipholus of Syracuse's servant Dromio an identical twin brother, prompting the probability for twice as many complications of mistaken identity.**

Brian Hamman as Dromio of Syracuse and Andy Truschinski as Antipholus of Syracuse in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

Back in Syracuse, the merchant's other son, named Sosicles, is *renamed* Menaechmus after the kidnapping, in remembrance of his lost brother. When he reaches adulthood, Menaechmus Sosicles sets out to find his brother. He travels for six years with his manservant and eventually lands in Epidamnus, where, unbeknownst to him, his twin lives. The uncanny resemblance between the two brothers causes Menaechmus of Epidamnus's wife, his mistress, and everyone else in the town endless consternation. After much confusion, the brothers recognize each other and the play ends.

Shakespeare takes the plot from *The Menaechmi* (as well as some elements from another Plautine work, *Amphityron*) and reshapes it for his own audience. The so-called "Old Comedy" of the Roman stage, with its practical, straightforward language and two-dimensional characters, had little use for poetry. In some ways, particularly in contrast to his later plays, Shakespeare's early play reflects its source in its language, too. However, when Shakespeare inserted a love interest for Antipholus of Syracuse (Adriana's sister, Luciana), poetry inevitably followed.

Luciana is not the only character he added to his Renaissance rewrite. Shakespeare also gives Antipholus of Syracuse's servant Dromio an identical twin brother, prompting the probability for twice as many complications of mistaken identity. Shakespeare cut some of the stock characters of Roman comedy, inserting others, including a kitchen-maid he named Nell. He switched the location from Plautus's little-known Epidamnus to the town of Ephesus, a name familiar to

Shakespeare's audience for its biblical reputation as a place full of evil spirits, magic, and sorcery—a town that might well induce such twin-inspired chaos.

Shakespeare changed the tone of his source, too: Plautus was famous for loveless tales of absurd hijinks and comedic implausibility, but Shakespeare humanized Plautus's stock characters. In *The Menaechmi*, the citizen twin has no guilty second thoughts about stealing from his wife or about his affair with the Courtesan, and does both, in fact, with roguish abandon. Shakespeare's citizen Antipholus, however, is not so ready to run to the Courtesan, and never actually gives her his wife's chain, though he threatens to. Though Adriana is still a nagging wife, Shakespeare makes sure the audience also sympathizes with her. She quickly bails her husband out of jail, and her possessive instincts, though frustrating to Antipholus, are rooted in her love for him.

The conclusion of *Comedy* is quite different from Plautus's work. Plautus kills off the twins' parents early on, but Shakespeare's version begins, and ends, with the father, Egeon. And at the play's miraculously coincidental ending, Shakespeare reunites him with his long-lost wife and sons. Plautus ends his play with the Menaechmi twins so enamored with one another that they decide to travel the world together after auctioning off all the worldly possessions of the citizen twin—including his wife—to the highest bidder. Shakespeare brings his two "Antipholi" brothers closer to finding love beyond their twinship: Antipholus of Ephesus with his wife at last, and Antipholus of Syracuse with Adriana's sister, Luciana.

Roman comedy was rife with parallels, a dramatic convention that Shakespeare was fond of, too. *The Comedy of Errors* is perhaps the earliest example of parallel plots and characters in Shakespeare, but he returns to them time and time again in his later plays, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Taming of the Shrew*—parallels to remind us of all the threads that connect us as individuals and groups, each with our own unique story and journey, to one another. ◼

SEEKING ANOTHER DROP: IDENTITY IN *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*

Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* opens with a death sentence. A Syracusan merchant, Egeon, is arrested because he is a stranger, unknown in the city of Ephesus. The Duke announces that, by day's end, Egeon will die for violating local laws banning Syracusans from entering the city—unless he can somehow pay the hefty fine by nightfall.

The play's dark beginning might well surprise readers, in part due to the play's title, but also because the opening appears so utterly divorced from the rest of play in both tone and content. Physical farce, mistaken identity, and chaotic circumstances rule the day as the play moves from the opening scene, as Egeon tells "sad stories of [his] own mishaps" after being condemned to die. The plot's unexpected turn from tragedy to comic farce gives us a chance to consider how these different tones of *The Comedy of Errors* work together—particularly as they relate to exploring the role of identity and connection in the play.

Ephesus's isolationist policies and Egeon's decades-long family separation dominate the opening scene. Ephesus keeps its borders closed to Syracuse to fend off competition from trade, and Egeon lost his wife, a son, and one of his twin servants in a shipwreck long ago. What can a city's foreign policy and an individual's family history have to do with one another? Both paint a picture of the world in which this play is set—one of isolation and separation. And these two, seemingly unrelated circumstances converge as the Duke asks Egeon why he would risk his life coming to Ephesus.

We learn that Egeon is searching for his son, Antipholus of Syracuse, and his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, who left home years before in search of Antipholus's twin. Egeon tells of Antipholus growing "inquisitive after his brother" and going "in the quest of him," leaving his father alone as he "hazarded the loss of whom [he] loved" (Act 1, Scene 1). As he describes his son's search, Egeon's story reveals that we are no longer hearing just a story of isolation. Egeon and Antipholus have also suffered a loss of identity because of the loneliness that they feel, propelling each to go out into the world in search of what could make them feel whole. For Egeon, the foreign policy of Syracuse and Ephesus makes

his exploration particularly dangerous, bringing the personal and the political into one narrative. The play's opening paints the search for identity as risky business.

But then the tone of the play alters dramatically: identical twin mishaps immediately change the narrative from tragedy to farce. Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, whom Egeon was arrested for pursuing, also arrive in Ephesus where, unbeknownst to them, their identical twins (who share their names) have been living since their rescue from the sea as infants. These coincidental (fated?) circumstances make the ideal recipe for chaos and confusion, prompting several of the main characters to question who they are—and consequently changing the conversation about identity to comic physicality and word play. Nevertheless, the significance of the discussion remains.

When Dromio of Ephesus asks the wrong Antipholus home to dinner instead of his master, he does not understand why Antipholus keeps asking him about the money he has entrusted in his attendant's care. Antipholus (of Syracuse) and Dromio (of Ephesus) simply cannot understand each other. Amid all the confusion, we discover Dromio of Ephesus's facility with language as he plays with the different meanings of the word "mark" (referencing both the local currency and his physical bruises). Dromio's skill with wordplay brings levity to the scene and, as the characters are deeply frustrated by one another's misunderstanding, the audience can look on and laugh at their confusion. This encounter between the mismatched Antipholus and Dromio reveals how Shakespeare uses humor to explore the impact of understanding one's self as the case of mistaken identity causes the characters to question who they are and, indeed, even their own actions.

As the stakes—and utter confusion—grow higher, Dromio of Syracuse in despair asks his Antipholus, "Do you know me sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself?" (Act 3, Scene 2) after a stranger claims him as her husband. The characters seem to question their own identities as they encounter others who act in ways that are unexpected and unpredictable, revealing that these characters (and, by extension, all of us) understand themselves based on the ways that others relate to them. And when relationships are disrupted, we may experience not only loss but also experience uncertainty about who we are—that is, our very identities.

Antipholus of Syracuse, having just arrived in Ephesus and for the first time left alone in this unknown place, describes this uncertainty as he describes himself and his journey:

> I to the world am like a drop of water
> That in the ocean seeks another drop,
> Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
> Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
> So I, to find a mother and a brother,
> In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself. (1.2.35-40)

The ocean is made up of a nearly infinite number of drops of water, as our lives are made up of countless encounters and connections. And yet Antipholus feels that something significant and essential is missing from his life, and so he continues to seek out his lost family in search of his own identity. Antipholus's struggle may feel familiar to us as contemporary readers who also struggle to feel connected to others and to search for the people who make us feel most like ourselves. *The Comedy of Errors* uses confusion and chaos to remind us that our identities are not formed in a vacuum; just as the play is performed in the midst of an audience, so to do our lives only become clear in the presence of those we care for. It is through our relationships with others that we define and learn more about ourselves and the world around us.

In *The Comedy of Errors*, moments of exploration and discovery are where we experience the heightened, absurd comedy. Witnessing the characters' confusion, we experience the joy of comedy and laughter. Understanding ourselves is never simple, but Shakespeare may suggest that the journey doesn't necessarily need be a completely serious one, shaped as it so often is by our misunderstandings and, yes, by our confusion. And though the play wraps up neatly with Egeon's life spared and his family reunited, what we are likely to remember most vividly is the mayhem along the way—suggesting, perhaps, that we, too, can find ourselves through the errors we make—and by losing ourselves in the joy of a good story.

Sarah Bonano, having recently graduated with a master's degree from University of Chicago, wrote this essay as an intern in the Education Department at Chicago Shakespeare in the summer of 2009. ■

SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE
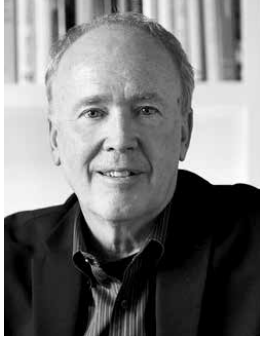
Clark Hulse is Associate Chancellor and Vice Provost for Graduate and Continuing Education and Dean of the Graduate College at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He holds appointments as Professor of English and Art History, and has published extensively in his research specialties, Shakespeare, Renaissance literature, and visual culture.

Like other scholars who pose their own ideas about what exactly tickles the funny bone, Hulse has his own theories of comedy. But while some might take their theories on comedy far too seriously, Dr. Hulse lightens up his notions with some serious comedy.

1. Monty Python tells us that as long as there is pain and suffering in the world, there will always be something to laugh at. In comedy, people fall down and it's funny. People get hit and it's funny. People make total fools of themselves and it's funny. People you wouldn't like in real life are humiliated and it's funny. But comedy based on the suffering of others is closely related to some things that aren't so funny: racism, misogyny, anti-Semitism. Shakespeare makes that pretty clear in *The Merchant of Venice.*

   Nonetheless, the violence and suffering in comedy can be redeeming. Shakespeare and Monty Python were wise enough to see that the people who inflict suffering can themselves be made ridiculous, or worse. And sometimes, when we see the sort of ridiculous violence inflicted in cartoons—pow! bam! splat!—and we then see the characters bounce back up again, it helps us think that we can live through our own fear of violence, our fear that we will be the ones to suffer, the ones to be humiliated.

2. Theater is like dreaming. It has good dreams and it has nightmares. In tragedy, you have to wake up during the best part of the good dream, confess that it was only a dream, and go back to your crummy life. In comedy, you get to wake up from the nightmare.

3. Aristotle said that tragedy showed people better than they are in real life, and comedy shows people worse than they are in real life. But at the end of a tragedy, the people end up dead, and at the end of a comedy, they have a party. What does that teach you?

4. Comedy is the older generation letting go. It's about parents realizing that when their kids ask for triple allowance and the keys to the car and insist on staying out all night, they (the parents) should say yes, because the kids are really okay even thought they act crazy, and they will get home safely even if we do worry about them all night, and when they're our age they'll be too tired to have so much fun so they should enjoy themselves now.

5. Comedy is the ritual of nature for people who have moved to cities. Comedy is about the turning of the seasons from winter to spring, the return of the leaves to the trees, the energy of youth, the renewal of communal bonds, the setting aside of misunderstanding and prejudice, the cessation of crime and fear, the acceptance of old age as the crown of life, and the renewal of the hope that children will create a better world than their parents have left them.

6. Hamlet is a natural comedian. (That's why he's so angry to find himself caught in a tragedy.) When Polonius says he will treat the actors according to their deserts, Hamlet tells him to treat them much better. "Use every man after his desert, and who shall 'scape whipping?" Comedy enacts the forgiveness we don't deserve. It's the second chance we don't usually get in life.

7. Comedy is the purest theater. In the end, it doesn't rely on social relevance or deep thoughts. It is all about timing. Timing the punchline. Timing the pratfall. Timing the exit of the lover out of the back door a half-second before the entrance of the husband through the front door. Timing the discovery of the true lover or the identical twin or the long-lost child. In comedy, there is no room for error.

8. Especially in *The Comedy of Errors.* ■

Angela Ingersoll, Kymberly Mellen, and Kevin Gudahl in the 2008 Chicago Shakespeare Theater production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

WHAT THE CRITICS SAY...

...ABOUT SHAKESPEARE'S SOURCES

As it is beyond Contradiction plain that this Comedy is taken from that of Plautus so I think it as obvious to conclude from that Shakespeare did understand Latin enough to read him, and knew so much of him as to be able to form a Design out of that of the Roman Poet; and which he has improv'd very much in my Opinion.

–CHARLES GILDON, 1710

This is perhaps the best of all written or possible *Menaechmi;* and if the piece be inferior in worth to other pieces of Shakespeare, it is merely because nothing more could be made of the materials.

–AUGUST WILHELM SCHLEGEL, 1808

What is due to [Shakespeare], and to him alone, is the honour of having embroidered on the naked old canvas of comic action those flowers of elegiac beauty which vivify and diversify the scene of Plautus as reproduced by the art of Shakespeare…

–ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE, 1880

To give the farcical a larger scope, Shakespeare doubled the source of it in Plautus by providing twin Dromios for the twin Antipholi he took from his Roman original. The plot becomes a sort of mathematical exhibition of the maximum number of erroneous combinations of four people taken in pairs. The bustle leaves no room for characterization, the persons in it enduring their lot as in a nightmare.

–H.B. CHARLTON, 1930

Plautus in his realistic world begins with truth and then involves his characters in error; Shakespeare in the mad world of Ephesus begins his episodes with error and enlightens them with flashes of truth.

–HARDIN CRAIG, 1948

Like a good cook who first learns and then forgets the basic recipes, or a dress designer who assumes the clichés of fashion only to go beyond them to something not quite predictable. Only Shakespeare could derive *The Comedy of Errors* from Plautus, and

only he could proceed from that simple fun to the enigmatic humor of his maturity.

–FRANCIS FERGUSSON, 1954

This play constantly reaches toward the universal. If *Measure for Measure* is the most Freudian play in the canon, *The Comedy of Errors* is the must Jungian. It is rooted in the collective subconscious, and archetypes of enduring power are presented.

–RALPH BERRY, 1985

Don Forston, Angela Ingersoll, Sean Fortunato, and Kymberly Mellen in the 2008 Chicago Shakespeare Theater production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

...ABOUT COMEDY AND FARCE

Shakespeare, has in [*The Comedy of Errors*] presented us with a legitimate farce in exactest consonance with the philosophical principles and character of farce, as distinguished from comedy and from entertainments. A proper farce is mainly distinguished from comedy by the license allowed, even required, in the fable, in order to produce strange and laughable situations. The story need not be probable, it is enough that it is possible.

–SAMUEL COLERIDGE, 1836

The play opens with grief and the doom of death impending over an innocent life; it closes, after a cry of true pathos, with reconciling joy, and the interval is filled with laughter that peals to a climax. This is not the manner of Plautus; but laughter with Shakespeare would seem hard and barren–the crackling of thorns

under a pot—if it were wholly isolated from grief and love and joy.

—EDWARD DOWDEN, 1903

It is comedy in the true sense of a criticism of life, which is at heart profoundly serious, and employs all the machinery of wit or humour, with the deliberate intention of reaching through the laughter to the ultimate end of a purged outlook upon things.

—E. K. CHAMBERS, 1906

[In] this early play Shakespeare already discloses his propensity for infusing romance into each or every 'form' of drama; that unique propensity which in his later work makes him so magical and so hard to define. But, as yet, farce and romance were not one 'form' but two separate stools; and between them in *The Comedy of Errors* he fell to the ground.

—Q [ARTHUR QUILLER-COUCH], 1922

The 'The' in the title of [*The Comedy of Errors*] may be taken in a generic sense—that is, as the author's characteristically modest intimation that he has provided merely one more species of a well-recognized genus. 'Here,' says he, 'are the Twins of Plautus again; here is the age-old comedy of resemblances.' But time has made the 'The' distinctive: here is indeed the comedy of errors.

—G. R. ELLIOT, 1939

The Comedy of Errors is most significant in what it reveals about Shakespearean comedy. Shakespeare never writes comedy of the cool, objective kind that appears in Plautus, Ben Jonson, and Molière. Shakespeare loved to play with edged tools. Somebody's life or somebody's happiness is at stake even in his comedies.

—HARDIN CRAIG, 1948

The characters never learn anything but the facts, never come to understand themselves or each other any better than they did at first; and the audience is …simply invited to laugh once more at incurable, familiar human folly. Shakespeare accepted the strict limitations of style and of medium that define the convention of classical comedy. And he made not only an indestructible entertainment but (what is less evident at first) an elegant theatrical form.

—FRANCIS FERGUSON, 1958

The comic strategy of the play is one of dislocation, forcing us to see experiences from a fresh perspective, reminding us that no one understanding of life is final. The mixed dramatic mode gives shading and variety to what could have been a one-note, mechanical farce; but it also embodies a comic vision of the instability of life itself.

—ALEXANDER LEGGATT, 1974

Despite its earliness, *The Comedy of Errors* resembles later Shakespeare plays in that the framing plot— that is, the story about Egeon and his long narration—is disturbing… Why did Shakespeare surround his farce with a tragicomic plot? Presumably, he wanted to deepen the seriousness in the play, to give the story a context of life and death.

—DAVID BEVINGTON, 2003

In [*The Comedy of Errors*] we find more intricacy of plot than distinction of character; and our attention is less forcibly engaged because we can guess in great measure how it will conclude. Yet the poet seems unwilling to part with his subject, even in this last and unnecessary scene, where the same mistakes are continued till they have lost the power of affording any entertainment at all.

—GEORGE STEEVENS, 1773

Business, money, things, and pleasures out of things as they relate to money are an omnipresent consideration, the climate of the play, the motive power and shaper of the plot. Appropriately the lives of the characters turn on these…. Our chief pleasure consists of watching them being hauled and mauled about, and the variety of ways discovered to do so, that the maximum of profit be wrung out of them. In this respect the characters are not much more than exploitable commodities.

—THEODORE WEISS, 1971

The hallmark of Shakespeare's comedies is consequently the move towards reconciliation and a restoration of order by the correct understanding of the original problem.

—ANGELA PITT, 1981

Indeed this play is a good beginning one for the student of Shakespeare, for ability to enjoy the madness of total bewilderment is not a tutored one;

every child has it. In the chaos created by two sets of twins (not to mention some four merchants), the expert is not of much help, as painstaking plot analyses of the play have shown. In telling who is who, or where, at any one time, the expert is about as helpful and impressive a guide as a professor leading a tour through a maze of mirrors in an amusement park.

–PAUL A. JORGENSEN, 1969

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

...ABOUT SETTING
"AM I IN EARTH, IN HEAVEN OR IN HELL?"

In *The Comedy of Errors* a tempest is important. We are brought to a world of gold and fun where the tragic work of a tempest is finally remedied by reunions. The sea tempest is here an actual event, the tragic background to a romantic comedy. … Such a tempest is peculiarly Shakespeare. We meet it again and again. Tempests always, as here, tragic, tend to 'disperse,' the resulting play to reunite, the people scattered in the tempest.

–G. WILSON KNIGHT, 1932

We are confronted with a world which is not 'real' but utopian and nevertheless 'possible.' Egeon has to prepare himself for impending death before he is given a new life. Adriana, who realizes that her marriage is in danger, suspects her husband of adultery, and he, having constantly been denied his identity by the sequence of confusions, is on the point of breaking down and of losing himself…

–WOLFGANG RIEHLE, 2004

This is a play that celebrates its unities. Every syllable of *The Comedy of Errors* is spoken in one place, Ehephus, and in one day's time… Yet the language of Ephesus, for all its frenetic, present-tense, comic and commercial activity, resists that unity, haunted by the memory of other times and other places.

–JOHN R. FORD, 2006

Ephesus evokes an ancient world poised on the brink of the Christian era, a world of practical Greek commerce and restless travel–one seemingly rife with pagan magic. In that liminal Ephesus miraculous transformations were possible… Ephesus is also a world coloured by Eastern exoticism and sensuality… Ephesus constitutes a distanced and paradoxical "place of transformation where people lose their sense of self."

–KENT CARTWRIGHT, 2017

Within *The Comedy of Errors*, a tragic potential always lurks. That potential takes us back to the ambiguous image of the sea, the boon and bane of merchants. In Shakespeare's 'Greek plays' (of which *Errors* would count as one), Sara Hanna argues, 'the sea plays a significant role as setting, symbol, or means of trade, adventure, warfare, escape, and even suicide.' The Greek world of fable and fantasy may have unleashed Shakespeare's imagination and created opportunities for illuminating comparisons and humorous contrasts, but it also introduces a residue of latent grief and sadness.

–KENT CARTWRIGHT, 2017

...ABOUT CHARACTER AND IDENTITY

The Comedy of Errors is an early study in the nature of personal identity. How soon does one's conception of oneself, the belief in one's own identity, break down before lack of recognition on the part of others? How far do we need others in order to have an identity at all? Is one's identity entirely dependent on the personal and social links and bonds, the ties of family, love, friendship and civic duty?

–GWYN WILLIAMS, 1964

If it were not so funny, Shakespeare's first comedy would read like a schizophrenic nightmare: identities are lost, split, engulfed, hallucinated, imploded. Apparently solid citizens (solid at least to themselves)

suffer 'ontological uncertainty' in acute forms, wandering about unrecognized by all they encounter.

–RUTH NEVO, 1980

[Aegeon's story] provides more than exposition as it opens up the anguish of a separated family demanding an emotional investment from an audience. Aegeon is a condemned innocent waiting impotently for characters and events to reclaim him.

–PAMELA MASON, 1995

Confronted by the gift of a dinner prepared by Adriana, the friendship of Luciana, and the gold chain, Antipholus of Syracuse is open to the opportunities life may afford him; having secured material goods without asking, what he seeks is that which surpasses the material. By no longer wishing to possess goods or people he earns self-possession.

–ARTHUR F. KINNEY, 1996

The coldness or dispassionateness of the Antipholuses is striking in contrast to the charming reunion of the Dromios, with which Shakespeare sweetly ends his comedy. ...These two long-suffering clowns have had

to sustain numerous blows from the Antipholuses throughout the play, and the audience is heartened to see them go out in such high good humor. ...It would be absurd to burden *The Comedy of Errors* with sociopolitical or other current ideological concerns, and yet it remains touching that Shakespeare, from the start, prefers his clowns to his merchants.

–HAROLD BLOOM, 1998

Antipholus of Syracuse has the longest role of lines, but in performance the Dromios are likely to dominate the action. They align themselves with two *commedia dell'arte* traditions: they get masters, and they are brainier than those masters. But in several respects they break with commedia convention… They are, in a word, intellectuals—we might almost swear, scholars—who enjoy nothing more than concocting a jolly quibble or a phrase with three or more meanings and a literary allusion or two, a strong hint of bawdy, a Latin tag thrown in, whenever apt, and a preoccupation with punishment.

–ALBERT BERMEL, 2000

Douglas Vickers, Ross Lehman, Sean Allan Krill, and Kevin Gudahl in the 2008 Chicago Shakespeare Theater production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

In the plot, concluding with farcical confinement, money and chains as well as wives and servants are returned to their proper owners. But no character seems transformed and no one apologizes or is forgiven. The debate about the proper role of women is left up in the air when, in response to the Abbess's lecture, Adriana and Luciana switch their positions on wifely roles, with the wife rebuked into subordination and the sister urging denial of false accusations.

–CAROL THOMAS NEELY, 2004

The play dramatizes the questions 'What is the self? What are the guarantees of identity?'

–WOLFGANG RIEHLE, 2004

Whereas the Syracusan Anthipholus confronts the fluidity and uncertainty of personal identity, his Ephesian twin insists on the fixity of his own self, reflected back to him by his possessions and his social standing. The brothers' starkly contrasted experiences in the play correspond to this divergence of attitudes toward identity and personhood.

–SHANKAR RAMAN, 2005

Loss of identity in *The Comedy of Errors* is at its most terrifying a loss of face, where the individual features that go to make up the face constantly threaten to degenerate into blank 'defeatures'…. This defacement is powerfully captured by the word 'defeature'–a word used by both Adriana and Egeon and which is unique in the plays to *The Comedy of Errors*.

–RICHARD ASHBY, 2018

Labelling and treating Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus as mad and thereby excluding them from their community of reason enables the other Ephesians to account for the inconsistency in their normality in a manner which leaves that normality intact. As Shakespeare has Isabella [from *Measure for Measure*] suggest, calling someone mad can be an attempt to make the unlikely seem impossible, thereby quarantining the undesired fact in a safe place where it cannot affect the general consensus on what is normal and real. This serves to explain the ubiquity of madness in *The Comedy of Errors*: in spite of the fact that not a single character actually goes mad or pretends to go mad, madness is more pervasive in the Comedy than in almost any other play by Shakespeare.

–RETO WINKLER 2018

Many recent productions of *The Comedy of Errors*… think that our pleasure in the play's mistaken identities will be greater if the twins really are identical. This perfect indistinguishability is usually achieved by having a single actor play both Dromios, another both Antipholi, finessing with body doubles the climactic onstage reunion of all four twins at the very end of the play.

–ALAN ARMSTRONG, 2016

…ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
"NOT ONE BEFORE ANOTHER" (OR ARE THEY?)

The introduction of Aegeon and Luciana is such an important thing that it calls for more than a passing notice. They import romance and sentiment into a comedy of confused identity. The romantic element which comes so unexpectedly into a classical comedy is Shakespeare's most daring innovation here and points the way in which he will discover his métier.

–S. C. SEN GUPTA, 1950

Here in a farce, in what may well have been his earliest comedy, Shakespeare introduces the chief structural principle of his romantic comedies: the juxtaposition of attitudes toward love and toward the ideal relationship of man and woman.…Adriana's concept of lover is the right to possess, to receive and own and be master of, whereas both her sister and Antipholus of Syracuse oppose to that concept their view of love as giving.

–PETER G. PHIALAS, 1966

As we see throughout Shakespeare's comedies, love seems to thrive on irrationality and confusion, and emerges from it strengthened, renewed and satisfied. …But the world of commerce simply goes crazy when an irrational factor is introduced, and the only satisfaction is for chains and ducats to be restored to their original owners, as though the confusion had never taken place. Nothing is gained in the process, for the transactions of business are barren and limited, incapable of the sudden, spontaneous enrichment that we see in the transactions of love. What is enchantment and enrichment for one brother is simply confusion for the other, a confusion that must be put right. The only party to gain something is the audience: since commercial life has been depicted

in such unflattering terms, we are bound to take a special, mischievous delight in seeing it disrupted.

–ALEXANDER LEGGATT, 1974

Both items, the chain and the rope, become part of the general confusion at the same time that they signify the possibility of conjugal unity on the one hand and the reality of marital division on the other. Yet, although both the chain and the rope are instruments for binding, they do more to cause separation between characters. Bond, bondman, legal arrests, a chain, and a rope are all of a piece when we realize that they are associated with the idea of one's being united or linked with legal responsibilities.

–VINCENT F. PENTRONELLA, 1974

Timothy James Gregory as Antipholus of Syracuse and Lisa Dodson as Adriana in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 1998 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

...ABOUT THE WOMEN

Beyond all its obvious crudities *The Comedy of Errors* aims at presenting a serious and humane view of human relationships. Most obviously of all, perhaps, the part played by the women in the entire series of farcical episodes is humanized in a way entirely foreign to the essential cynicism of the classical source…

–DEREK TRAVERSI, 1960

At the core of a coherent social structure as he viewed it lay marriage, which for Shakespeare is no mere comic convention but a crucial and complex ideal. He rejected the stereotype of the passive, sexless, unresponsive female and its inevitable concomitant,

the misogynist conviction that all women were whores at heart. Instead he created a series of female characters who were both passionate and pure, who gave their hearts spontaneously into the keeping of the men they loved and remained true to the bargain in the face of tremendous odds.

–GERMAINE GREER, 1986

[The Abbess is the one character] not to enter into, or appear to be deceived by, the errancies of nomination. Rather, she invites everyone to do the two things that they have failed to do all day: to look and to speak.

–LYNN ENTERLINE, 1995

Adriana's restless pursuit of action indicates her efforts to resolve her troubles with means outside of her control… Because Adriana sees the disunity in her home as a product of her husband's will, she does not conceive of a way that she herself can improve the circumstances.

–ERIN WEINBERG, 2016

Nowhere are the duplications and polarities more evident than in the play's discussion of marriage, an institution which is both spiritual and social, sometimes both romantic and farcical; an institution which cruelly reverses the rhetoric and power of courtship, transforming the worshipping male servant into household master and the female mistress into obedient conjugal servant; an institution in which personalities may struggle for individuality or unity (or both); an institution in which one's most intimate companion can sometimes seem a stranger.

–LAURIE MACGUIRE, 1997

...ABOUT SERVITUDE AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS

The rough treatment of the Dromios and their ambiguous servant/slave status reflect similar features of Elizabethan servitude. In *The Comedy of Errors*, Shakespeare constructs the Dromios so as to condense the potential slavishness of sixteenth-century English service. The playwright's focus on de facto slavery widens to encompass the institution of marriage and the individual's ordering of his or her inner faculties. Implicitly Shakespeare poses a dramatic question: do the reunions and festive releases celebrated at the end of *The Comedy of*

Errors include a remedy for slavery, whether of the social, marital, or existential variety?

–MAURICE HUNT, 1997

Harry Levin has judged that the number of beatings that the Dromios receive is 'a matter of farcical convention rather than social custom.' *The Comedy of Errors* has often been termed a farce; and farce, as Eric Bentley has reminded us, 'is notorious for its love of violent images.' By this logic, Shakespeare's decision to become a farceur committed him to representing physical violence, essentially non-meaningful abuse… In these accounts farcical convention fully explains the use of the Dromios. Nevertheless, contrary to Levin's opinion, analysts of farce generally agree that farce and social custom are inextricably linked… In other words, the beating of the Dromios may represent Shakespeare's veiled criticism of certain Elizabethan social injustices.

–MAURICE HUNT, 1997

In *The Comedy of Errors* there is a contrary tendency to naturalize or to accept slavery. In the Roman comedies that provide the model for *The Comedy of Errors*, slaves win or buy their way out of slavery. In Shakespeare's version the Dromios remain slaves at the end: the play's providential dénouement does not extend to this degree of enfranchisement. To render slavery a matter of comedy is, when practiced by Englishmen, to make it acceptable, and, when practiced by England's enemies, to exorcize its threat.

–ANTHONY MILLER, 2002

This play seems selectively concerned with the responsibility of the subservient members of the domestic sphere. This message of subordination has the potential to be disempowering, but by linking it to Stoicism, by painting it as a mastery of the passions, these disempowered groups can find empowerment through their roles in the social hierarchy. By rewarding active efforts to remain passive, Shakespeare offers a resolution in which the silent, suffering woman can find empowerment through the mastery of her self.

–ERIN WEINBERG, 2016

Joe Minoso as Angelo, Christopher Chmelik as a Bumbellini, Daniel Cantor as Dr. Pinch, and Jackson Doran as Antipholus of Ephesus in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

…ABOUT THE AUDIENCE'S ROLE

When Shakespeare wrote *The Comedy of Errors* he was aiming, with great accuracy, at the perennial popular theatre. He demanded, therefore, very little of his audience.

–FRANCIS FERGUSSON, 1954

We know little about the contemporary reception of *The Comedy of Errors*, but it is easy to fancy its being what we call today a 'hit.' It gratifies the essential theatrical craving. … We live in the midst of a confusing world. We are forever making blunders ourselves and becoming the victims of blunders of other people. How restful yet exhilarating it would be if for once we could get above it all and from a vantage point watch the blunders going on below us. Well, that is just what the theater permits us to do for an hour or two. … In one form or another practically everything that goes on in the theater is based on something misunderstood by some or all of the people on the stage that is at the same time clear to the people who are watching them. The spectator is thrilled to share a confidence of the dramatist at the expense of the actors. Hence the playwright's rule: Never keep a secret from your audience. Here is one explanation of the incessant concern of drama with the theme of appearance versus reality. And herein, too, lies the danger of theater.

–HAROLD C. GODDARD, 1951

The great resource of laughter is the exploitable gulf spread between the participants' understanding and ours. This gap is held open from beginning to end…

–BERTRAND EVANS, 1960

At its ending *The Comedy of Errors* admits its own artificiality, its participation in that special realm of fairy-tale where the lost are always found, while reminding the theatre audience that it has not been in complete control of the situation after all. This last scene is consciously contrived but also moving in a way that seems to anticipate the marvelous discoveries of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale*.

–ANNE BARTON, 1974

Structurally and stylistically, Shakespeare uses Plautus to outdo Plautus, Terence to outdo Terence, and turns Roman farce into a polished and sophisticated entertainment, which produces a special intellectual relation between performance and audience depending for its effect upon awareness of its conscious art.

–CATHERINE M. SHAW, 1980

Shakespeare decisively if subtly shifts the generic expectations of an Elizabethan audience steeped in Scripture and the liturgical calendar from pure farce to something like a divine comedy in which emotional experiences and intellectual reflections portrayed by the characters are shared simultaneously by the playgoers despite their privileged knowledge of the twinned Antipholi and their twinned Dromios.

–ARTHUR F. KINNEY, 1988

Here, in a play that may be his first comedy, we find Shakespeare following what was to prove his permanent instinct: never to forsake the norm of social life. However distant he may get from that norm into inhuman horror, or wild romance, or lyrical fancy, or mystical heights, he always reverts, if only for a short spell, to the ordinary world of men and to its problems of how they are to live together…. You may say that he was forced to do this to please his public; but he was also following his instincts, which insisted on connecting, on demonstrating the unity of all experience.

–E. M. W. TILLYARD, 1965

…ABOUT TEXT WORK

It is difficult to suggest a philosophical spokesman for the form of Shakespeare's comedy. For Shakespeare, the subject matter of poetry is not life, or nature, or reality, or revelation, or anything else that the philosopher builds on, but poetry itself, a verbal universe. That is one reason why he is both the most elusive and the most substantial of poets.

–NORTHROP FRYE, 1949
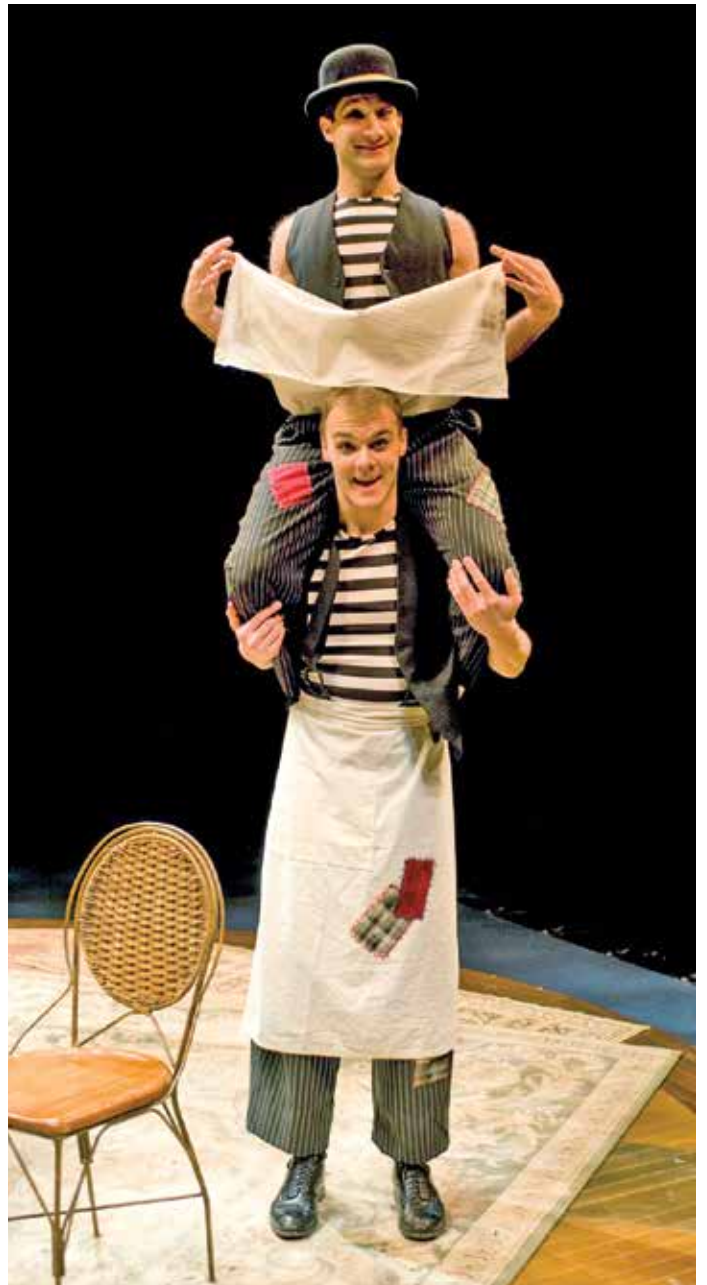
John Stokvis and Christopher Chmelik as the Bumbellini in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

The text of *The Comedy of Errors* is full of clues indicating that the Egeon actor also played Dr. Pinch. Interwoven with the lines that Shakespeare wrote to serve the main action of the play…are lines that point teasingly to a simultaneous but different failure of recognition: the failure of Dromio and Antipholus to recognize the actor who plays Egeon as the very same actor who played Dr. Pinch, their persecutor, just a few minutes earlier…Shakespeare's script re-establishes that actor's identity as Egeon, but simultaneously allows us to recognize him as the Pinch-actor, even by his distinctive voice… This intentional reminder of playing's "unreality" has rich and complex effects. One such effect is to convert our seeing through the play's artifice into a kind of pleasure, shared between player and audience—a source of wonder and delight rather than disillusioned disappointment.

–ALAN ARMSTRONG, 2016

Adriana is associated with water: she notably repeats Antipholus of Syracuse's image of the drop of water that, falling into the ocean, loses itself among others, and she and others called attention to her propensity for weeping. … The churning Adriatic thus provides the image of the shrew and, in that mode, Adriana storms emotionally over her husband's suspected marital infidelity and is elsewhere in danger of letting her temper flair into a squall. But Adriana's world contrasts to Egeon's: his of tragedy, hers of the domesticity associated generically with comedy. In that respect, Adriana represents a different potential ending, the restoration of familial and household relations.

–KENT CARTWRIGHT, 2017

…ABOUT THE OTHER
"HE WAS A STRANGER HERE"

In the context of the stranger crisis, the financial difficulties and unwelcomeness experienced by merchants like Antipholus of Syracuse and his sons would have had much contemporary resonance, especially for a London audience experiencing a steady flow of immigration traffic.

–ERIC GRIFFIN, 2014

The sea serves as a vehicle for separation, alienation, fear, loss, shipwreck, tragedy, loss of control, and suffering. It destroys homes. But it also creates a re-enchanted world—reunion, regaining control, recovery, joy, pleasure, love, and happiness. The arrival of the wandering refugees from Sicily dislocates the habits and rhythms of life in Ephesus. In the process, these newcomers discover a sense of belonging in a new city, far away from their ancestral Sicilian home.

–GERALDO U. DE SOUSA, 2018

Displacement is one of the governing principles of the action and the focusing of the audience's visual attention on two pairs of twins makes the interplay clear. The new, strange, or unaccountable must either occupy the space belonging to the known, or be excluded by it. Much of the comedy arises from the characters' attempts to make what they see tally with what they think they know so that the familiar pattern of life will be preserved. The most usual recourse is to accuse others who are behaving aberrantly of madness or satanic possession, and the visitors can only account for their reception by regarding Ephesus (perhaps in the light of its biblical reputation) as a place of sorcery and enchantment, full of false appearances.

–JOANNA UDALL, 1992

The play makes visible the flawed logic of a racialized system of differentiation, illustrating the process by which large numbers of people may be grouped together solely on the basis of shared somatic markers, and made subject to the sweeping generalizations of racial prejudice. We can trace this devastating force even in the critical tendency to refer to the brothers as 'Antopholi' [sic] and 'Dromios.' This is an impulse we can now recognize as part of the genealogy of race-concepts: the impulse to reimagine twins who shared the same name as distinct individuals who happen to share some resemblances, but as members of a larger race.

–PATRICIA AKHIMIE, 2016 ■

A Play Comes to Life

A LOOK BACK AT *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS* IN PRODUCTION

We know little about the contemporary reception of *The Comedy of Errors*, but it is easy to fancy its being what we call today a 'hit.' It gratifies the essential theatrical craving. ... We live in the midst of a confusing world. We are forever making blunders ourselves and becoming the victims of blunders of other people. How restful yet exhilarating it would be if for once we could get above it all and from a vantage point watch the blunders going on below us. Well, that is just what the theater permits us to do for an hour or two.

–HAROLD C. GODDARD, 1951

Although *The Comedy of Errors* is the only play by Shakespeare which includes the word 'comedy' in its title, critics have persistently wanted to dismiss it as a farce, unworthy of serious consideration, however great its success as a theatrical frolic.

–ANNE BARTON, 1974

Tiffany Scott as Adriana and Andy Truschinski as Antipholus of Ephesus in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Michael Brosilow.

The stage history of *The Comedy of Errors* could be compared to that of the late comedic actor Rodney Dangerfield. It gets no respect—and there, in some ways, lies the key to its success. *The Comedy of Errors* is one of Shakespeare's earliest plays, the shortest in length (1,777 words), and the briefest in duration of plot, with all of the action occurring in just one day. It is also one of Shakespeare's least celebrated plays, frequently disregarded by critics, scholars, and artists alike as an "apprentice" work, a farce not to be taken seriously.

In spite of its inferior reputation (and in part because of it), *The Comedy of Errors* has found great success on stage. Unencumbered by the weight of a "masterpiece" text, directors generally have made up for the play's lack of distinction by making the most of its seemingly boundless potential for adaptation. Some have played it fast and loose with Shakespeare's story, bringing it to life – with varying degrees of success – through musicals, operas, circuses, puppetry, film noir, rock 'n' roll, and hip-hop. Other directors have viewed the play's characters and events in a darker light, discovering a deeper comedy about self-identity, gender, family, and love. Others have simply let Shakespeare's rigorous text and carefully constructed dramatic structure work its own magic—and mayhem—conjuring out of this once ancient misadventure of mistaken identity a surprising mix of humor, humanity, and modern insight.

> ### Unencumbered by the weight of a "masterpiece" text, directors generally have made up for the play's lack of distinction by making the most of its seemingly boundless potential for adaptation.

Like many of Shakespeare's plays, T*he Comedy of Errors* is an adaptation itself, based largely on the work of Titus Maccius Plautus, a Roman playwright famous for his farcical comedies. The earliest recorded performance of The Comedy of Errors took place on December 28, 1594, at one of the four Inns of Court (London's schools of law). The Gray's Inn Record of that night suggests the spirit of the night was akin to the play's own unruly atmosphere:

> *…it was thought good not to offer any thing of Account, saving Dancing and Revelling with Gentlewomen; and after such Sports, a Comedy of Errors [was played by] a Company of base and common fellows… So that Night was begun, and continued to the end, in nothing but Confusion and Errors; whereupon, it was ever afterwards called, The Night of Errors…*

Perhaps not the ideal environment for Shakespeare's intricate plot. But the audience—a gathering of lawyers

and law students celebrating Innocents' Day with dancing, drinking, juggling—would have been familiar with Plautus's work in Latin, and so probably would have recognized how Shakespeare embellished it, adding a second set of identical twins to Plautus's pair, and transporting the action from the Greek city of Epidamnus to the Turkish city of Ephesus, known at the time for the kind of inexplicable trickery and sorcery that appears to disrupt the characters' lives.

Most likely, this initial performance was staged in the simple medieval style of "simultaneous settings," meaning that every location in the play appears on stage at the same time, adding to the comedy's confusion and potential for error. The compact setting of the play (never again utilized to such an extent by Shakespeare) was perfect for such a neoclassical stage as well as the Inn's crowded environment, since all of the action takes place in just four confined areas: the city streets of Ephesus and three specific buildings—the Phoenix (the house of Antipholus of Ephesus), the Porpentine (the house of the Courtesan), and the Priory.

Evidence (or rather a lack thereof) suggests that only one other performance of *The Comedy of Errors* took place during Shakespeare's lifetime. Presented on Innocents' Day in 1604 before King James I at the Palace of Whitehall, this staging also appears to be the last recorded performance of Shakespeare's comedy for more than a century. Like all plays at the time, *The Comedy of Errors* would have been forced from the stage in 1642 by the close of the theaters during the Puritan dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell. But when theaters reopened eighteen years later with the restoration of England's Charles II, the script of *The Comedy of Errors* seems to have stayed shut. In a period preoccupied with the satire and sophistication of the so-called "comedy of manners," there was probably little room for this "low" comedy, with its absurd storyline, ribald humor, and physical buffoonery.

Those elements, however, proved popular in the eighteenth century, when an enthusiasm for adaptation bestowed multiple identities upon a comedy about mistaken identities. For more than a century, Shakespeare's play slipped on and off stage in shifting guises—often without the benefit of his poetry or dramatic framework. The first of many versions, *Every Body Mistaken*, took place in 1716. The next, *See if You Like It*, or *'Tis All a Mistake*—described as a comedy in two acts "taken from Plautus and Shakespeare"—was

performed in 1734, and was staged for more than seventy years at London's Drury Lane and Covent Garden Theatres. In 1762 actor and playwright Thomas Hull presented the period's most popular adaptation, *The Twins*, or *The Comedy of Errors*, featuring songs and other new material that would keep it on the Covent Garden stage, in various incarnations, for years to come.

Yet, while directors and audience were reveling in the rediscovery of Shakespeare's delightful comedy (however diluted), scholars continued to disapprove of—or simply disregard—it. As late as 1817 even England's leading expert on Shakespeare's writings William Hazlitt had few compliments for *The Comedy of Errors*, which, he explained, "is taken very much from the Menaechmi of Plautus, and is not an improvement on it. …This play (among other considerations) leads us not to feel much regret that Shakespear [sic] was not what is called a classical scholar." The overall lack of literary criticism on *The Comedy of Errors* leading up to the nineteenth century suggests it was considered to be of little importance. That attitude was echoed—and probably underscored—by the fact that two full centuries passed without a production reflecting Shakespeare's own version of the play.

When it did regain the spotlight in 1855—thanks to British theater manager and Shakespeare enthusiast Samuel Phelps, who restored Shakespeare's original to the stage—audiences were in for a treat, along with some over-the-top entertainment. By 1865 the play regained enough of its cultural standing to be presented as part of the Shakespeare Tercentenary celebrations at the Princess's Theatre in 1865. That production featured two Irish brothers, Charles and Henry Webb, playing a pair of Dromios looking and acting more like court jesters than servants, a sign of what was to come. In 1927 a production at the Old Vic featured two sets of twins wearing clown noses—one pair of nostrils turned up, the other pair turned down. The clown or fool, central to nearly all of Shakespeare's works, always existed within the cast of *The Comedy of Errors*. But by the early twentieth century, it seems the clown also became central to the play's success on stage, with productions of *The Comedy of Errors* employing not just clowns, fools, and goofs, but also acrobats, mimes, comics, dancers, singers, and anyone else capable of burlesque, buffoonery, slapstick, silliness, pratfalls and folly.

Stage performance, like other forms of art, is a product of its times and culture.

Part of the inspiration for that kind of human circus may have been Theodore Komisarjevsky's 1938 production—an amalgam of ballet, operetta, and farce spilling across a Toy Town setting of dollhouse buildings watched over by a surrealist clock. His staging of the play transformed *The Comedy of Errors* into a literal playground for audiences and actors alike, with characters wearing a menagerie of costumes from mismatched time periods, and singing and dancing to tunes by a mixture of musical styles. Summed up by a local newspaper as "mime, music, and madness," the production infused a true sense of fun and sophistication into a play previously considered pure nonsense. It also reestablished the play's close relationship with physical comedy as a means of expression and exploration beyond mere entertainment.

Since then, countless productions of *The Comedy of Errors* have drawn upon the play's foundation in farce, clowning, and commedia dell'arte. Once of the most memorable modern examples is Chicago's Goodman Theatre's 1983 production starring the Flying Karamazov Brothers and Avner the Eccentric. Adapted, abridged, and rearranged to accommodate the skills of the acrobatic comedians and their juggling, plate-spinning, tumbling, and physical comedy, Shakespeare's words became part-circus, part-play. The unconventional production transferred to Lincoln Center and ultimately took a turn on Broadway.

It wouldn't be the first appearance of *The Comedy of Errors* on Broadway, however. The same year Komisarjevsky shook up the theater world with his production of The Comedy of Errors, America was recovering from its own shake-ups of the Great Depression, the first World War, and the prospect of its involvement in another one. A period of chaos and uncertainty, it was also Hollywood's Golden Age, an era of radio shows, comic books, jazz music and Broadway musicals. One of those musicals, *The Boys from Syracuse*, turned out to be a full-scale success, turning Shakespeare's neglected comedy into a mainstream hit. Featuring music and lyrics by the legendary duo Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, the musical comedy (adapted from *The Comedy of Errors* by George Abbott) ran in

New York from 1938 to 1939. In 1940 it was made into a popular film bursting with anachronistic gags, such as Dromio of Ephesus organizing a labor union, a parchment newspaper with the headline "Ephesus Blitzkriegs Syracuse," and characters zooming around in checkered-chariot taxicabs. Revived on Broadway in 1963, *The Boys from Syracuse* ran a second time for 502 performances.

Stage performance, like other forms of art, is a product of its times and culture. Just as political events, social movements, or current schools of thought may influence a director's vision, they may also change the tastes of an audience. When *The Boys from Syracuse* was revived by New York's Roundabout Theatre Company in 2002, it met with mixed reviews. Half a century after its Broadway premiere, some critics found the original glamour of the production gone, leaving only out-of-place gags and an underdeveloped script strung together for the sake of the legendary songs.

Yet that same year, what could be considered a modern-day equivalent to *The Boys from Syracuse* appeared at Chicago Shakespeare Theater in the form of the rap-infused, hip-hop musical, *The Bomb-itty of Errors.* Conceived as a senior thesis by a group of NYU theater undergraduates, this five-person streetwise adaptation was first staged off Broadway in 1998, and subsequently restaged in Chicago, London and Edinburgh. Against a corrugated metal, graffiti-sprayed wall (equipped with the essential doors of farce), director Andy Goldberg's production reworked Shakespeare's own adaptation into an all-male, sixteen-character plot, told by four "MC's" and a disc jockey who stood nearby, mixing music and occasionally mixing it up with the others.

Bomb-itty's plot follows Shakespeare's own, with the two sets of twins morphing into quadruplets, who were born into a troubled New York family and split up in infancy to different foster homes. Luciana is transformed into the dim-witted, blonde-wigged younger sister; Dr. Pinch morphs into the Rasta herbalist sent in to cure Antipholus's madness; and Angelo into a riddle-loving Hasidic goldsmith. Here in Chicago, as in every other city it played, this "mindbending love letter to the Bard" earned rave reviews: "Holding a mirror up to the nature of their own times, putting their ear to the pavement, employing the scratch-and-spin techniques of high-style house DJ, and substituting rapid-fire jive for courtly jigs, the show is a brilliant, energizing gloss

on Shakespeare," said the *Chicago Sun-Times*. One of *Bomb-itty*'s originators, GQ, with his brother J became the Q Brothers, adapting a number of other classics into hip-hop musicals, including *Othello: The Remix*.

Meanwhile, many modern productions of *The Comedy of Errors* have continued to pay tribute to the very days of film-noir and screwball Hollywood comedies embodied in *The Boys from Syracuse*. In many productions of the late twentieth century—including the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2000 production directed by Lynne Parker—various permutations of Laurel and Hardy, Harold Lloyd, the Keystone Cops, and the Marx Brothers have frequently appeared on stage, if only in spirit, alongside (or sometimes inhabiting) Shakespeare's mismatched twins. When used carefully, these modern incarnations of the classical clown can help "generate unusual satisfaction," as Parker's "pleasure-packed production of Shakespeare's early farce" did for many critics and audiences. But such devices can also generate the opposite, as another critic points out: in the search to produce a "palpable crowd-pleaser,…what you lose is something of the play's emotional reality."

That has been a recurring struggle for productions of *The Comedy of Errors*—finding a balance between Shakespeare's complex, comical story and all the extra ornamentation, improvisation, and invention it inspires. In 1962 a stopgap production directed by Clifford Williams for the Royal Shakespeare Company found that balance, bringing a temporary, tasteful halt to the chaotic adaptations of *The Comedy of Errors* becoming the twentieth century norm. His production employed conventions of commedia dell'arte, including slapstick, false noses, and narrative through mime. But contrary to some interpretations that pushed the play's potential for masquerade, confusion, and deception as far as it could go, Williams pulled his production back to Shakespeare's text for an intimate focus on the characters' relationships to each other and their social environment. The play was revived for three seasons before it toured to America, Eastern Europe, and returned for another revival in Stratford. Michael Billington, theater critic for *The Guardian* of London, called Williams' interpretation "a milestone in post-war theatrical production," showing that "behind the mistaken identities and manic confusions of farce there are often genuinely dark and disquieting forces at work."

A decade later, another milestone production managed to prove that it is possible to combine *Comedy* with song, dance, and modern-day taste without compromising Shakespeare's text. Presented in 1976 at the Royal Shakespeare Company and starring Judi Dench as Adriana, the production was directed by Trevor Nunn, the acclaimed classical director who went on to helm the Broadway musical hits *Cats* and *Les Miserables*. Nunn's production featured a contemporary, eclectic score, ranging from rock 'n' roll to Greek folk music. Nevertheless, he managed to write lyrics that stayed true to the play's dialogue and spirit, achieving the "opposite extreme of lavish ornamentation," according to *The Times* of London.

Yet another RSC production directed by Adrian Noble in 1983 achieved just the opposite, offering a compendium of the play's most successful stage conventions, including elements of circus, silent film, music hall, commedia dell'arte, and rag-time music. Generally praised for its entertainment value, the production ultimately became, for many, an example of too much of a good thing—especially on top of a play already as rich and full of life as *Comedy*.

In 2012 Shakespeare's Globe in London hosted the Afghanistan-based acting company Roy-e-Sabs' production of *The Comedy of Errors*. Roy-e-Sabs—which translates to "path of hope"—is an innovative acting company that dares to put women on the stage in a country where actresses can face harassment and even death threats. This production marked the first time the group had acted outside of Kabul. Paris-based director Corinne Jaber kept the story intact but changed two key details: the two sets of twins were separated by a sandstorm instead of a tempest and the play was set in Kabul instead of Ephesus. The actors spoke their lines in Dari Persian, the colloquial language of Kabul. Jaber believes that this story has special significance to an Afghan audience because, as she says, "After 30 years of war, people do return looking for lost relatives—and family is so important, you just can't exist without your family."

Chicago Shakespeare Theater first staged *The Comedy of Errors* in 1998, directed by David H. Bell. The full-length production was set in turn-of-the-century Italy, in a romantically lush seaside village, with flower-adorned balconies overlooking the cobblestone streets and outdoor café below. In the opening scene before the houselights came down, lackadaisical waiters (four

circus-trained actors called Bumbellini) silently swept the floor and set the tables—before mayhem broke out in the first of many episodes of juggling plates and assorted flying objects. This fairy-tale universe, glowing in the warmth of sunset-colored lights and the rustic costumes of the Italian countryside, was designed to beckon its Chicago audience from the harsh reality of the wintry Windy City outside the theater doors. Bell established a sense of community, with a shared history and close ties, against which outsiders, like the alien Syracusans, were judged. The final moments of the play, which followed two-and-one-half hours of hilarious highjinks, were moving and memorable for their tenderness and bittersweet joy as the family was at last reunited.

In 2008 *Comedy* returned to the Chicago Shakespeare Theater stage, helmed for the first time by Artistic Director Barbara Gaines. This time Shakespeare was transported to the golden age of film, as an eccentric group of stage and screen actors gathered on the fictional English movie set of Shepperton Studios in the midst of World War II and the London blitz to film *The Comedy of Errors*. With a new framing script by Ron West, Gaines's production explored the comedic elements of Shakespeare's original, while delving into the deep human truths present in the classic text, powerfully evoked by West's frame and Gaines's directorial vision.

This year's abridged production of *The Comedy of Errors* is a play that its adaptor and original director, David H. Bell, returned to numerous times. This production is a re-staging of his *Comedy* first seen on the CST stage in 2005, again four years later in 2009, and once again last summer in the eighth year of Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks program. Set in Depression-era United States, the production features a "play-within-a-play" structure, in which a troupe of itinerant Shakespearean players travels the country as part of the WPA Federal Theatre Project. Engrossed in a series of errors themselves, the troupe decides at the last minute to perform *Comedy* when fellow cast members, props, and costumes for *Hamlet* are stranded en route. The production is directed in 2020 by Eli Newell, who has worked with David Bell extensively. ■

Laura Lamson as Luciana and Timothy James Gregory as Antipholus of Syracuse in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 1998 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

A CONVERSATION WITH DAVID H. BELL

David H. Bell, who adapted and originally directed this production of The Comedy of Errors, *is one of the leading directors in America today. At Chicago Shakespeare, he directed to Theater's full-length productions of* The Taming of the Shrew *(2003),* As You Like It *(2002), and* The Comedy of Errors *(1998)—as well as the original mounting of Short Shakespeare!* The Comedy of Errors *in 2005. His extensive work as a director, choreographer and writer at a host of Chicago theaters has earned him twelve Joseph Jefferson Awards and forty-five nominations. Internationally, he has staged productions in London, Paris, Berlin, Zurich, Vienna and the Barcelona Olympics*

The director of a play approaches a text with his or her own vision. Shakespeare's words, like those of other playwrights, are written on a page for us to read and speak aloud. But a play's words, like most human communication, are open to interpretation. Plays are written to be enacted. It is the work of a director and his or her designers and actors to "decode" the play and bring it creatively to life. The director reads the play closely, and from the printed words on the page, begins to create a living, visual image—or rather, a series of images that eventually unfold before us, alive on stage. He develops a "concept," a basic, central interpretation that helps us approach the play and enter its world with both feet—and our imagination. He plans closely with his designers—the artists who visually create the world of the play—through stage settings, costumes, lighting, and sound. Working together, the director and designers "physicalize" the abstract ideas and make them a concrete part of the theatrical experience that surrounds the actors and us.

David sat down with the Education Staff to discuss his production of *The Comedy of Errors*…

CST: Tell us about the world in which you've chosen to set your production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

DHB: I've directed multiple productions of this play— it's one of my favorites—and each time, it's inhabited a very different world, and for different reasons. For this production, I wanted to create a world that not only satisfied but truly celebrated some of the inherent limitations of a touring show. And so I decided to set our play in Depression-era America when the WPA was operating the Federal Theater Project. Our production is framed as a play-within-a-play: a troupe of itinerant actors travels from town to town, with all the costumes, props and set pieces they can find, loaded into a couple of old trucks. In one town, they put on *Hamlet*, and down the road they do *Romeo and Juliet*. In the prologue to our show, we'll see Egeon—who doubles as the troupe's actor/manager—directing the others as they're setting up their stage and props and getting into their make-up and costumes at the top of the show. The world is going to exist in a layered sense of theater history. There will be props and set pieces used as things other than what they are: a ladder will double as a door, a steamship trunk as a house. There's a wonderful dramatic imagination that informs the entire show. The sandwich board announces today's show, but when the truck with the set and half the actors gets caught out on the road somewhere in Nebraska, they have to change their plans. And at the last moment, they decide on *The Comedy of Errors* instead. That's the comic world of the kind of show we're doing, where everything comes out of a comedy of errors, extending to the theatrical world of the performers themselves.

CST: As you created that world for your production, what was essential to include?

DHB: You need to create a sense of community, a group of people who function together and become the norm against which any "aliens," outsiders, are judged. In *Comedy*, you have a very interesting twist on *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, where the aliens—Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse—come to this very foreign land, where people act as though they know them, as if they belong there. All they can do at first is react with wonder, then they start thinking themselves blessed and begin to fit in, assuming these new identities that have been handed to them.

The first time I directed this play at Chicago Shakespeare, it was a full-length production with a 20-plus-member cast. That production wasn't designed to tour, and so we created this exquisite Mediterranean village, peopled with waiters, fishmongers, bakers—an entire community that had existed in that place for centuries. This time, with fewer actors and a show designed to tour to schools, the challenge became: how can we still create a sense of community but in a very different kind of way?

The entire community has been entirely dysfunctional because of a missing piece of the puzzle—and in the course of the play it gets progressively more dysfunctional as those two pieces orbit together.

That's why I decided to frame the play as a production staged by a traveling troupe of actors, who themselves have their own community, with a history and relationships existing outside the plays they stage. So when their characters come together at the end of the play, they are reuniting in a way that we've anticipated from the very beginning because these two truly do adore each other. The troupe's nervous actor/manager (who has to play all the roles of the actors who didn't show up on the bus, which broke down on the road somewhere with half the cast and the other pieces of set…) is anxiously having a near-death experience throughout the whole show. If the character of the actor/manager is still there, inhabiting the persona of Egeon when the reconciliation happens at the very end, it should resonate that all things are ending well—meaning, 'We've lived through this performance against all odds'—and suddenly that's the metaphor for the actors whose community extends beyond the limits of the play.

The pay-off for widening the footprint of our show is that we don't think of these characters as simply *commedia* types who meet each other on the stage, beat each other up, and immediately bounce right back up into the next scene. There is some larger ramification of the events that happen on the stage.

CST: If you 'widen the footprint' to give these characters a reality of their own, you must see a psychological reality to them.

DHB: Absolutely. When Antipholus of Syracuse says, 'I am to the world like a drop of water' searching for another drop, you have this sense of overpowering want.

Clearly he has wandered forever searching for the lost father and brother and mother and Dromio's brother, and finally he arrives at this place where he *should* feel most alien but where he is treated as though it's his home.

There is something that happens in the opening beats of the play when Antipholus of Syracuse becomes the missing piece to a puzzle he doesn't know he's in. From that missing piece, we reconstruct the remaining pieces, building a puzzle backwards.

Then there's the other brother, Antipholus's twin, who has *always* fit in, always had a home. He doesn't have the same personality defect manifested in this lifelong search for a lost brother. But there's still something clearly unsettled about his life. He can't really focus and commit to his wife Adriana, who loves him deeply but is thoroughly confused by him.

He stays away from home, and he doesn't commit all that much to the Courtesan, either. But he is settled in one place—this is his home—and yet he gets displaced by the missing piece of the puzzle. He, too, gets to be surrounded by an environment that suddenly is hostile to him. It comes to a place where he is in total crisis, too.

CST: Do those psychological conflicts, as well as the plot conflicts, get resolved in the end?

DHB: The entire community has been entirely dysfunctional because of a missing piece of the puzzle—and in the course of the play it gets progressively more dysfunctional as those two pieces orbit together. Throughout the chase scene, we have intersecting maniacs trying to put their lives in order. Finally, out of the absolute chaos, those two pieces meet and all becomes clear. Suddenly there is an order in the universe that is so rare in Shakespeare that you almost breathe this cataclysmic sigh of relief. The final piece of the puzzle comes together when the two 'Antipholi' see each other for the first time. We should feel that the entire play was all about arriving at this one moment of time. It's in this one moment when the question that none of them has been asking—'Why are all these errors happening?'—is finally comprehended. You need to create a clear sense of community because it's the community that needs to be resolved and at peace at the end.

> The entire community has been entirely dysfunctional because of a missing piece of the puzzle—and in the course of the play it gets progressively more dysfunctional as those two pieces orbit together.

CST: How will the community that you've imagined impact the kind of comedy we'll see?

DHB: Our full-length production was an attempt to make reality-based physical comedy, whereas this is going to be theatrical-based physical comedy. This time, the physical comedy will be motivated more like *commedia* characters rather than by a 'realistic' world of people who live in this place, who make their livings here.

CST: You've used the term, 'New World Clowning.' What do you mean, and what role does it play in this production?

DHB: Cirque du Soleil, for example, embodies New World Clowning. Old World Clowning, like all theatrical techniques, follows strict rules. You have the white clown and the red clown and the sad-sack clown— all very specific archetypes. They were derivations of *commedia* stock characters. Then, in the hands of people like Molière, they progressed into more human archetypes, and in the hands of Shakespeare, they evolved further, where you can barely see the traces of the 'Pantelone' character in Shylock, except that Shylock is a classic Pantelone. And you see traces of 'Harlequin' and 'Pedrolino' in the Dromio and Antipholus characters, but that's who they are. Dr. Pinch is 'Il Dortorre,' it's a classic. These are stock characters and these are the people that we tell a story with. Charlie Chaplin is perhaps the first New World clown, though New World Clowning has roots stretching back to the 1600s when clowns moved to the stage and they find really human quality, but they're not any more realistic. Chaplin takes this character that you might pass on the street every day, with the tight-fitting jacket and the baggy pants and the bowler hat and the cane, and out of that he creates the ultimate Harlequin. Everything he does harkens back to when *commedia* only had a scenario and no script.

Cirque de Soleil, as I said, is very much identified with New World Clowning. They've extrapolated street performance, and out of that they've come up with a world that is uniquely itself, which is human-based, not "bit"-based. Although they do 'bits,' the human story transcends that. That is the essence of New World Clowning, where you don't see the red nose and the white face and the smiles—or the Bozo hair. What you see is something that's a lot closer to what we are. It has a broad sense of acrobatics, so there is the 'clowning' tradition, the physical comedy, but it's based in more realistic stuff.

CST: How do you create a world where all the violence never seems particularly dangerous?

DHB: As written, somebody is beating up the Dromios every time they're on stage. You have to make that feel fun—like a Saturday morning cartoon—and not physically dangerous and life threatening. That's a hard line to find but it is the point. I want to support the text and I want it to be fast-moving, to rediscover the play's *commedia* roots in a way that we didn't in our full-length production, which was motivated by realistic stage action. This time, we are admitting that we're on a stage, we're admitting that we're actors, so there's a different kind of contract with the audience, which reads something like: 'I don't have to set up that there's a real orange on stage in the market for sale before I use it to throw at Dromio. I can reach into a trunk, get an orange, and start throwing things.' And it doesn't have to be an orange; it can be a Nerf ball. It can be something baldly created simply to throw at Dromio at that moment. We want to always be reminding the audience that the Dromios know that they're in a play so that the violence is always defined as something that is not real.

> **Antipholus of Syracuse knows that he's looking for something; Antipholus of Ephesus only feels the lack without knowing what it is he's looking for.**

The physical action between Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse always has to be out of friendship, even at its worst, as opposed to Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio, which can be a bit crueler. It's Dromio of Ephesus who gets beaten up a lot, partly due to the rage that Antipholus of Ephesus feels and is unable to put his finger on. Antipholus of Syracuse knows that he's looking for something; Antipholus of Ephesus only feels the lack without knowing what it is he's looking for. And in there he's a time bomb.

CST: Many who are coming to see *The Comedy of Errors* may be more familiar with *Romeo and Juliet* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. How do you see this early play fitting into Shakespeare's other work?

DHB: At the end of this first period he has great plotting and he's actually observing classical unity in ways that he never had before. I think that he must have been talking to some Frenchmen because they were

very much into the unity of time/place/action! In this play, the events happen in a single day and in a single place. It doesn't fluctuate wildly between comedy and tragedy. Although there is some darkness in Adriana, it's more to let us in to her, to feel compassion for her. I do think that there's more light and dark available if you look for it, but compared to the wild coexistence of comedy and tragedy in all of the later comedies—

CST: And even in *Romeo and Juliet*…

DHB: Oh, absolutely. *Romeo and Juliet* is a comedy that goes horribly wrong with the death or Mercutio. Up to that point, you are in a classic Shakespearean comedy. *The Comedy of Errors* is the only show that you can do on a unit set—it doesn't travel from the Capulet house to Friar Laurence's cell. And it doesn't have the wide change of time and place that other Shakespeare plays do. It's why *Comedy* has often been minimized and separated from the rest of the canon as nothing more than Shakespeare playing with Roman comedy without transcending the form. And that's so wrong! He is actually writing within the form and by different rules, but he does exhibit everything that is always Shakespeare: there is a complex human soul yearning underneath and fueling us.

The plot does not fuel us as much as that ephemeral yearning does, and that is unique. Antipholus's line early on, 'I to the world am like a drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop'—really is the key to what Shakespeare is about because he sees an entire universe that's made dysfunctional by the inability of these two people to recognize each other as brothers. And that dysfunction of the universe is uniquely modern and uniquely Shakespeare, and it is why community is so important in creating the world of this play. It's not just the 'Antipholi' and the Dromios who are suffering; it's the entire universe contained in the play, and that's very intriguing to me.

Shakespeare never goes back to this particular kind of Roman farce as source material. I think he's interested in deeper source material, and often in stories that are not as theatrical. In *Comedy*, you see the influence of Roman comedy in a way you don't in any of his other plays. The mix-up of identities in *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* are gender-based; this is not. But in these later plays, he's simply adding another layer to something he's already playing with here in *Comedy*, which is the confusion of identity. Who am I? What

happens to my sense of self if I'm treated in a certain way? And their confusion is not just for comic effect; it serves to find the metaphor for the dramatic underpinnings of the piece.

CST: A metaphor that speaks directly to some of the central concerns of adolescence.

DHB: Yes, these are the very confusions that they face every day: of identity, of loyalty, of how to fit in. There are moments when you're growing up that you're defined by what people call you. So there is Antipholus of Syracuse who's searching for something. He doesn't know what, and he's suddenly given a life and people are telling him who he is—total peer pressure—and he agrees. He succumbs to that peer pressure. Similarly, Antipholus of Ephesus, being told that he's done things that he knows he hasn't, reacts in rage and confusion. These are very real, very contemporary adolescent issues. Dromio at one point asks Antipholus, 'Am I myself ?'

And that's what makes Shakespeare Shakespeare: he always finds a way to deal with issues he identifies with and puts them in a play—honestly, truly. Adriana loves someone who can't love back; she is in love with her illusion. Then Shakespeare puts her a love scene with a man who doesn't even know her (though she thinks he does), a stranger who can only act in a disaffected way—manifesting her absolute worst fears. That's a wonderful metaphor for relationships based more in our illusions and fears than in the reality of another person.

CST: And for the struggle over whether they should accept that identity that they've been given.

DHB: Which both of the 'Antipholi' do—particularly Antipholus of Syracuse, because the identity he's offered is a positive one. But Antipholus of Ephesus ends up outraged and kind of giving up. And then this wonderful thing happens: he's forced to fight for the very life he was disaffected from right along. He's forced to claim that thing that he didn't seem to want. Brilliant!

CST: What was your visual inspiration for the show?

DHB: The scenic and costume designers were both inspired by the work of the twentieth-century American painter Thomas Hart Benton. Part of the Regionalist movement, Benton is best known perhaps for his murals depicting common, everyday scenes of Midwestern life. There's kind of a midwestern American impressionism in

their art. One of Benton's most famous murals appears in the State of Illinois Center in downtown Chicago.

But it wasn't until after I saw the initial costume sketches by Costume Designer Ana Kuzmanic that I remembered the work of Thomas Hart Benton, a phenomenal painter of the 1920s and 1930s. His work combines the light touch of the Art Deco movement that preceded him with humanity and a flowing line that lends itself perfectly to comedy. In researching him I came across a couple of murals he did in 1933 called 'City Activities,' which were part of a bigger series called 'America Today.' In these murals, he layered a number of locations and activities together to create an *impression* of American life, not just a painting. His vibrant style and composition and use of collage were the ideal solution to our challenge of creating a backdrop that suggests the play without spelling it out.

CST: What do you want the set to accomplish?

DHB: As a touring show, *The Comedy of Errors* has to pack up and travel very quickly, which actually fits in perfectly with David's concept of a touring theater company of the post-Depression era. At that time, the government launched the 'Federal Theatre Project' (as part of a larger effort called the 'Works Progress Administration,' or WPA), to help revitalize the theater establishment and provide work for unemployed actors, directors, designers, and vaudeville artists. So the set of *The Comedy of Errors*—like the set of the WPA's touring theater companies—is mobile, flexible, and gives a quick impression of the time and (hopefully) the style of the play, without giving away too many tricks so we can surprise the audience as much as possible.

CST: Is there a line that for you is key into this entire story?

DHB: Yes, it's that one I've mentioned before. Early on in the play, Antipholus of Syracuse is left alone on stage for a moment and he tells us about himself: 'I to the world am like a drop of water / That in the ocean seeks another drop… So I, to find a mother and a brother, / In quest of them, unhappy, lose myself.' (Act 1 scene 2) What Antipholus is saying here is really the key to what Shakespeare's about in this play: he sees an entire universe that is made dysfunctional because of the inability of these two people to recognize each other as brothers. And that dysfunction of the universe

is uniquely modern and uniquely Shakespeare, and that's why community is so important.

> **What Antipholus is saying here is really the key to what Shakespeare's about in this play: he sees an entire universe that is made dysfunctional because of the inability of these two people to recognize each other as brothers.**

It's not just the Antipholus and the Dromio twins who are suffering; it's the entire universe around them. The parallels to our own world today—in the Middle East, in the former Soviet bloc, in some of our own troubled cities here in the United States—are striking and profound. And that's why this play for me is never 'simply' a farce or broad comedy.

CST: David, finally, if you had to sum up what you have come to love most in this play, what is it?

DHB: I love this show for a million reasons that you may not expect. When it works, it is in orbit of a miracle. For me, it is that moment when Antipholus of Syracuse and Antipholus of Ephesus arrive on stage together at the end of Act 5, and they look at each other. And in that miracle, if we do it right, there is the greatest gift I think we can give anyone in the audience: the sense that, at that moment, they belong: the twins belong to each other, the community belongs to each other. What has ripped them all apart throughout the rest of the story is transformed into the very thing that now cements them together. To me, there is nothing more profound than what this moment offers. The twins belong to each other, and the community belongs to each other, and everybody on the stage as actors belongs to each other. And we invite an entire audience of people from communities across the city to belong to us as well, and we belong to them. For me, there is no more essential reason to tell stories. There is no more essential reason to be in the theater. ■
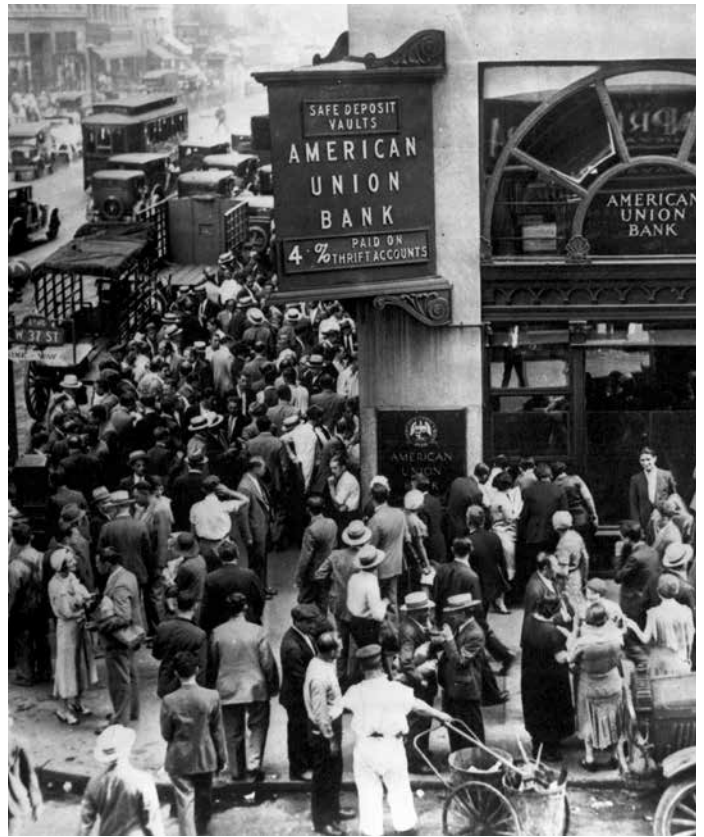
ART AND AMERICA'S GREAT DEPRESSION

The Great Depression was a worldwide economic recession that affected employment, production, and the way the world regarded government. Beginning with the end of World War I in 1918, industry in the U.S. began a slow and steady decline. Few worried near the start of the downturn because prior recessions had lasted less than a year. As time wore on, though, depressed mining and farming industries showed little sign of turning around, and in 1928, the construction boom came to an end. Then, on October 24, 1929, the U.S. stock market crashed, leaving the economy in ruins. Frightened of losing all their money, people rushed the banks and withdrew their savings; the banks suffered major setbacks, further eroding the country's faith that financial institutions were secure. Unemployment jumped from 9% in 1930 to 25% just three years later. From 1929 to 1932, 11,000 banks failed in the United States alone—six times the number that had failed each year during the 1920s.

Herbert Hoover, president of the United States during the beginning of the economic downturn, was hesitant to increase the federal government's power, so he decided to put off direct aid to citizens and financial institutions . In 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president and changed the face of government aid forever.

President Roosevelt believed that it was the federal government's duty to get the country out of the Depression, so he implemented the New Deal—a sweeping set of government programs created to aid citizens by providing relief for the poverty stricken, jobs for the unemployed, and dramatic restructuring of America's systems of labor and production, all to ensure that such a harrowing economic downturn could be avoided by future generations.

The New Deal addressed problems within every facet of labor. Unions were encouraged to protect wages for workers; aid was provided to small farmers; and projects were implemented to bring jobs to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed throughout the nation. New acts passed through Congress, creating many public projects, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided jobs that aided conservation projects—planting trees and constructing government buildings, many of which still stand today.

Crowd at New York's American Union Bank during a bank run early in the Great Depression.

Another project, the Public Works Administration, provided jobs for the construction of bridges, dams, and schools. Some New Deal projects continue to thrive even now, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority—a government corporation formed in 1933 to address energy, environment and economic development in a particularly depressed area of Tennessee—and the Social Security Administration.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA—later reformulated as the Works Projects Administration) was one of the most successful of the public works programs authorized by the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act in 1935. Over eight million jobless Americans found work through the various programs of the WPA—most in manual labor, building libraries, schools, hospitals, airports, bridges, and roads. But the WPA included many more narrowly focused sub-groups dedicated to providing work opportunities, entertainment, and psychological relief for the larger public. Among these groups were the Federal Writers' Project, the Federal Art Project, and the Federal Theatre Project, all under the general umbrella project called Federal One, which aided thousands of artists, writers, actors and

students. It was important to President Roosevelt to fuel not only the country's financial life, but also its cultural and artistic life. In such dire circumstances, artistic and personal expression might otherwise have been effectively silenced.

From 1935 to 1943, writers created portraits of American life for the Federal Writers' Project (FWP). Project director Henry Alsberg employed college professors, journalists, novelists and other literary talents to record local and regional history. Some of the writers went on to become literary stars, including Chicago's own Studs Terkel and Saul Bellow, as well as Ralph Ellison, Zora Neale Hurston, and John Cheever, among others. The core of their publications was a set of travel books known as the "American Guide Series." The series included guides for the contiguous forty-eight states, Alaska and Puerto Rico. They featured information on major highways, cities and small towns, local history, folklore, and social commentary. In all, the series totaled more than 1,000 books and pamphlets. In 2008, a collection of these writings as they related to regional American cuisine was finally published as *America Eats*, putting many FWP authors' work back on the bookshelf for the first time since 1935.

The Federal Art Project (FAP) provided employment for thousands of local artists, whose artistic endeavors still grace hundreds of local post offices, libraries, schools, and other government buildings throughout the US. The FAP's strongest outreach program was in art education for children. The FAP maintained more than 100 community art centers across the country, managed art programs, and held art exhibitions of works produced by children and adults. The artwork was loaned to schools, libraries, galleries, and other institutions. It is estimated that 2,566 murals, 17,744 sculptures, 108,099 paintings, and 240,000 prints were produced during the program During a four-year period, the Federal Theatre Project (FTP) produced and staged more than a thousand plays in twenty-two states. Many performances, staged in schools and community centers, were free of charge. People were able to enjoy theater without the obstacles of travel or cost.

Consequently, the theater reached people who had perhaps never experienced a live performance before. Though the artists involved with FTP were paid only $22.73 a week, they were among some of the country's most talented actors and directors, including Orson Welles (who went on to create film versions of *Macbeth*

and *Othello*, and a TV version of *The Merchant of Venice*), Arthur Miller (whose most notable plays include *The Crucible* and *Death of a Salesman*), and John Houseman (who went on to produce a film version of *Julius Caesar*).

Many productions of the FTP were politically resonant and socially active, including Sinclair Lewis's anti-fascist *It Can't Happen Here*, which was staged simultaneously in 22 cities. Marc Blitzstein's *Cradle Will Rock*, directed by Orson Welles, was shut down for what are widely believed to be political concerns over its pro-communist content, though it was later staged guerrilla-style and enjoyed much public success—including a 1999 semi-fictional film adaptation by actor/director Tim Robbins. Welles' production of *Macbeth* was staged with members of the FTP's all-black theater unit and set in the court of Haitian King Henri Christophe. The production featured only four experienced professionals in a cast of over 100 actors; it played to standing-room-only crowds in New York City. Welles later recalled the experience as "by all odds the greatest success in my life."

The implementation of the New Deal's programs paved the way for economic relief. Worldwide, citizens looked to their governments for support, and those governments that had previously provided little aid—the U.S. included—took the initiative to adjust spending and aid policies. New Deal programs paved the way for an exploration and reinvigoration of the arts in America. ◼

ON THE ROAD: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOURING SHAKESPEARE

A wandering minstrel I, a thing of rags and patches, of ballads, songs, and snatches of dreamy lullaby…

–GILBERT & SULLIVAN, *THE MIKADO*

Another op'nin, another show, in Philly, Boston, or Baltimore; a chance for stage folks to say hello, another op'nin of another show.

–COLE PORTER, *KISS ME, KATE*

The actors are come hither, my lord… The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical- historical- pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited.

–WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *HAMLET*

No one knows for certain where or when theater began, but from what historians can tell, touring was a part of theater almost from the beginning. Theater has always required an audience, and it's still true that if the audience can't get to the theater, the theater will go to its audience. Though working in the theater is often full of uncertainties, anyone who does is sure to travel, and likely to tour. Tours can be as large as productions like Wicked or as small as a juggler who wanders around the city. The traveling lifestyle is so strongly associated with actors that many of them refer to themselves as gypsies; the word fits them as they wander about from show to show, going wherever their work takes them.

As early as the second century BC, companies of actors traveled the Roman Empire, setting up temporary stages at carnivals or in market squares. Audiences circa 190 BC were apparently just as particular as those today—or perhaps more so: if the performance did not live up to their expectations, the audience would simply wander away. The following excerpt from Plautus's prologue to the play *Poenulus* is more than 2,000 years old, though some of it is still considered proper "audience etiquette" today:

Let… the usher [not] roam about in front of people or show anyone to a seat while the actor is on the stage. Those who have had a long leisurely nap at home should now cheerfully stand, or at least refrain from sleeping… And let the nurses keep tiny children at home and not bring them to see the play, lest…the

children die of hunger or cry for food like young goats. Let matrons view the play in silence, laugh in silence, refrain from tinkling tones of chatter…

As time went on and the Catholic Church became more powerful, plays were forbidden—especially Greek or Roman ones that the Church felt promoted pagan beliefs. Eventually the only professional performers left were minstrels wandering from town to town. Acting was equated with sin, and actors were outcasts from society. But the desire to engage in performance seems to be a universal one, and soon enough the Church itself instigated the creation of a type of play that contemporary scholars regard as a foundation of modern theater: the medieval miracle, or mystery play (from *mystère*, the French word for miracle). Based on the Bible, the plays (most often done in a cycle) depicted such famous stories as Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, the Nativity, the Loaves and Fishes, and, finally, the story of Jesus' death, called the Passion Play.

Versions of the medieval Passion Play are still performed today. The mystery plays were a part of church ritual and reinforced its teachings. The players would set up stages throughout a village, and the townspeople would wander from stage to stage until they had seen the whole cycle. With some cycles, this could start early in the morning and last until it was too dark for the audience to see. As time went on, the sets became more elaborate. Many were placed on horse- drawn wagons so that they would not need to be reconstructed in each town. Some wagons carried structures of two or more stories and required four horses to pull them!

The mystery plays (with a few exceptions) did not have developed characters or plots, but their popularity led to stagings of new works, called "morality plays," which depicted the common man in allegorical situations ranging from religious to political to comic. Characters in these plays had names such as "Despair" or "Divine Correction." The morality plays made way for new theatrical forms, and small companies of actors once again wandered about Europe, performing for anyone who could pay.

The stigma of sin that the Church had placed on secular entertainment was a long time in wearing off, and even in Shakespeare's day Queen Elizabeth declared all actors to be vagabonds (and thus without civil rights) unless they had a patron in the nobility. Shakespeare's

Timothy Edward Kane, Ross Lehman, and Angela Ingersoll in the 2008 Chicago Shakespeare Theater production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Barbara Gaines. Photo by Liz Lauren.

company earned its name from such patronage when it was known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and later as the King's Men when King James (Elizabeth's successor) served as the acting company's patron. These sponsored companies performed at the courts of their patrons, at the new public theaters such as the Globe, and, like companies today, did tours of the country.

The very real threat of plague—associated at that time with large gathering places—closed the London theaters for weeks and sometimes months on end; during these periods, acting companies simply packed up and returned to the road. Traveling from town to town, the troupe would pull its cart into a town square or the courtyard of an inn. Their wagon became a stage, and the actors performed to all who gathered around the makeshift stage.

With theater's resurgence in the Renaissance came playwrights, such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and Molière—men whose plays' popularity long outlasted their own lives. Theater was again a vital element of culture, so strong that when the Puritans shut down the theaters in the seventeenth century, they stayed closed for eighteen years—as opposed to the six

centuries accomplished by the Church's opposition in the Middle Ages. Although touring companies were still popular in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, especially in Italy and Spain, some plays could not tour because of the fast-growing taste for elaborate sets that could not easily be moved. Directors and designers experimented with realistic design elements that were, at the very least, impractical for touring—real sheep in a pastoral play, for instance, or rain falling on stage in a storm scene.

Shakespeare's works delighted directors and designers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the plays were full of shipwrecks, apparitions, battles and country scenes, which gave them opportunities to create larger and more complicated sets and special effects. The results must have been astounding, but it was not unusual for the plays to be cut, rewritten, or rearranged to suit the needs of the set and the demands of the audience. *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, was rewritten by at least four different people in various ways. In some versions the lovers did not die, in others they exchange last words as they died; there were some versions that created lengthy funeral processions at the end of the play. More elaborate sets required more time to move,

and so "two hours' traffic of the stage" could easily become much longer as the audience waited through the set changes.

The very real threat of plague—associated at that time with large gathering places—closed the London theaters for weeks and sometimes many months on end...

The move back to Shakespeare's text as written was a gradual one, and it was not until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that attempts were made to stage his plays as they are thought to have been staged during his lifetime. An English director named William Poel was instrumental in this "back to basics" Shakespeare. The emphasis in Poel's directing was on language, and on simple staging, which allowed the plays to emerge through the word rather than the scenery. Poel encouraged his actors to speak Shakespeare's language conversationally, as they spoke in modern plays. He moved away from the declamatory style of nineteenth-century productions—in which the delivery of the lines could be as plodding as the long set-changes—and created instead simple, elegant Shakespearean productions.

The new emphasis on language rather than spectacle gave the audience much more of a stake in the work being performed. Their feelings for the characters and situations in the play were reliant on how well they understood what was going on, and thus by how well the actors did their jobs. Will an audience understand that Phoebe in *As You Like It* is a shepherdess even if she has no sheep with her, or is not dressed in a traditional shepherdess costume? In *King Lear*, can the actors playing Lear and the Fool be at the mercy of the elements even if the storm is evoked by no more than the occasional sound cue of thunder? That, of course, depends on the skill of the actors and director—and the audience's willingness to use their imaginations.

Every year, Chicago Shakespeare Theater also goes on tour. More in line with the traveling acting troupes of Shakespeare's day and not as elaborate as a national touring show, our abridged Shakespeare production tours to a number of Chicago Public Schools in the winter, and to neighborhood parks across the city each summer, "free for all." The full cast, accompanied by a crew of light and sound operators, a dresser, and stage managers, brings Shakespeare to dozens of communities, giving them the opportunity to share in this centuries-old part of the theater experience.

The last century has seen glorious achievements in movies and television, but going to the movies is a purely reactive experience for its audience: even if everyone in the cinema were to get up and leave, the film continues to play. Theater, however, is impossible without an audience, and no matter how many times one sees the same production, no two performances will ever be the same. The excitement of theater lies in that indefinable connection between playwright, director, actor, and playgoer. This sense of connection is vital to touring productions, which typically rely on less elaborate sets, lights, and costumes. Actors in touring productions have nothing up their sleeves. They must use the play, themselves, and the audience to create magic. ■

Timothy James Gregory as Antipholus of Syracuse and Kraig Swartz as Dromio of Syracuse in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 1998 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks

A summer tradition in our city since the program's launch in 2012, **Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks** tours a professional Shakespeare production to neighborhood parks throughout Chicago for four to five weeks of free performances each year. Working in partnership with the Chicago Park District, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks brings together community organizations, neighborhood stakeholders, and local artists in each community where the program tours. To date, more than 120,000 people of all ages have experienced Shakespeare in their neighborhood. In 2019, Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks toured *The Comedy of Errors*—the same production that 30,000 students across the Midwest will experience on stage at Chicago Shakespeare and on tour to schools in Winter 2020. ■

Will Allan as Dromio of Syracuse in Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks 2019 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Alec Silver as Dromio of Ephesus in Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks 2019 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Chicago Shakespeare in the Parks 2019 production of *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by David H. Bell. Photo by Liz Lauren.

Classroom Activities & Resources

To the teacher, please note: The line numbers indicated here are based on the Cambridge School Shakespeare *edition of* The Comedy of Errors.

BEFORE YOU READ THE PLAY

AS A CLASS

1 Shakespeare, like most good writers, chose the opening lines for his plays with some thought about the story that followed them. In one way or another, they end up telling us a lot about the world we're about to enter. But for a comedy, *The Comedy of Errors* starts off *very* oddly! A character by the name of Egeon starts everything off by saying, "Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall, and by the doom of death, end woes and all." What's going on here?!? Why would something called a "comedy" start off by talking about "the doom of death"? As a group, brainstorm some possibilities. What do you already know about "comedy" from watching TV sitcoms or movies? Start getting some questions up on the board that you want answered, just based on Egeon's two-line opener. And you might want to go back to a couple of other stories you've finished recently and see if *their* first lines suggest anything about the author's "deck of cards" that gets revealed as the story plays itself out.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R2, R4

2 As a class, create the skeleton framework of a bulletin board for *The Comedy of Errors*, which you'll add to as you read and watch the play performed. Start by putting up pictures or words that represent anything you know or think about this play's story before you start to read. Look for pictures of some of the play's prominent ideas and actions—long journeys, foreign lands, foreigners, family loss, reunion, money, twins, identity confusion (to name just a few…). As you read the play, add images, quotes, headlines, poetry—anything that reminds you of characters, events, key objects, words, or anything else that you feel is relevant to your responses and thoughts about *The Comedy*. As a class, discuss your additions in the context of the play.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standard R3

3 *(To the teacher: Choose evocative or important lines from throughout the play, create narration to string them together and tell the basic story.* ***See Appendix A*** *for some lines that we shared at our 2009* The Comedy of Errors *teacher workshop.)*

Hollywood knows how to hook an audience with movie trailers. What if there were a movie trailer for The Comedy of Errors? Before you read the play, act out your own trailer as a class. Using your teacher's script of interesting and significant lines strung together by trailer-type narrative and underscored by some music, volunteers stand and read through the movie trailer script. The lines should be read quickly, with suspense and energy. Then after you read the play, go back and create your own trailer! What lines would you include? What music would you choose? What mood do you want to create for your audience? You might even create your own filmed version of the trailer, if you have access to camera equipment, or create a photo montage to run under the sound of the trailer using an editing program like iMovie.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL2, W3

—Adapted from Timothy Duggan, Ed.D., CST teacher workshop activity

4 *The Comedy of Errors* takes place in a Mediterranean seaport, a town called Ephesus. Imagine what you might find in such a town and write all of your ideas on the board. Pick something from the list for which you can make a sound, such as a leaf crunching underfoot, and put your initials by it to "claim" it! In a circle with your eyes closed, the leader will begin by making her sound. The person next to the leader then makes his sound, and so on. The object is to hear each sound, not to drown out your neighbors! With your eyes still closed, imagine yourself in Ephesus!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standard SL4

5 *(To the teacher: Excerpt 30 lines from the play that are rich in Shakespeare's language or are descriptive of character. Distribute a line to each student on a slip of paper, not revealing the character's name. See Appendix B for a sample list!)* Examining the language of a text can help us predict the play's larger context. Each student gets a line from the play that's rich in Shakespeare's language or descriptive of a particular character. Look at your line and, as you walk around the room on your own, say it aloud again and again without addressing anyone. Play with the words, saying them in as many different styles, tones, inflections, and volumes as you can think of. Make each word matter. Now walk around the room and deliver your line directly to your classmates as they do the same. Regroup in a circle, each reading your line aloud in turn.

Forming a circle, discuss your lines. First, what questions do you have about the meaning of particular words? Can you guess at a possible meaning in the context of the full sentence—or by even the sound of the word itself? Imagine what this play might be about, simply based on some of the words and lines that you've heard its characters speak. What questions do the lines make you ask about the story? Did you hear any lines that seemed to be spoken by the same character, or that might have been spoken to another character in the circle whose line you heard? This is a time to listen to the language and begin to use your imagination to think about the world of the play you've just entered.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R4

6 Shakespeare often wrote in "iambic pentameter"—ten syllables to a line of text, and (like the "de-dum" of our heartbeat), alternating the stress with every other syllable starting with the second and ending on the tenth. And though actors in performance never emphasize the rhythm enough that we hear it (though they may as they learn their lines), it has a different impact, much like a piece of music does, because it is so like the rhythm of our heart and breath. Take the Duke's first monologue at the opening of *Comedy* and read it silently first to yourself. Count out the number of syllables in each line—there will be a few that aren't "a perfect ten." Now, as a class, form a circle. In the circle, walk as you read the monologue out loud. Let the rhythm of the writing set the pace. Don't think too hard about this, just read the passage and walk the circle. When you reach the end, just pick right up at the beginning again. Soon you should notice the rhythm affecting the pace of your steps. You're walking in iambs! An excellent activity to build reading fluency.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R3, L4, L5

7 You know how sometimes it just makes you feel better when you've said a word or two to someone in anger? Words develop to help us express feelings—and release feelings (and some words just by their very sound are better able to do that than others). Practice aloud—at each other with feeling!—the insults **(See Appendix C)** that characters from *Comedy* sling at one another. If the meaning of a world is not clear, don't get stuck! Keep repeating the insult and you'll be closer to its meaning than you might think. Once you've slung quite enough dirt at each other, do it now in turn, and after someone has hurled an insult, it's a race among the rest to imagine a contemporary situation that might provoke such a rebuke!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, L4, L5

8 The sheer number of characters in *The Comedy of Errors* can be daunting, especially when some of them have the same name! Use stuffed animals, action figures, Legos, etc. to represent the characters from the *Dramatis Personae* As one person reads through the play's synopsis out loud, the others use the figures to enact the story. Repeat this activity a few times, bringing all the creativity and enthusiasm you can to your play. Keep the figures on hand as you study the play for enacting certain scenes or simply as a reference.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R3

9 *The Comedy of Errors* **in a Snap!**

What students will learn and be able to do:

- Gain an introductory understanding of the story.

- Speak and hear some of the key lines of the play.

- Gain comprehension through physically activating the language.

- Work collaboratively to explore varying interpretations of the text.

[To the teacher: copy the sheet of the lines—along with their numbers—and cut them into strips. Divide the class into small groups of 3-4 people, giving each group several lines to share in their work together. Prior to class, write the quote numbers, 1-25, in sequence on the board so you can silently point to each, cuing the next group without interrupting the narrative. **See Appendix D for a printable version of the script and lines***.]*

In your small groups, read your lines aloud a few times. Discuss what questions you have about the lines. Then, working with one line at a time, decide how you want to physicalize it to help bring its meaning alive for your audience. Your choices don't need to be literal, but they should help your audience to better understand the line as you play with the words' meaning or sounds.

Practice saying your line as a group with your gesture—either in a choral reading or dividing up the words between you. But everyone needs to speak at least part of each line! Repeat this process for the rest of your lines.

As a class, stand in a circle. As the story is read, watch for the moment the narrator points to your line numbers and jump in with your line and gesture.

Tableau (Extension)

What students will learn and be able to do:

- Develop visualization skills to understand text structure and deepen comprehension.

- Work together collaboratively to create a single interpretation.

- Actively engage as an audience in reading and reshaping tableaux as text.

Creating a tableau

Each group creates a visual picture with their bodies of one of their lines of text—a frozen snapshot.

- The line of text may be spoken by one person or divided up amongst members of the group.

- Use different levels—low, medium, high

- Find depth in the tableau. (Avoid the straight line…)

- Use proximity and distance as tools to convey meaning.

- Employ your entire body (head to toe) including facial expressions.

Sculpting a tableau

Taking tableau work to the next level, this actively involves the audience—as readers, observers, interpreters—and even as sculptors.

- In staging a tableau, the group "donates" their work to the class.
- The class "reads" the tableau and offers suggestions for possible reshaping, while honoring the group's interpretation.

Reflection

What thoughts/feelings does this picture evoke for you?

- How did incorporating levels, depth, and distance help to shape the tableau?
- To the tableau-makers: What did the group intend to communicate?
- To the audience: Observing their picture and hearing their intentions, what aspect/s could be made clearer?
- How would you suggest that they continue to sculpt their tableaux?

What more have we learned about the line through tableaux?

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

10 It's no secret that Shakespeare is filled with words we don't know the meaning of without looking them up—and that's true for adults as well as students. It was true for his audiences, too, because he was making words up often as he went along. Even today, the English language is constantly reinvented and added to.

Take a look at two words written up on the board: "comedy" and "error." By associating other words that you connect with both, start coming up with a word web that links certain words, and then branches off from particular words to other associations. Once you've spent some time focused on the words, divide into pairs, with as much space between you as possible for creating a "Sculpture Garden" in your classroom. As your teacher calls out a particular word from the web, one person will serve as sculptor, the other as clay! No words, just communicating by touch. Use different levels: a sculpture is as likely to hug the ground as it is to reach toward the sky. When your teacher calls, "Freeze!" the sculptors will walk around the garden, observing other artists' interpretations. Switch partners and continue with other words from your word web. When you finish, talk as a class about the title of Shakespeare's play. What do you imagine about the world of the play from the words and physical shapes you spun out from its title alone? There's no right or wrong answer at this point. You're thinking about the clues Shakespeare is giving you before you even open to the first page, and then you can start to check out your hypotheses against the story you find there!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, L4, L6

—Adapted from CST teacher workshop activity

11 In small groups, leaf through the script to find three words that you're pretty sure will be unknown to everyone, including you! Then, using your resources (footnotes in the text, a lexicon if you have one in the classroom, or shakespeareswords.com), look up and write out the definition that seems to make the most sense in the

context of the story. Next, make up two other convincing definitions for each word that your classmates are sure to believe! Now, in your group, first read aloud the line in which the word appears. Then read your three possible definitions for the word, including the right one, while you try to stump the others! So often in Shakespeare (as in other texts), the context will help lead you to a word's meaning—even if you've never heard the word before.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, L4, L6

12 *(Check out the Royal Shakespeare Company's Image Library to find about five images of different moments from various productions of The Comedy of Errors and give each group a set of the five pictures. You can access the Image Library here:* https://images.rsc.org.uk/action/browseItems?categoryId=203&categoryTypeId=1)

In small groups, examine each of the five images in your packet. What's going on and what is the relationship between the people in the picture? Where does the scene take place? What is happening? Take turns looking at the photos and write your responses down by each picture. You can also respond to comments your other group members have already made.

After you've all had a chance to look at each image, try to arrange the pictures in the order in which you think these scenes occurred. How might these scenes be connected? Why does one picture come before another?

After each group has decided on the best order, share your decision with the rest of the class. What did other groups decide? Why?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R2, R7, SL1

—Adapted from Becca Manery, CST teacher workshop activity

13 Stop! Before you turn one more page in that book, take another long look at that very long list of character names listed in the front. What is anyone to make of it? Well, admittedly, not a whole right now, but there are lots of clues about the play—even here on a page that looks like it's written in another language… In your small group, do some detective work. You've been hired to follow up on a case in this town (a missing gold chain…) and you know nothing about this cast of characters—beyond this list. Brainstorm—based on this one page alone: a) what you know; b) what you might guess; and c) what questions you have to get answered about the people in this play and the place they live. Make three lists and check them out against the clues your classmates thought they found in Shakespeare's *dramatis personae*.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R3, R5, R7

14 Shakespeare was a descriptive writer—which any of us can be, too, when we know and observe our subject very closely. As a homework assignment, choose a place to sit and write about for ten minutes on your own. Pick a location that is active, like a school hallway, the gym, or your kitchen at dinner time. Keep writing throughout, and don't stop writing until the time is up. Just write what you see, hear, smell, and how the place feels. Make your words as descriptive as possible. Poets like Shakespeare rely on metaphors—comparisons of seemingly dissimilar things like love and food to describe abstract emotions and sensory experience. Test out your metaphorical skills as you write about the space!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3

ON YOUR OWN

15 Shakespeare's plays are still around because his characters experience life so much like we do still. Before you enter the world of Shakespeare's play in reading or seeing it on stage, it's helpful thinking about your own life experiences that may help you identify with his characters. Jot down some of your ideas about one of the following situations.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3, W4, W10, R2, R3, R6

- Have you ever visited a foreign country and felt like you—or maybe everybody else—was just a bit crazy, because of the differences between you and the way everybody thought and acted? What was the situation? What experiences made you feel particularly out of tune? Did the situation—or your feelings about it—ever change, and if so, how?

- Have you ever been mistaken for somebody else—not literally being called by another person's name, but people thinking that you were somebody that you're not? In other words, has your own perception of the kind of person you are differed from the perceptions people have of you? What did you see in yourself, and what did they see in you? Why the difference? And how did it make you feel?

- Have you ever been in a situation with a close friend or family member whom you trust when there's been a total breakdown in communication—you're both telling the truth but you're both positive that the other person is lying to you? What were the circumstances? What made you think the other person had to be lying? How did the two of you figure out what was going on—and how did the whole mess make you feel?

- Have you ever felt that being in love changed you, that the person you were in the past was somehow transformed in some very real way? What about you seemed different? Was it your feelings? Your appearance? Your personality? The way others viewed you? The way you viewed yourself? Describe the sense of transformation you experienced, and talk about how it made you feel. ■

AS YOU READ THE PLAY

BELL RINGERS

These are brief introductory activities to set the stage for class. They are simply 2–5 minute attention-getters and focusers. Used daily or strategically, they can help students connect day-to-day, create initial class unity and focus, and simply add some fun to the beginning or end of a class. Teams, rewards and bonus points often heighten focus and enthusiasm. Many of these activities work well as class conclusions, emergency substitute activities, and creative full-class activities as well.

16 If you are working on memorizing a monologue, use the opening minutes to collectively recite it. Use different tones and inflections (a southern, French or western accent, like Elmer Fudd, as one of the Simpsons…) Say it fast and slow, sing it, chant it, be creative each day—and soon you'll know it and have learned it together.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standard SL6

17 Ask students to finish a line that you or another student begins. Use the previous night's reading or previous scenes, or even future lines and have them guess based on what they already know about the character. Have them guess the character that would say the line.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standard SL3

18 Throw a bunch of lines in a fish bowl. As a student to pick one out and read it, with the other students trying to match the character and moment in the play.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, R5, R6

19 Imagine if Twitter, Instagram or Facebook had existed in ancient Ephesus… Based on the scenes you are studying for homework, compose creative daily tweets from the local Ephesus news Twitter feed to describe what's going on—or Antipholus of Syracuse's Facebook status updates as his day gets progressively weirder. Remember to keep your posts short—Ephesus doesn't have a lot of bandwidth!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R7, W4

ACT 1
AS A CLASS

20 Stop reading! If you're reading Egeon's opening words, "Proceed, Solinus, etc." you've gone too far—that is, until you back up and read that seemingly throwaway line above it—Shakespeare's "stage direction." Shakespeare, unlike modern playwrights, didn't write many of these. Those two-page-long stage directions in a Tennessee Williams or Eugene O'Neill play are harder to steer around without at least *noticing* them. And, granted, stage directions aren't in and of themselves the most exciting reading around, BUT they tell you a lot—like who's there (and who's not).

Act 1 scene 1 of *The Comedy of Errors* is pretty straightforward as far as stage directions go: they all enter at the beginning; they all leave at the end. But as a class, talk about the various ways that those characters might get on and off that stage. First off, how many of them are there? Who do all those "attendants" belong to? Does everybody come in together, and if not, who might be with whom? What do we know about where they are, and does that setting in any way inform this single stage direction? For the sake of argument, let's say, that some of those "attendants" come on stage before the rest. What might they be doing there?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R5, SL1, SL4

21 In the opening scene of Shakespeare's *Comedy*, a character named Egeon recounts the sad tale of his entire life—and it's a very long monologue! The goal when you're faced with anything long? Break it up! And here are a few ways to help you do just that…

- In pairs, facing your partner, read Egeon's speech as if it were a conversation between two people, each person taking a sentence at a time. Try to engage each other conversationally, like you would a friend that you were filling in about your weekend.

- In small groups, take a look at Egeon's monologue and highlight in every line of verse the word that seems to be the key, the most essential word in the line. If you disagree about which word to call your "silver bullet," discuss and try to reach a consensus between you. Try reading your key words aloud, and see if you can make sense—not as complete sentences, but as a "through-line" that builds as Egeon's life story does. If you need to go back and exchange one silver bullet for another, go ahead—and then compare your results with those from other groups.

- Cut it! Well, not completely, of course, but consider doing what adaptor (and the director of the original staging of this production), David H. Bell did by abridging the play for the stage—cut Shakespeare's 100-line version by half. Then go ahead and cut it in half a second time, and finally one last time to come up with a cohesive speech of 10-15 lines. What do you immediately cut—and why? And then compare the decisions you make for your second and third cuts. What goes each time, and why? What stays—and why?

- In reading (and re-reading) Egeon's story, identify its distinct sections, name them as you would the chapters in a book or the pages of a scrapbook, and then create an accompanying "photo gallery" of tableaux, or human sculptures, with you and your classmates as the subjects!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL1, SL3, R2, R5, R6

22 Shakespeare's text was, first and foremost, a play script: a working document that was used by his acting company to put on a play—and, as scholars now understand the process, sometimes with very few days to rehearse. What we think is that he built many different kinds of clues into his text to help the actors in performance. In the rehearsal process, actors look at Shakespeare's clues and experiment with them. One of those clues was something called a "short line"—simply a line in the middle of the iambic pentameter that breaks the meter with perhaps only half the number of syllables. The short line calls attention to itself, and often suggests a pivotal point that almost requires silence after it. Or, it may require an action that, in a sense, "fills in" the extra beats.

In Act 1 of *Comedy*, there are three such lines—and they're easy to see because their unusually short length makes them stand out. As you read through Act 1, work out what the possible "stage business" is that fills out the line's missing beats. Or is it, perhaps, no business at all, but simply silence? Why do you think Shakespeare might have chosen these particular lines among the 150+ lines in Act 1 to break the rhythm of his 10-beat line?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L3, L5, R4, R5, W8

23 Select several students to lie on large sheets of paper to trace their profile–and if you don't have butcher paper, you can recycle newspaper or wrapping paper! In small, "adopt-a-character" groups, draw, cut-and-paste or attach costumes to these life-size portraits. As you read through the play, use "caption bubbles" to attach quotes from the text that have particular significance for this character. Continue to costume the portrait and add caption bubbles, developing your character throughout the study of the play.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R6, R10

24 Antipholus of Syracuse, as travelers are inclined to do, has some preconceptions in his head about what this strange and wondrous place of Ephesus is like. In just one packed sentence at the very end of Act 1, he spins out quite a picture.:

> 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:
> If it prove so, I will be gone the sooner.
> I'll to the Centaur, to go seek this slave:
> I greatly fear my money is not safe.

Based on Antipholus's description, draw a picture based on just one of the images he anticipates that he may find in Ephesus. Post your drawing on a classroom wall, then stand back as a class to take a look at your visual Ephesus based on Antipholus's descriptive imagination of this strange place. As you read the story or come

to experience the play brought to life on stage, think about how Antipholus's preconceptions about Ephesus work to shape his experiences there, and how you may have experienced something similar as you've entered a new school, moved to a new community, or visited a place for the first time.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R4, R6

25 A movie soundtrack is often not just music, but also sound effects that add to the mood. Imagine watching a horror film without all the scary noises. Egeon's tale in Act 1 scene 1 is full of action—from births, to storms, to shipwrecks. Think about the sounds that might accompany each event, and in small groups, take a section of Egeon's speech and create a soundtrack. First identify words you don't know and discuss possible meanings. What sounds can occur with those words in mind? Then produce your scene with only sound effects, no lines or words.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, R6, R10, SL4

—Adapted from Christine Adaire, CST teacher workshop activity

26 This is a good refresher to do after you've finished reading an act—or the entire play! Sitting in a circle, choose a leader. The leader begins to describe the action from Act 1 (or 2 or 3…) until they've come up with three plot points, or can't think of what comes next. Then the story passes to the next person, who adds the next few actions. You can use the "Act-by-Act" synopsis included in this book as a place to check your own story against!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R2, R3, SL3

27 Look back at Act 1. In your small group, come up with just one word that describes the mood or atmosphere of each scene. Then headline each scene, choosing a title that reflects both the mood and the action. How does each scene inform the scene that comes before it? The one that comes after it? *(This is an exercise that can be used throughout the play.)*

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R2, R10

ON YOUR OWN

28 In order to understand their characters, actors use a variety of clues from the text: their own lines; other characters' lines about their character; whether their text is written in prose or verse, etc. For actors playing roles with fewer lines, creating a full character can sometimes be daunting, since they have fewer textual hints to help them. On the other hand, they are faced with a terrific creative challenge.

Imagine that you have been cast as one of the smaller parts in *Comedy,* such as Luce or the Officer. Keep a journal of that character's reactions to what goes on around him or her. Start by using text references as clues, and go on from there, building on your observations to decide what that character thinks or feels about what happens in the course of the play. Some questions to answer might be:

- Who does my character like and dislike?
- Does my character know something at a particular moment in the play that other characters don't?
- Is there anything going on at a particular moment that my character doesn't yet understand that others (or we in the audience) do?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R1, R6

29 First—and last—impressions are often great insights into character development and relationships. Using the *Dramatis Personae* and the text, make a list of the first lines and their contexts as you come across each new character. What predictions can you make from these first impressions? Return to your predictions at the end of the play. Go back and see what the characters' final lines were, too. What has changed? How close were your predictions? What deeper meanings are in these lines now that you've read the play?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L3, SL3, R1, R3

30 Contemporary scripts often give a summary of a character's personality before the play even opens. But in Shakespeare's time, much of the detective work had to be done by the actor. Many actors keep an "actor's journal" to gather information and ideas about his or her character. As you are introduced to the different characters in *Comedy*, select one to keep an actor's journal about. Record the following clues:

- What your character says about himself/herself/themselves

- What other characters say about him/her/them

- What your character does in the play

You can use different color highlighters or post-it notes to mark the three character indicators.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R6

31 Choose a character to follow throughout the play. Imagining yourself to be that character, create a personal diary. Your daily entries might focus on how the other characters feel about you, and how you feel about them. What do you wish to do, or wish you had done, or hope will happen? What do you most fear? Most want? Use text references and lines to supplement your journaling and personal thoughts.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R6, W3, W9

32 For homework before you move on to Act 2, make a list in your notes or reading journal of all the significant characters you have met so far in *The Comedy of Errors*. Add a second column in which you describe as specifically as you can what each of these characters wants (but remember that may change as the story progresses). In a third column, note the act, scene and line numbers that created this impression for you. Which characters get what they want immediately? Does it seem likely that they will retain it? Why or why not? As you go through the play act by act, return to your list, filling it in with new characters you meet, and making notes in a fourth column to indicate when they (or you) have changed their mind.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W9, R1, R3, R6

ACT 2
AS A CLASS

33 Shakespeare uses some words in his plays that we don't use anymore. For that matter, he was making up so many words that were completely new to the English language that his own audiences wouldn't have known many of their meanings either! But in performance, actors use vocal expression as well as body language to communicate their meaning to their audience who might otherwise be left in the dark. As you're reading Act 2, jot down three words that aren't used in modern-day English. Then look your words up in the text's gloss or a lexicon. Now, standing in a circle, say your word and definition. Say your word again, this time making a strong verbal "choice" as you recite it. Pass the word to the person next to you, who repeats that same word, first with your inflection, then with his or her own vocal choice. Once the word makes its way around the circle, the

person who chose it will repeat the definition one last time and then the next student will continue on with her selected word and definition.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L3, L4, L6

34 In 2001 a group of college undergrads at NYU (including GQ who, with his brother J, formed the Q Brothers Collective) wrote a hip-hop adaptation of Shakespeare's Comedy, called *The Bomb-itty of Errors* for their graduate thesis. *Bomb-itty* became wildly popular, playing in cities across the US and abroad. The cast of four male actors, plus a DJ, played all the roles—and you can imagine that this hip-hop fantasy took a lot of liberties! Their Luciana was portrayed as a stereotypically "macho" male putting on a stereotypically long, blonde wig— and playing into the stereotype for all it was worth, including an inability to recall even her own name. Here's *Bomb-itty's* version of Luciana at the opening of Act 2:

> *No wait, sister, I have a hunch*
> *Perhaps Antipholus is just out to lunch*
> *Let's go eat, later we can meet 'em*
> *A man is a master of his own freedom*
> *They come and go as they please*
> *When they feel like eating cheese, they eat cheese*
> *It's been that way since times of ancient*
> *We must go inside, sister, please be patient*

Based on your introduction to Luciana in Act 2, what in Shakespeare's Luciana might have inspired *The Bomb-itty* authors to portray her as, well, frankly, kind of brainless? Talk about whether you agree or not, and begin to speculate what Shakespeare might have been up to, portraying these two sisters and their very different points of view. Play with Luciana's *Bomb-itty* rewrite—remember it's delivered as a rap, and if you need help envisioning the character, refer to the photo here.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, R9

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

35 "How many fond fools serve mad jealousy!" Luciana sums up her sister Adriana's feelings about her husband's infidelity in this way. Shakespeare transforms jealousy into a master; he personifies it. Make sure you understand the meaning of each word first since a couple of them have very different meanings now than they did when Shakespeare wrote them—check the glossary in your book, a Shakespeare lexicon, or shakespeareswords.com. Then with your small group, create a still-life tableau to depict that brings your understanding of Luciana's summary into a three-dimensional—multi-level!—sculpture.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standard R1

36 In pairs, look at Dromio of Ephesus's lines in Act 2 scene 1, lines 58–66 ("But sure he is stark mad…Out on thy mistress!'"). As he recounts a conversation with his boss, he goes back and forth between his own voice and quoting Antipholus. Practice a few ways that you could indicate to your audience that you're quoting someone else. Do you make them sound old and angry? High-pitched and whiney? Think about how we do this same thing in everyday conversation with one another, and come up with an example or two that you yourself may have said—perhaps in telling a friend about something outrageous

that somebody in your family said to you just last night… Do you indicate it in your voice alone? In your face? With hand gestures? Now return to Dromio's lines and make the most of them!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L3, R1, R4, R5, R10

37 In groups of eight, take a look at Act 2 scene 1, lines 138-71, with its four speaking parts, beginning with Antipholus of Syracuse's line "Plead you to me, fair dame?" As a full group. read through the passage aloud a couple of times as a group.

Then with two people assigned to each character, one person stands in front of the other and reads their character's lines, as the other stands behind the reader and serves as the character's *alter ego*—who speaks that character's private, unspoken thoughts after each segment of the spoken dialogue. This is also called the character's "subtext," and actors use it all the time to inform the way in which they bring the words of the play to life on stage. Does listening to your partner's subtext fuel your reading of the lines in any way? As a group, discuss if anyone thought of other subtexts that might have made sense, too—remember that there are multiple ways to approach these words (which is why every production you see will be completely different from any other).

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R4, R6

38 Look back through Acts 1 and 2 and create a typical gesture for each of the characters you've already met.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R4, SL3

ACT 3
AS A CLASS

39 Modern playwrights have a way of writing in long, detailed stage directions that leave little to chance when a group of actors and their director decide to take up their script and stage it. But in Shakespeare's plays and in those of his contemporaries, stage directions were very few, and instead, the playwright wrote directions "embedded" into his text. These embedded stage directions can be found throughout any of Shakespeare's plays—with a little bit of detective work. Act 3 scene 1 is rifled with them. When Dromio of Ephesus tells his master to "knock the door hard" (line 58), the actor playing Antipholus knows that the playwright expects him to do something there—without writing it in italics and separating it from the rest of the script in parentheses or brackets.

As a class, spend some time together looking through this scene, discovering lines in which you see Shakespeare's embedded stage directions. Some are crystal-clear and pretty indisputable, but others may be cause for some discussion in your class—just as they are among the actors and their director in the rehearsal hall!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R4, R5, R8, R10

40 The confused chaos that occurs in Act 3 scene 1 is absolutely hilarious, slapstick farce—once you can figure out *what* is going on… There are a few ways to tackle their (and our) confusion. One way is to read through the passage out loud and, with seven people standing at the front of the class (each person representing one of the characters, whose name can be written on the board above them), the entire class pointing at the character being referred to by the speaker. This technique is called "deixis" (pronounced dake-sis), from the Greek word

for "pointing." The second time around, point like your life depended on it, as you get more familiar with the who and the where!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R1, R6

41 Luciana has a way of thinking about gender roles that is perhaps what one might safely call "traditional." But even for Shakespeare, her point of view is perhaps being just a bit challenged… Let's place Luciana on the "hot seat" and check out her ideas about marriage, gender roles, cheating on your partner, etc. With one brave soul volunteering to take the hot seat and represent Luciana and her views, the rest of the class will take on the role of talk show host, grilling her about her ideas, what she wishes for in life, what she imagines for her sister's future, etc.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R6

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

42 At last we meet the *other* Antipholus that we've been hearing about all along. So how will these two "Antipholi" be differentiated by each other? In your small group, discuss all the ways that a director and the two actors playing these roles might be portrayed as twins, but distinct them from one another. Use what we already know about Antipholus of Syracuse, and start looking for clues about Antipholus of Ephesus (adding them to what we know about him already by report). Think about costumes, of course, but also about possible props, hairstyle, physique, the way they talk and walk. There's lots of room for creative possibilities, but always be grounding your ideas in the text, indicating which line or lines inspired you! This process of reading the text for visual clues is exactly what a director, the designers, and actors go through themselves as they prepare to stage a play.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, SL1

43 Is it any wonder with a play riddled with rhyme as this play is that a group of undergrads created a full-length hip-hop adaptation of it? Shakespeare's characters love playing with words, much like rap artists do today. Here in Act 3 scene 1, nearly the entire cast of characters breaks into rhyming couplets. In groups of four, starting from Dromio's "Say what you will, sir, but I know what I know" in line 11, and taking it to Luce's entrance, take each part and read through the passage to get a sense of the rhythm. Read it again, and start to really focus on the rhyming, serving up one line to land on the next. And when the two words don't quite rhyme, play with those, too, as (spoiler alert!) actors on stage always do… It's contagious.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standard R5

44 As the characters grow increasingly desperate and frantic, so does the pace of their banter. When Antipholus of Ephesus arrives home to find himself locked out, the stakes are suddenly raised. You'll start seeing a series of "shared lines"—that is, instead of one character filling out the full 10-syllable line, a couple of lines from different characters complete the full 10 beats together. Sometimes it demonstrates great chemistry between two characters (as in *Romeo and Juliet*). Sometimes it indicates tension between adversaries. Shared lines stand out: they're the lines that start in the middle of page instead of at the left-hand margin.

Looking at Act 3 scene 1, lines 48–60 (starting with Luce's entrance), in groups of five, take turns with the four roles (and the fifth role as director), and practice these lines. You want to keep the line up in the air—the way you keep a ball being volleyed in the air. Avoid pauses—and keep up the good energy. Remember, you're

sharing a single line. And for the Olympics of shared lines, look ahead to the next scene, where a single line is shared three ways—by two characters!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R3, R5

45 Another clue that Shakespeare gave his actors (and us) was in the use of repetition. In repeating words, he let everyone know which words were important and needed to be "lifted" in some way. It's the same thing we do when we're wanting to add emphasis: "I like this guy. I really like this guy." In Act 3 scene 1, lines 73–84 (beginning with "Go fetch me something. I'll break ope this gate"), the three characters repeat each other's words. In groups of three, take the roles of the Dromios and Antipholus of Ephesus, and play with the repetitions. The first time a word is said, neither the speaker (nor the audience) knows its importance; it's the second (or third or fourth) time when the actor has to make sure that the word "lands." Play with the lines, and then talk about the impact of the repetitions when you use them.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L5, R1, R4

46 Luciana tells Antipholus what she thinks marriage means in the first 28 lines of Act 3 scene 2. In pairs, write down what seem like the three most important two-line couplets from her speech. Arrange them to show the relationship of importance or equal status between them. Then compare yours with others. What are your thoughts about the advice she gives to the person she believes to be her sister's husband?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, W9, SL1

47 In this early play by Shakespeare, much of the language is direct—the characters say what they mean without the heightened language of metaphor and poetic imagery. But Luciana's sermon on marriage and Antipholus of Syracuse's adoring reply are full of imagery. Below are five such lines. Taking one, work out in your small group how to create a tableau that embodies your line. Share yours with the class, and discuss what the various live sculptures tell you.

- The sweet breath of flattery conquers strife.
- Muffle your false love with some show of blindness.
- Bear a fair presence, though your heart be tainted.
- Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint.
- Are you a god? Would you create me new?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L5, R1, R5

48 When you re-mix two completely separate speeches as one conversation between two characters, the results reveal a lot. Taking one or two lines from Luciana's speech (Act 3 scene 2, lines 1–28), intercut them with one or two lines at a time from Antipholus's reply in lines 29-52. Continue through their two speeches, using whichever lines you want, as often as you like, in whatever order you like. Rehearse your adaptation a few times, then present it to your class. Directors will sometimes choose to intercut monologues—and, sometimes, entire scenes—in this way to heighten the drama, or to draw parallels or contrasts they see in Shakespeare's script

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R5, W4

49 *(Scaffolded by the preceding activity)* Shakespeare often writes with antitheses—sometimes within a single line spoken by a character, and sometimes in lines spoken between two characters. At Chicago Shakespeare, actors work with a verse coach to "score" their text, looking for all the antitheses and repetitions in their

lines. Finding them and using them in their performance makes their performance much clearer and more accessible to us as viewers and listeners. As a "Part 2" to the intercutting you've just done, go back and look at your adapted dialogue between Luciana and Antipholus of Syracuse. Now with your partner, work at scoring your own text by finding all the opposing words, or antitheses, that their two different agendas set up. Highlight or underline the antitheses, then go back and, using them for emphasis, play off each other's words, like two opponents in a tennis match.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L5, SL3

ON YOUR OWN

50 In Act 3 scene 1, lines 78-9, the Dromios banter back and forth. "I pray thee, let me in," calls out Dromio of Ephesus, to which Dromio of Syracuse replies: "Ay, when fowls have no feathers, and fish have no fin." We have our own ways of communicating pretty much the same kind of "no way" statement. But play with your own ideas, as Dromio does here, setting it up with the rhyme you need. Here's one example: "I pray thee, let us enter." "Ay, when stars do not shine, and the earth has no center."

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3, L5

51 "Are you a god? Would you create me new? / Transform me, then, and to your power I'll yield." Antipholus has got it bad. He's head over heels, and feels himself to be an utterly different person from the one he was when he woke up just that morning. Maybe you know exactly what he's talking about. So let's say, for the sake of argument, that Antipholus a) keeps a journal; and b) it's in rhyming couplets… What would he just have to write in his journal later that day?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3, W9, R1

52 Poor Luciana—her sister's husband (so she thinks) is hitting on her, and she doesn't know what to do. Well, there's always Dr. Phil to turn to when one's in distress. Think about how you (as Dr. Phil) would advise Luciana in these dire straits—and write back to her with all the help you can give. (In England, these advice columnists in the newspaper are called "agony aunts.")

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W1, W2, R1, R6

ACT 4
AS A CLASS

53 In Act 4 scene 3, a very bewildered Antipholus of Syracuse has a moment alone on stage when, in a soliloquy to the audience, he shares his utter confusion. The person who volunteers to be Antipholus will stand in the middle of a circle. As he recalls each of these bewildering incidents, divide yourselves up and mime them for him. He's seeing you as sorcerers: what was at first a joy ride is now pretty much a nightmare. Use that information to decide how you'll stage your mime. How can you make the seemingly harmless and everyday occurrence into something that is invasive, threatening, and unpredictable? And Antipholus, don't forget to make essential eye contact with your audience members—you're confiding your fears in them!—just as actors do from the stage when they have a soliloquy with their audience.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R6

54 How could Antipholus of Ephesus escape the hot seat any longer? The way he's been acting out, he's pretty much begging for it… Find someone brave enough to take the hot seat as Antipholus of Ephesus; have them brainstorm and review to be able to present a convincing Antipholus, and then the rest of the class plays a jury of his fellow Ephesians, trying to get to the bottom of his mysterious behavior. Have the jury prepare questions for Antipholus (about who he is, where he's from, what he's experienced throughout the day, etc.) as he responds in character. A few experts need to be thrown into the jury too for special questioning—like a psychiatrist, a policeman, a private detective, and maybe a grade-school friend.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R6, SL 1, SL3

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

55 Adriana's enraged description of her husband in Act 4 scene 2, lines 19–22, is pretty unbelievable—even to her onstage audience. In groups of five, with two in your group acting as directors and speaking the lines (including Luciana's reaction to them in lines 22–24), devise statues for each of Adriana's descriptions (14 in all). Standing in a line, strike your pose—on cue, of course—as Adriana's lines are read aloud. You each are cast in multiple roles, so once you've completed one pose, move to the end of the line and be ready to strike your next!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R4

56 These Dromios love words. Why say just one when twenty come to mind? In Act 4 scene 2, Dromio of Syracuse is describing the officer who arrested Antipholus. Some of his words are familiar, but frankly, he's making them up as he goes along! "Backfriend"? "Shoulder-clapper"? This is Dromio (and his inventor) just having fun, combining two words to make a new one—whose meaning is still pretty clear to us, at least in the context of his rant. Talk in your small group about what a "backfriend" might be, or a "shoulder-clapper." Make up your own new compound or hyphenated words synonymous with some other professions: a teacher, perhaps? A doctor, movie star, a bus driver or coach?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards L3, L4, R1

57 When an actor takes on a role, they study the text and looks for clues about their character, not only in the words they've been given to speak, but also in what their actions are, and in what others say about them. We're introduced to "a Schoolmaster called Pinch" here in Act 4, and while Pinch doesn't have many lines to deliver, he certainly makes an impression on everybody else! How would you costume your Pinch? How would he walk into a room? Read a book? Put on his coat? Observe one of his "patients"? As you and your partner work out your Pinch, use one another as directors who can observe your physicality and come up with suggestions to help sculpt your own ideas.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R6

ON YOUR OWN

58 Sometimes, it's said that our approach to mental illness is downright "medieval," but the truth of the matter is that while we have a long way to go still, we do view mental disorders in a very different light from previous centuries. Advances in science and in humanist thought during the early modern era (when

Shakespeare wrote) began to redefine the Middle Ages' understanding of madness, but there were enormous misconceptions about the treatment–and mistreatment–of mental illness. For those who are interested in history or psychology, it's a fascinating topic to explore, and one that lends itself perfectly to a research project–on a serious side–in conjunction with *The Comedy of Errors.*

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W7, W8, W9

ACT 5
AS A CLASS

59 The anatomy of a fight… As a class, look closely, line by line, at what happens in the opening 32 lines of Act 5 scene 1. Dissect what happens, all the way up to the stage direction, They draw, following line 32. What leads up to these two drawing swords on one another? What does each line bring into the scene that may fuel the violence? If you were staging this scene, how would you position the four actors? How would their body language communicate the growing tension? What gestures and what facial expressions might signify to both their onstage and offstage audiences that tensions were building?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3

60 Here we are in the final scene of the entire play and what should appear but a new character, the Abbess, at line 38??? Before you read another line, stop right here and, acting as an office of private investigators, who is this woman and what role could she possibly be here to play? As always, base your discussion in the text, but perhaps where you should start is in listing all the various loose ends that we know have to be pulled together in some way. Once there's some consensus about what's still missing, do some informed predicting about the role that the Abbess might here to play…

And just in case your list of loose ends didn't include the old man Egeon, whom we last saw back in Act 1 scene 1, here he shows up again in line 130 of the final scene! So, any revisions that anybody wants to make at this point about predicting what's still ahead for Ephesus and its Syracusan visitors?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R2, R3, R10

61 Antipholus of Ephesus is a man at his wit's end. His speech to the Duke in his own defense recounts the entire day–from his own point of view… As a class, read through Antipholus' speech, lines 214-254. Find all the people he characterizes and shape each of them into a statue–seen from Antipholus of Ephesus's perspective. How does he see "this woman," "that goldsmith," Balthazar, the officer, the "rabble of vile confederates," his wife, her sister, "one Pinch," and the Duke?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R6

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

62 Shakespeare built many types of clues into his script to help his actors with their roles. One of these is the short line–meaning simply a line containing fewer than the standard 10 beats of an iambic pentameter line without a shared line to complete it *(See Activity #3 to compare with shared lines.)* It's understood that short lines call attention to themselves on the page, and likely indicate some kind of "stage business" to be performed, which, in a sense, calls for an action that "fills out" the missing beats. In a short passage between the Abbess and Adriana in Act 5 scene 1, lines 55-61, Shakespeare gives us one of those short lines–but don't get diverted by the two shared lines, also contained in this passage. And while you're scoring, you might as well look for any repetitions and antitheses you see there, too. Now, play with staging this brief vignette. Make a clear decision

about what to do with the short line. Why do you think Shakespeare makes this a short line? And why are other lines between the two women shared, would you imagine?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R5, L5

63 The Abbess is tough, and even the typically fiery Adriana loses her fire here as she's confronted by this woman. Look together at Act 5 scene 1, lines 38-70 (starting at "Poisons more deadly than a mad dog's tooth"). Adriana has always stood up for herself before. Why not here? Is it the sheer power of the Abbess, or is it something else? If you see Adriana starting off strong in her exchange with the Abbess, but backing down somewhere, at what line would you have the actor play it? Or do you see a change in her before this, and if so, where? Go back and trace your idea to a particular moment in the play.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R4

64 As the Abbess revs up, she's pretty tough on Adriana, who is silenced by her rebuke. As she listens to the Abbess, is she agreeing with her, or is there any part of the old Adriana in there who railed against her husband and the subservient role of women? Go back to Adriana's earlier speeches–to Luciana in Act 2 scene 1, and to Antipholus of Syracuse in Act 2 scene 2. Choosing key lines or words from those two earlier conversations, work out with your partner an "inner monologue" that might be playing in Adriana's mind as she listens to the Abbess's sharp criticism. Intercut the Abbess's speech with words that Adriana spoke earlier, then, with one person taking the Abbess's speech and the other taking Adriana's inner monologue, read the passage again, this time with Adriana's earlier words interspersed as she might think them once more, listening to the Abbess. As a class, discuss whether or not you think it plausible that Adriana has any fight left in her by now, or if her inner thoughts at this point are more likely self-critical.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R6

65 Role reversal! Suddenly in the final act of the play, it's Luciana who is the fighter, and Adriana takes the role of the compliant, dutiful wife. What *happened*? Do you buy it? In groups of five, think about your own life–maybe among your group of friends, in your family, or perhaps in a class–have you ever felt like you and somebody else were suddenly saying what the *other* always said? It often happens–as though both sides of the argument have to be made by someone! Talk about whether you've ever experienced this kind of role reversal. Discuss how Luciana feels in this moment–what is her thought process? Then, with three people taking on the roles of Abbess, Luciana and Adriana, read aloud Act 5 scene 1, lines 68-117, while the other two in your group take on the unspoken thoughts of Luciana, her own inner monologue. One alter ego assumes the role of the "new Luciana," while the other person takes on the role of the "old Luciana." Does her old voice still get heard inside her head, or has it been entirely silenced? Once your group works out a scenario, check it out against other groups.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3, R3, R6

66 Throughout Act 5 scene 1, the director and the actor are given plenty of verbal clues about Antipholus of Ephesus's behavior. In small groups, go back through the entire act and highlight all those lines that might inform the actor playing Antipholus of Ephesus about his character. It might be things he says, things he does, or things that everybody else says about him. What picture is emerging? Based on just how deranged you want your Antipholus to act, think about which actor you could see playing him. Remember that he also has to play the Antipholus of the earlier scenes, too. Discuss your decisions with others as you reconvene as a class.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R6, R10

67 "I see thy age and dangers make thee dote." The fickle finger of judgment is now pointed at Egeon. In groups of five, go back through the play up to this point, and find all the lines that call someone's sanity into question (maybe even their own). Decide how to present some or all of these lines in a choral reading to the rest of the class. You can arrange them in any way you like, repeat some, cut some, echo particular words throughout. What do you want your reading to communicate about your understanding of this theme that runs throughout *Comedy*?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R2, R4

68 With Egeon's return and the impending threat of his execution, Shakespeare returns to the frame of his story, introduced in the opening lines of *Comedy* and popping up again in Act 5. In your small groups, talk about the frame the playwright places around his story of identical twins and confused identity. His primary source, Plautus, didn't include such a frame, so Shakespeare was making a clear choice by adding it. Egeon's story in Act 1 is challenging to any reader, director, or audience because it's long and we're not immersed in the play yet. So what does Shakespeare gain by adding the frame? In your small group, brainstorm the impact of the frame story. Imagine the play without Egeon's part. How would the story be changed? What does the frame story add to the central story? Or is it the central story?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R2, R3, R5 ■

AFTER YOU'VE READ THE PLAY

AS A CLASS

69 *The Comedy of Errors* Jeopardy! *(This activity works well as review session. It's set up like the TV game show, and does take some preparation—but it goes more quickly than you might think. A few students can set up the game for extra credit. First, choose several categories. For example: "The Boys from Syracuse," "The Boys from Ephesus," "Quotes," "Masters and Servants," "Travel in the Mediterranean," etc. Then leaf through the text to find eight answers at least per category. The more specific and exclusive the information is, the less ambiguous the game will be. Organize the answers by range of difficulty and create a point value sheet. An overhead projector works well, allowing the whole class to see the categories being marked off as the game progresses. You can use a website like jeopardylabs.com to help you!)*

Divided into teams, one student from the team chooses a category: "The answer is…" A member of one of the opposing teams must frame the correct question, winning points for their team with a correct question. Then the next team chooses a category, etc. When the wrong "question" is given, open it to the other teams!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R2, R3, R10, L3, SL1

70 Choose a leader to stand in the middle of the circle, with the rest of the class standing around, passing a soft ball in one direction. When the leader says, "Stop," whoever has the ball has to answer the leader's Comedy question before the ball can make it back around the entire circle. Come up with questions like: What's the Abbess's real name? How old were Antipholus and Dromio when they left Syracuse? If you don't answer the question correctly by the time the ball comes back around, you take the leader's place inside the circle—and start thinking of questions! Hint: It's hugely helpful to write down a list of your questions beforehand… And one more postscript: Shakespeare isn't always consistent when it comes to tracking years and ages!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R5, R10, SL1

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

71 Each person writes down a single event from the play on a note card. Separate into two large teams and combine your event cards with the others from your team. One person from the first team starts with a card from the opposite team, such as "Egeon tells his story to the townspeople of Ephesus." That person has to mime the event (no words!) until his own team guesses correctly—or until the clock strikes one minutes. Then it's the other team's turn. The team scores one point for correct guesses.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R5

72 As a class, take another look at Shakespeare's *Dramatis Personae* (see page 13) for *The Comedy of Errors*. If you had to arrange all the characters in order of importance, what order would you place them all in? What if you looked at all of them and grouped them by associations and their links to others?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, R6

73 Chicago Shakespeare's casting department is responsible for finding the right actor for every character you see on our stage—no easy task! After you've read the play, think about each character—how do they look, sound, move and behave? Think of TV and film celebrities who fit your definition of the character and discuss who your "dream team" would be for your version. In magazines, look for faces, hair-dos, bodies, and clothing, and mix-and-match to create your perfect cut-out cast. If you've seen the play, how do you think your actors' costumes and performances might be different from Chicago Shakespeare's?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3

74 How would you tell the story of *The Comedy of Errors* to a younger brother or sister, a nephew or niece? After you've finished reading the play, get into small groups to create your own children's story or comic book detailing a part of *The Comedy of Errors*. How would you make the story accessible to a younger audience? What are the important plot points to include? How many illustrations should you have? Or, instead of creating a children's book, you can make a comic strip!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3, W4, R5

—Adapted from Foreman High School teacher Nicky Shoffer's Bard Core classroom activity

75 Create a newspaper for Ephesus. Sections may include: local news, world news, obituaries, "Dear Abby," entertainment, personals, classified ads, etc. In your small group, develop and design your paper with the setting and characters from *Comedy* in mind.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W3, W4, W5, R1

76 With all the rhyming couplets throughout Comedy, it's no wonder perhaps that Shakespeare's play has spun off at least two well-known musical adaptations: the 1950s musical, entitled *The Boys from Syracuse*, and the hip- hop version from 2001, entitled *The Bomb-itty of Errors* (which played at Chicago Shakespeare before its New York and London runs). Choose one character and write "their song." Use any music you want—country, blues, rap, pop, etc. Once you choose your character, think about what his or her "essence" is, and what words might communicate that best. Then share your compositions with the rest of the class!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W9, R1, R3

ON YOUR OWN

77 List five of the major characters in *Comedy.* Write a single sentence for each that begins: "What I most want is…" Take a risk—there's not just one right answer! Then write a sentence for each character that begins: "What I'm most afraid of is…" Now, as a class, compare your sentences. How many of you agree about the characters' various motivations? Is there ever a situation when what one most wants is also what one most fears? Are there characters who, though seeming to behave and feel very differently from one another, have similar wants and fears?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R2, R3, R6

78 Choose a favorite line or passage that held particular meaning for you. Pretend you are giving a TED Talk, and that the theme of your quote is the focus of your talk. Write a short talk exploring how you understand the line and why it holds this meaning for you. Read your presentation in small groups.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards W1, W2, W4, W6, R1, R4

79 An actor must be as detailed as possible about the life of the character he or she will be playing. What does the character's voice sound like, how does he move? What's the character afraid of, and what does he want more than anything else in the world? Actors must make choices about a character's "back story" based on what is said about them and by them in the text of the play.

Choose a character from *The Comedy of Errors*. Collect materials that you think your character would carry around in their backpack—and explain why you chose each item. Your classmates will be asking you questions, like: "Was that item a gift?" "Who gave it to you?" etc. An actor must be as specific as possible in creating her character!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R3, SL1

80 Create a travel brochure for Ephesus that will entice visitors from all over the world to plan a vacation there. Use quotations from the play in your brochure to help "legitimize" your advertising claims! Be creative with sights and activities for people to visit and do.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R4, R6, W1, W2, W5

81 Now that you've finished the entire play, go back and try your hand at rewriting one of Shakespeare's speeches—in rap. Here's just a small sampling of how *The Bomb-itty of Errors* tackled Egeon's story in the play's opening scene:

> *Meanwhile, the children at the tender age of two*
> *Were separated from each other (sad but true)*
> *One Dromio and one Antipholus*
> *Were brought up in the fine city of Ephesus*
> *Too young to understand and too young to choose*
> *The other two were raised in the town of Syracuse.*

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R2, W3, W4 ■

PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE

AS A CLASS

82 Before seeing the play at Chicago Shakespeare, create a list of expectations and what you'd like to see watching *The Comedy of Errors* live and on stage. What do you imagine the actors will wear? What props might help fill out their world on stage? How do you think the look-alikes might be made to look alike– and different? Do you imagine that the play will be more difficult, or easier, to understand seeing it performed live? What are your expectations based on? Once you've seen the play at CST, discuss how your expectations and the production matched up. How would you prepare a friend for seeing a Shakespeare play for the first time?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL1, SL4

83 Part of the actor's job is learning why their character does what they does. Everything from taking a sip of water to sitting down on a chair is carefully thought through by both the performer and director. Clear your classroom space and pull one chair into the middle of the room. First, move the chair around with no motivation or reason in mind. Now try moving your chair as Adriana might, or Luciana, or Antipholus of Ephesus—as any of the characters from Comedy might perform this everyday and common task. Now move the chair again as if this character were furious, in love, lonely. When you're watching the production, keep an eye out for how and why the actors do these simple tasks and see what it tells you about their characters.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL1, SL3, SL5, R1, R3, R9

84 At the beginning of a production, a director will often choose to open the play with a wordless "outside-the-text" scene that helps draw in the audience into the action and mood of the play to follow. Sometimes it reinforces Shakespeare's first lines, but sometimes the director may choose to stage a brief scene that stands in stark contrast with the first words Shakespeare gives his characters. If you were directing *Comedy* and wanted to stage a brief scene just prior to the first words spoken of Shakespeare's text by Egeon, what would your scene portray? When you see CST's opening scene, compare it to those you and your classmates discussed. Why do you think the production was framed in this way?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R9

ON YOUR OWN

85 Choose a character that you'd like to watch in particular at the upcoming performance. Before you see Chicago Shakespeare's production, write down your expectations—and then after you've spent some time with this character on stage, compare your ideas with those of the actor and director.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R9

86 Scholar Harold Bloom points to the end of the play and the contrast he sees in the way in which the two sets of twins reunite. Pointing to the embedded stage directions that Shakespeare gives to the Dromios in their language, Bloom says that there is no such expression of affection indicated in the lines spoken by the Antipholus twins. Chicago Shakespeare's adaptation may show a different conclusion, but before you see it, come up with your own interpretation for staging the final lines of the play once the two sets of brothers are left alone on stage. Based on the characters you've come to know throughout the play, how might they behave? Would you contrast the response of the two sets of twins, and if so, how? What about distinguishing the Ephesians from the Syracusans? Is everyone's attention entirely on the scene at hand, or would you have

any of the brothers looking in the direction in which the others just departed? The possibilities are many, and there is not one or even two "right" answers. BUT do ground your staging in your knowledge from the play, and be ready to defend it—both textually and psychologically!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R1, R9, R10 ■

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

AS A CLASS

87 Heare ye, Heare ye! The word "audience" comes from the Latin *"audentia"* meaning, "to hear." When Shakespeare's plays were first staged in Elizabethan England, the English language was still young and very much in flux. Imagine a language without a dictionary—which is exactly what English was at the time. There was no right way of spelling a word, and words themselves were being invented all the time—thousands of them, in fact, by Shakespeare. The English looked upon their language at the time with great nationalistic pride—almost the way we do our Olympic teams or our flag. Those Elizabethans simply loved their language—and everything that Shakespeare and other playwrights were doing with it! Today, we say, "I went to see a play at Chicago Shakespeare," but back then, they would say, "I went to *hear* a play at the Globe." Discuss your experience with hearing the words of Shakespeare. How was it different from reading them? Were there particular scenes that you felt benefited from hearing the language? What was it about those scenes specifically that made them ripe for acting?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R9

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

88 Often the actors you see on stage will imagine the life of their characters outside of the play's text in order to get into their roles. They call this "creating a back-story." It is fully hypothetical and subjective, but hopefully well informed by an understanding of the text and its characters. Choose a character to embody, and imagine that it is now five years *before* the play begins. How old are you now? Where do you live and with whom? What are your current hobbies? Your relationships? Have you led a tough life, or a relatively easy one? What are your concerns about your life? Your dreams? Root your work as much as possible in clues from the text. Discuss your character profile in small groups or pairs.

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards SL3, R1, R9

89 Now that you've not only seen *The Comedy of Errors* but also heard it, in your small group think back to the play and discuss whether there were particular words that you remember hearing the actors say. You may remember the ones that rang oddly in your ears, but you also may remember words they said frequently. Here are several of the words that Shakespeare repeats frequently throughout *Comedy*: "now," "home," "come," "know," "wife," "see," "man," "seek." Do you recall hearing any of them, who spoke them, and in what context?

Choose one of the words above that interests you in connection to *Comedy*. With your group, talk about why that particular word seems to have special significance in this story. Write down all your group's ideas. Then, your research begins… A concordance is an alphabetical listing of words used in a text that indicates how frequently and in what context the words are used. Scholars use concordances all the time, but they are great

resources for anybody—and for Shakespeare, there are several on the Internet. One comes out of Nagoya University in Japan: http://victorian-studies.net/concordance/shakespeare/.

Using the online **concordance**, look up your selected word and pick out the lines that resonate for you. In your group, work out a dramatic choral reading that brings life to the word from the play that you chose. Use as many or as few of the lines as you need. Use them in any order, and excerpt words and phrases from them that you want for your montage. If you want certain words, phrases, or lines to echo in your audience's ears, repeat them like Shakespeare did!

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R1, R4, W7, R8, R9

ON YOUR OWN

90 Write a letter to Chicago Shakespeare Theater expressing your opinions about the production. What was your favorite part? What part or parts didn't you like? Did seeing the play change your ideas about any of the characters or events in *Comedy*? How close was CST's production design to your own vision of the play? Having seen it now, what would you have changed? Was there any point during the performance at which the sound design particularly affected you—or distracted you? What kind of mood did it create? And what about a lighting choice? What was most interesting to you about the production, and why?

Consider Common Core Anchor Standards R9, SL2 ∎

CLASSROOM WARM-UPS

A brief physical and vocal warm-up can help your students move from a "classroom mode" to a "studio mode." It sets the tone for a student learning Shakespeare in a theatrical sense as well as a literary sense. Try warming up every class, and you will find that after the first couple of times, your students' nerves—and yours—will be unseated by energy and focus. A few rehearsals in the privacy of your own home can do a lot to bolster your courage!

Every actor develops his/her own set of physical and vocal warm-ups. Warm-ups help the actor prepare for rehearsal or performance not only physically, but also mentally. The actor has the chance to focus on the work at hand, forgetting all the day-to-day distractions of life, and beginning to assume the flexibility required to create a character. The body, the voice and the imagination are the actor's (and the student's) tools in mastering Shakespeare.

PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

91 GETTING STARTED

- creates focus on the immediate moment
- brings students to body awareness
- helps dispel tension

Begin by taking a comfortable stance with your feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs deep into your abdomen, and exhale through your mouth. Repeat this a few times. Notice how your lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

92 **WARM-UP FROM THE TOP OF THE BODY DOWN** *(approximately 7–10 minutes)*

- gentle movement helps increase circulation, flexibility, and body readiness
- increases physical and spatial awareness

Begin by doing head-rolls to the left and to the right, about four times each way, very slowly. Then do a series of shoulder rolls to the back and to the front, again very slowly, and emphasizing a full range of motion.

Stretch each arm toward the ceiling alternately, and try to pull all the way through the rib cage, repeating this motion six to eight times.

Next, with particular care to keep knees slightly bent, twist from the waist in each direction, trying to look behind. Again, repeat six to eight times.

From a standing position, starting with the top of the head, roll down with relaxed neck and arms until the body is hanging from the waist. Shake things around, making sure your body is relaxed. From this position, bend at the knees, putting both hands on the floor. Stretch back up to hanging. Repeat this action about four times. Then roll back up—starting from the base of the spine, stack each vertebra until the head is the last thing to come up.

Repeat the deep breathing from the beginning of the warm-up. Bring your feet together, bend your knees. Keeping your knees together, rotate them in a circle parallel to the ground six to eight times. Repeat in the other direction. Return to standing.

Pick up the right foot, rotate it inward six to eight times, and then do the same with the left foot. Repeat with outward rotation of the foot. Take a few moments and shake out the entire body.

VOCAL WARM-UPS

[*Your vocal warm-up should follow your physical warm-up directly—approximately 7 minutes*]

93 **GETTING STARTED**

- helps connect physicality to vocality
- begins to open the imagination to performance possibilities

Begin by gently massaging and pat the muscles of your face. This will help wake up the facial muscles.

Stick out your tongue out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This exercise will seem strange, but can be made silly and fun, while accomplishing the necessary vocal warm-up. When students see you going through these exercises with commitment, that's often all they need to draw them in.) Repeat this exercise once or twice.

Put your lips gently together and blow air through them, creating a "raspberry."

Next, hum, quietly, loudly, and across the entire vocal range. The vocal instrument loves to hum. Explore all the resonating spaces in the body, by moving the sound around. Humming helps to lubricate.

Create the vowel sounds, overemphasizing each shape with the face –A, E, I, O, and U–with no break.

Choose two or three tongue-twisters—there are some listed below. Again overemphasizing the shape of each sound with the lips, tongue, jaw, and facial muscles, begin slowly with each tongue-twister, and gradually speed up, repeating until the speed is such that the enunciation is lost.

94 **TONGUE TWISTERS**

- Red leather, yellow leather… (focus on the vertical motion of the mouth)

- Unique New York… (focus on the front to back movement of the face)

- Rubber baby buggie bumpers… (focus on the clear repetition of the soft plosives)

- Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers… (focus on the clear repetition of hard plosives) ∎

One of the actors at Chicago Shakespeare Theater likes to describe the experience of acting Shakespeare as the "Olympics of Acting." Shakespeare's verse demands a very flexible vocal instrument, and an ability to express not only the flow of the text, but the emotional shifts which are suggested by the variations in rhythm and sound. In light of the sheer volume of words, some of which are rarely—if ever—used in modern vocabulary, the actor must also be prepared to help the audience with his body, as well. An actor acting Shakespeare must go through each word of his text, determine its meaning, and then express it clearly to his audience. This requires a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor's basis for each performance.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand our imaginations, increase our sense of "ensemble" or teamwork, and encourage being "in the moment." These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor's training—and, of course, they are fundamental, too, to the learning process in the classroom.

95 **STAGE PICTURES** *(approximately 10 minutes)*

- shows how varied interpretation is: there is no one "right" answer

- encourages the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies

- begins to show how the body interprets emotion

You will need a list of very strong descriptive, colorful, emotional words from the script for this activity. Consider lines like "urging helpless patience" (Act 2 scene 1, line 39)

Begin walking around the room. While walking, fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like to be a different weight or a different height. Move the center of your body into different places. For instance, try walking with your nose leading your body. Now try your hip, your knee, your elbow and so forth.

Shakespeare's characters are often very physically broad. He created elderly characters and hunchbacked characters; clowns, star-crossed lovers and cold-blooded killers. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in his/her gut? Or perhaps his/her chin? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character's body.

Notice if you feel any emotional differences within these changes. After about three minutes of exploring these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. *[To the teacher: encourage these discoveries without necessarily drawing focus to individual students, as this is a self-reflective activity, but perhaps suggest to the group they might "Try what it feels like if you slow your pace, hunch your shoulders, droop your head, and move your center into your knees."]*

After a few minutes of this exploration, find a "neutral" walk. You are now going to create a stage picture as an entire group. Chose a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, say freeze, and the class must create a photograph of the word you have chosen, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotional quality the stage picture exudes. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, asking the observing group:

- What do you notice?

- What emotions are evoked in the stage picture?

- What questions do you have about the stage picture?

- What changes would you like to suggest to strengthen or clarify the stage picture?

- What patterns do you see emerging from the stage picture?

96 MIRRORING *(approximately 10 minutes)*

- helps build trust within the ensemble

- encourages the students to "listen" with all their senses

- helps the students reach a state of "relaxed readiness," which will encourage their impulses, and discourage their internal censors

Many actors will tell you that learning the lines is the easy part; making it come out of their mouths as if for the first time is the hard part, especially with Shakespeare. Shakespeare can sound like a song, but how do you make it sound like real people talking to each other? Actors listen to each other, and try to respond to what they hear in the moment of the play. Listening is a very important part of acting; it keeps the moment real—and the characters believable.

Find a partner, then comfortably sit facing your partner, in fairly close proximity. You and your partner will be mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. You must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that your partner can follow. Partners should make eye-contact and see each other as a whole picture, rather than following each other's small motions with their eyes. Switch leaders and repeat.

After the second leader has had a turn, students will stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. Keep going, but now there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss.

97 FOUR UP *(approximately 5 minutes, but can also be extended)*

- helps the ensemble work together

- helps to slowly introduce physical activities in the classroom

- helps to bring focus to the classroom

For this game, everyone should be seated; it would be fine for the students to stay seated at their desks. The goal of this game is to have four people standing at all times. There are a few rules—everyone can stand up whenever they want, but only four should be standing at a time and they can only stand up for a maximum of 5 seconds. Finally everyone needs to pay attention to each other and everybody should participate and try to stand with a group of four.

A sense of community and having a strong focus can be the keys to a successful production (and classroom too!). This exercise can help to establish those things in a fun way that is also getting the students up on their feet.

98 **ZING! BALL** *(approximately 5 minutes, and requires a soft ball about 8-12 inches in diameter)*

- helps the ensemble grow together
- helps the students let go of their internal "censor" and begin tapping into their impulses
- brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together

Stand in a circle, facing into the center. In this game, the ball carries with it energy. This energy is like a feedback loop that increases the energy, speed, and focus of the entire group by the amount that each actor-student puts into the ball. The idea is to keep the ball moving in the circle without letting the energy drop. There should be no space between throw and catch. There should be no thought as to whom the student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, you must make eye contact with the person you are throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the person throwing should say "Zing!" Experiment with the way you say "Zing!" It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way you wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy.

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. Actors must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure.

99 **ZING! BALL (WITHOUT A BALL)** *(approximately 5–7 minutes)*

- asks the students to make their imagination clear to the ensemble
- focuses the students on physical detail

This exercise builds on Zing! Ball. Take the ball out of the circle and set it aside. Take an imaginary Zing! Ball out of your pocket. Grow this ball from a tiny rubber ball into a huge balloon. Using "Zing!," toss the ball to someone across the circle, and as it floats down, that person will try to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then he/she will recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how it changed. In the same way as Zing! Ball, work around the circle.

The wide range of vocabulary in Shakespeare's plays can often be intimidating as one reads the scripts. The actor's job is to make the language clear, and this is often accomplished by very specific physical gesturing.

100 **WAH!** *(approximately 5–10 minutes)*

- facilitates physical awareness and risk-taking
- encourages vocal projection
- helps actors increase their sense of timing and decrease response time

Stand in a circle, facing in. No one in the circle is a student or teacher any longer, but rather a fearsome warrior. Press the palms of your hands flat together to become a sword.

To begin the game, one warrior raises his or her sword straight up, then brings it down, pointing at another warrior in the circle. Warriors must make excellent eye contact to avoid confusion. As the warrior brings down his or her sword, he or she utters a fearsome battle cry, by saying, "Wah!" (Be wary, warriors, of shouting, which comes from the throat and leads to laryngitis, a warrior's worst enemy. Using the good support and deep breathing from your vocal warm-up will help you keep your vocal chords in top fighting condition.) When you become the recipient of "Wah!," raise your sword up above your head. While your sword is raised, the warriors on either side of you slash towards her stomach, as they cry "Wah!" in unison. Then make eye contact with someone else in the circle, slash your sword towards them with a final defiant "Wah!" Each "battle" should therefore include three cries of "Wah!"

As the group becomes familiar with the game, work to increase your speed and volume. This is a silly game; remember that warriors don't care about "looking cool" because they're too busy fighting unending battles. When a warrior misses his or her cue, stop the round and start it again until everyone is comfortable being loud and making big physical choices.

101 ZIP ZAP ZOP! *(approximately 5 minutes)*

- facilitates mental focus
- encourages eye contact and team work
- builds a sense of rhythm and pace

[*To the teacher: For a demonstration of this community builder, watch this video,* http://www.tinyurl.com/zipzapzop, *for a demonstration and instructions.*]

Stand in a circle, facing in. Bring your hands to your chest in a prayer pose. Make sure everyone can see each person in the circle. Eye contact is going to be very important! Point your hands like a laser, make clear eye contact at another person in the circle, and say "zip," "zap" or "zop," picking up your cue from the person before you. While maintaining the word sequence of zip, zap, zop as well as the rhythm, start slowly and eventually build speed.

102 TO BE! *(approximately 5–10 minutes,)*

- helps students to listen to and work with one another, creating a supportive learning community
- brings the physical and the vocal actor tools together
- facilitates mental focus
- introduces students to some of Shakespeare's language and characters

[*To the teacher: consider using ZIP, ZAP, ZOP as a scaffold to this warm-up.*]

Stand in a circle, facing in. One person will start as the keeper of the energy. There are multiple ways to pass the energy, all based off Shakespeare's plays and words. The idea is to keep the energy constantly in motion around and across the circle. Introduce each option one at a time, so students have time to experiment with each option as the game builds in complexity.

- "To be!"–make eye contact with the person to the left or right of you. Reach towards them with your hand (as if you are clutching Yorick's skull) while speaking this line from *Hamlet*. Now that person has the energy.
- "Not to be!"–to change the direction the energy is flowing, hold up your hands in a "stop" gesture while speaking this line from *Hamlet*. The person who tried to pass you the energy now has to send it in another direction.
- "Get thee to a nunnery!"–to send the energy across the circle, point to someone and deliver this line from *Hamlet*. That person now has the energy
- "Out, damn spot!" –to "ricochet" the energy back across the circle in response to "Get thee to a nunnery!", make an X with your arms as you speak this line from *Macbeth*. The person who tried to pass you the energy now has to send it in another direction.
- "Romeo!" "Juliet!"–to trade places with someone else in the circle, make eye contact and stretch your arm towards them as you cry, "Romeo!" They must then respond "Juliet!" Now run gracefully past each other. The person who cried "Juliet" now has the energy.

- "Double, double, toil and trouble!"–this line from *Macbeth* instructs everyone to change places at once, leading to a completely new circle. Whoever cried, "Double, double, toil and trouble!" keeps the energy.

- "A horse, a horse!"–Whoever has the energy may call out this line from *Richard III*. Everyone else in the circle must respond, "My kingdom for a horse!" while galloping in place like a horse. The energy stays with the person who gave the command.

- "Exit, pursued by a bear!"– point to someone across the circle as you speak this stage direction from *A Winter's Tale*. Run through the circle to take their spot. Your classmate must now run around the outside of the circle to take your previous spot in the circle. That person now has the energy.

- Add your own rules! Choose short lines from the play you're studying and match them with a gesture and action. Where does the energy travel?

Your goal as a group is to keep the energy moving in the circle without letting focus drop. As the class becomes more comfortable with each command, the game will get faster and faster, and you will need to think less and less about what to say next.

Experiment with the way you deliver the lines! There is no wrong way, as long as you speak the lines with energy.

103 WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Form two parallel lines, and enough room in between for "action" to take place. The first student in one line, Student A, steps into the empty space between the two lines and begins miming any action (ex. bouncing a basketball). The first student in the opposite line, Student B, steps out and addresses Student A, saying their first name (a good name reinforcer!) and asking, "[Name], what are you doing?" Student A then states any action that is not what they are miming (e.g. "baking a cake"). Student B then begins miming the action that Student A has just stated, and the next student steps out to continue the exercise.

[*To the teacher: Once students feel confident with the exercise, ask students to choose actions found in a chosen text. For instance, if you are teaching Romeo and Juliet, students might say, "I'm sword fighting." or "I'm climbing a garden wall."*] ■

Teacher Resource Center

If you have an activity or lesson plan that was a classroom success with your students, we want to hear about it! Consider donating your lesson plan to the Teacher Resource Center, and become part of our ever-growing, permanent collection! Need inspiration? If you are looking for the perfect activity or "proven" lesson plan, visit the Center to access hundred of teaching resources.

Call the Education Department, 312.595.5678, to make an appointment.

TECHNO SHAKESPEARE

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

Chicago Shakespeare Theater's website
http://www.chicagoshakes.com

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

Writings and Career of Plautus
http://www.theatrehistory.com/ancient/plautus001.html

The Bomb-itty of Errors
http://www.bomb-itty.com/prologue.php

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

Absolute Shakespeare
http://absoluteshakespeare.com

Shakespeare in Europe Sh:in:E
shine.unibas.ch/metasite.html

Touchstone Database (University of Birmingham, UK)
http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/welcome.html

The Encyclopedia Britannica's Guide to Shakespeare
http://search.eb.com/shakespeare

The Shakespeare Study Guide
http://shakespearestudyguide.com

The Reduced Shakespeare Company: The Complete Works of William Shakespeare Abridged
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vd4h16DWpdU

TEACHING SHAKESPEARE

indicates specific focus on The Comedy of Errors*, among other plays*

The Folger Shakespeare Library
http://www.folger.edu/Content/Teach-and-Learn/Teaching-Resources

PBS: Shakespeare Uncovered
http://www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered

Web English Teacher*
http://www.varsitytutors.com/englishteacher.com/shakespeare.html

The Royal Shakespeare Company Resources
http://www.rsc.org.uk/education/teacher-resources

Shakespeare Online
http://www.shakespeare-online.com

Shakespeare Resource Center*
http://bardweb.net/plays/index.html

Nagoya University's Concordances
http://victorian-studies.net/concordance/shakespeare

SHAKESPEARE AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
http://www.shakespeare.org.uk

The Elizabethan Theatre
http://www.uni-koeln.de/phil-fak/englisch/shakespeare/index.html

Elizabeth I: Ruler and Legend (The Newberry Library's exhibit commemorating the 400th anniversary of Queen Elizabeth's death)
http://www.newberry.org/elizabeth/index.html

Queen Elizabeth I
http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm

Shakespeare's Globe Education and Research Database
http://www.shakespearesglobe.com/learn/research-and-collections

Proper Elizabethan Accents
http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)
http://sceti.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/index.cfm

Renaissance Sites and Elizabeth Resources
http://elizabethan.org/sites.html

Tudor and Elizabethan Portrait Gallery
http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/explore/by-period/tudor.php

The History of Costume by Braun and Schneider
http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html

The Elizabethan Costuming Page
http://elizabethancostume.net

The Map of Early Modern London Online
http://mapoflondon.uvic.ca/index.htm

Shakespeare's Staging
http://shakespearestaging.berkeley.edu

TEXT AND EARLY EDITIONS

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Massachusetts Institute of Technology site)
http://shakespeare.mit.edu

The Oxford Shakespeare
http://www.bartleby.com/70

Treasures in Full: Shakespeare in Quarto (British Library)
http://www.bl.uk/treasures/shakespeare/homepage.html

The First Folio and Early Quartos of William Shakespeare (University of Virginia)
https://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/003081548

The Internet Shakespeare Editions (University of Victoria)
https://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca

What Is a Folio? (MIT's "Hamlet on the Ramparts" site)
http://shea.mit.edu/ramparts/newstuff3.htm

The Rare Book Room
http://www.rarebookroom.org

WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

Open Source Shakespeare Concordance
http://www.opensourceshakespeare.com/concordance/findform.php

Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary (Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library site
https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.03.0079

Shakespeare's Words Glossary and Language Companion
shakespeareswords.com

SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE

Touchstone Performance Database
http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/performance.html

The Internet Movie Database: William Shakespeare
http://www.us.imdb.com/find?q=Shakespeare

SHAKESPEARE IN ART

Shakespeare Illustrated (Emory University)
http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Shakespeare.html

Absolute Shakespeare
http://absoluteshakespeare.com/pictures/shakespeare_pictures.htm

Folger Shakespeare Library Digital Image Collection
http://luna.folger.edu/luna/servlet/view/all

AMERICA IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Contextual sites for Chicago Shakespeare Theater's 2020 production of The Comedy of Errors*, and its Depression-era setting*

Teaching the Great Depression (National Park Service)
https://www.nps.gov/teachers/classrooms/civilian-conservation-corps.htm

WPA Art Curriculum Sites
http://www.wpamurals.com/curricul.htm

The Depression Era Art Projects in Illinois (Illinois State Library)
https://www.lib.niu.edu/2000/ihsp0004.html

Library of Congress: Federal Arts Project Resources
http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fap.html

Library of Congress: Federal Writers' Project
https://www.loc.gov/collections/federal-writers-project/about-this-collection

Art Institute of Chicago Collections: Thomas Hart Benton
https://www.artic.edu/collection?q=thomas%20hart%20benton ■

appendices

MOVIE TRAILER FOR *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (Activity #3, pg. 47)

Cue subtle dramatic music

Egeon (Older Man): In Syracusa was I born, and wed unto a woman.

A wealthy couple blessed

Egeon: She became a joyful mother of two goodly sons:

A story of twin boys

Egeon: The one so like the other, as could not be distinguished.

And twin servant companions

Egeon: Those, I bought, and brought up to attend my sons.

This same family split by shipwreck

[Sound Effect: Sea and Wind]

Egeon (with emotion): We were encountered by a mighty rock,

Which being violently borne up,

Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst;

A wife, babe, and servant babe, gone one way

[Sound Effect: Woman screaming and babies crying]

And husband, son, and servant gone another

[Sound Effect: Man screaming and babies crying]

And now, many years later, this father in search of his family faces a death sentence

Duke (with authority): If any Syracusian born
Come to the Bay of Ephesus, he dies:
Unless a thousand marks be levied to ransom him.

Witness the tale of one brother wandering in search of his twin…

Antipholus S: I to the world am like a drop of water, That in the Ocean seeks another drop.

…and not seeing the forest for the trees Cue music change to lively, comic melody

Dromio E (frantically): The Capon burns, the Pig falls from the spit;
The clock hath strucken twelve upon the bell:
My Mistress made it one upon my cheek:
She is so hot because the meat is cold!

Antipholus S: Huh?

When a pair of men encounter their living doubles, the familiar becomes strange,

Antipholus S (angry): Where have you left the money that I gave you?

Dromio E (puzzled): To me sir? Why you gave no gold to me?

and the strange…

Adriana: Antipholus!

Antipholus S (surprised): Speak you to me fair dame? I know you not.

…becomes familiar.

Antipholus S: What, was I married to her in my dream?

This is William Shakespeare's The Comedy of Errors!
See a wife puzzled by the strange behavior of her husband

Adriana (forlorn): His company must do his minions grace,

Whil'st I at home starve for a merry look:

Dromio E: Why Mistress, sure my Master is stark mad: I know quoth he, no house, no wife!

And doubts growing

Adriana (frantic): I know his eye doth homage other-where!

Dromio S: I pray sir, why am I beaten?

Antipholus S: Dost thou not know?

They find themselves in a strange fantasy

Dromio S: This is the Fairie land, oh spite of spites,
We talk with Goblins, Owls and Sprites!

Antipholus S: Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
Sleeping or waking, mad or well advised?

Another man, same name, same face, finds his identity stolen

Antipholus E: My door is locked!

Dromio S: Go get thee from the door!

Antipholus E: What art thou that keep'st me out from the house I own?

Replaced at home, his wife denying him

Antipholus E: Are you there Wife?

Adriana: Your wife sir knave? Go get you from the door!

And a shocked sister-in-law

Luciana: Why call you ME love? Call my sister so!

Antipholus S: Thee will I love, and with thee lead my life

Luciana (in fright): Ahhhhhh!

A servant confused and scared

Dromio S: Do you know me sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I my self? I am due to a woman!

Antipholus S: What is she?

Dromio S: Marry sir, she's the kitchen wench, and all grease!

Luce (with love): Dromio!

Dromio S: Run, Master, run!

One man's life turned upside down,

Antipholus E: How now? A Madman?

Officer: I do arrest you sir!

His unknown twin on the run

Antipholus S: Avant thou witch!

Dromio S: Run, Master, run!

And a family reunion like no other

Egeon: I see my son Antipholus and Dromio.

Adriana: I see two husbands, or mine eyes deceive me.

Aemilia: Speak old Egeon, if thou bee'st the man

Egeon: If I dream not, thou art Aemilia!

See it live at the Chicago Shakespeare Theater!
This play not rated. ∎

DISEMBODIED LINES (Activity #5, pg. 48)

Proceed, Solinus, to procure my fall,

And by the doom of death end woes and all.

Therefore by law thou art condemned to die.

I to the world am like a drop of water

That in the ocean seeks another drop.

I am not in a sportive humor now.

Methinks your maw, like mine, should be your clock.

I have some marks of yours upon my pate,

But not a thousand marks between you both.

They say this town is full of cozenage.

Hence, prating peasant, fetch thy master home.

Fie, how impatience loureth in your face!

Yea, dost thou jeer and flout me in the teeth?

Ay, ay, Antipholus, look strange and frown!

I am possessed with an adulterate blot!

Plead you to me, fair dame?

Dromio, thou Dromio, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot.

I think thou art an ass!

Over…

Sing, siren, for thyself, and I will dote.

What, are you mad, that you do reason so?

My heart prays for him, thou my tongue do curse.

Avaunt, thou witch!

Alas, you fiery and how sharp he looks!

Oh, most unhappy strumpet!

Justice, most gracious Duke, O grant me justice!

Why, what an intricate impeach is this!

We came into the world like brother and brother,

And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another. ◼

Appendix C

INSULT SLINGING! (Activity #7, pg. 48)

I shall break that merry sconce of yours. 1.2.79-80

Dost thou jeer and flout me in the teeth? 2.2.22

When the sun shines let foolish gnats make sport. 2.2.30

There's many a man hath more hair than wit. 2.2.81-82

Thou drone, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot. 2.2.194

If thou art chang'd to aught, 'tis to an ass. 2.2.199

I think thou art an ass. 3.1.15

Mome, malthorse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch! 3.1.32

She's the kitchen wench, and all grease. 3.2.93-96

I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Poland winter. 3.2.96-97

[She is] swart like my shoe, but her face nothing like so clean kept. 3.2.100-1

She sweats, a man may go over-shoes in the grime of it. 3.2.101-2

She is spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her. 3.2.111-13

As from a bear a man would run for life,
    So fly I from that would be my wife. 3.2.153-54

He is deformed, crooked, old and sere,
    Ill-fac'd, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere;
    Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind. 4.2.19-22

Thou art sensible in nothing but blows, and so is an ass. 4.4.25-26

The fiend is strong in him. 4.4.105

[What a] mountain of mad flesh! . . . . 4.4.152 ■

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS IN A SNAP! SCRIPT (Activity #9, pg. 49)

Welcome to **Ephesus!** A thriving market town on the beautiful coast of Greece—as long as you're not from **Syracuse**, you should have a lovely time. If you are a Syracusan, you'll want to pack an extra thousand bucks—otherwise… **[1]**.

Egeon—a Syracusan merchant—finds himself smack-dab in the middle of this feud when he's arrested and sentenced to death. Yikes. **The Duke** in charge of this operation wants to know… **[2]**. Egeon's not on vacation. He's had his hands full… **[3]**. You see, he's searching for his son, named **Antipholus**, and his servant, named **Dromio**, who left home in search of Antipholus's long-lost twin. Hmm. There has to be more to this story, and Egeon wants to tell it…

Once upon a time, Egeon had a happy, simple life-he was at the top of his game as a merchant and married to his dream girl… **[4]**. His wife gave birth to beautiful twin boys (who happened to be identical)… **[5]** and their dad gave them twin servants (who also happened to be identical) as a birthday present. The twin servants were even born… **[6]** as Egeon's kids. What are the odds? Egeon had absolutely everything he desired in life—and it all disappeared one night on the high seas in a terrible storm when… **[7]**. Egeon is rescued, with one son and one servant, but his wife, along with their other son and servant, is never seen again. So, he's stuck telling… **[8]** to anyone who will listen. Egeon renames the twins after their missing brothers, Antipholus and Dromio. A nice tribute, maybe, but SPOILER ALERT it's gonna cause a whole lot of chaos down the road… Phew! We're all caught up, and back in Ephesus.

On that very same day, Antipholus and Dromio also arrive in Ephesus. Antipholus is chilling in the market and wants to… **[9]** when Dromio enters in a huff. He's been looking everywhere for Antipholus—it's dinner time, and his wife, Adriana, wants him home ASAP… **[10]**. Antipholus snaps that Dromio needs to stop kidding around since… **[11]**, and Dromio has to report back to **Adriana** that her husband is acting really, really weird…

And so concludes our first round of identical-twin hijinks. You see, the other two, the OG Antipholus and Dromio— the ones who have been MIA their entire lives—have been living all these years HERE. In Ephesus.

Rightfully suspicious and possibly a bit hangry, Adriana tracks down Antipholus herself. She and her sister, **Luciana**, drag him home but he's still on about not having a wife. He even tells Adriana… **[12]** AND, adding insult to injury, he flirts with Luciana, reasoning that… **[13]**, which is odd, right, for someone who is supposed to be married? You guessed it—he's the wrong Antipholus! Antipholus and Dromio think something sketchy is going on since everyone here seems to know them. And like any reasonable person, they assume it's a bunch of hocus pocus… **[14]** and…**[15]**.

This is when the right Antipholus, who lives in Ephesus and this house, moseys on home to discover that… **[16]** and he can't get in. Antipholus is ready to knock this house down—he yells at Dromio to… **[17]**. When brute force doesn't work, he does the mature thing and decides to make his wife jealous by asking the **Goldsmith** to… **[18]** that he was going to give to Adriana and decides to give to another woman instead. It's not long before the Goldsmith is shouting… **[19]** at Antipholus (the wrong one…) for refusing to pay for the gold chain (that he never actually received.) But the Goldsmith did deliver the necklace to Antipholus—it just happened to be the other Antipholus…

Everyone is seriously freaking out. One Antipholus wants out of jail and asks Dromio to tell Adriana that he needs money because… **[20]**, while the other Antipholus wants out of Ephesus all together. And to top it all off, Adriana thinks her husband has lost his mind to madness and begs **"Dr." Pinch** to perform an exorcism—which, like everything else at this point in this town, is more ridiculous than spooky:… **[21]**. It's total and complete chaos. Thank heaven for the **Abbess** (she's the head nun at the local nunnery) who has all the answers and is finally ready to share. In a big reveal, the Abbess reunites the two sets of twins, the "Antipholi" and the Dromios, for the first time since infancy. Amazing—they look so much alike that even the Duke needs them to… **[22]**! PLUS! She's **Emilia**, the long-lost wife of Egeon! He's just as shocked as we are:… **[23]**.

Everybody's in a great mood and Egeon's life is spared—he doesn't even have to pay the ransom! And the Dromios are over the moon about having a brother—who looks just like them… **[24]**! Who'd have thought that a story beginning with a sentence of death would end happily ever after… **[25]**? ∎

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS IN A SNAP! LINES

[1]   By law thou art condemned to die.

....

[2]   Why thou departedst from thy native home?

....

[3]   Five summer I have spent in farthest Greece, roaming clean through the bounds of Asia.

....

[4]   With her I lived in joy…

....

[5]   The one so like the other as could not be distinguished but by name.

....

[6]   That very hour, and in the selfsame inn.

....

[7]   Our helpful ship was splitted in the midst!

....

[8]   Sad stories of my own mishaps…

....

[9]   Go lose myself and wander up and down and view the city.

....

[10] She is so hot because the meat is cold; the meat is cold because you come not home.

....

[11] I am not in a supportive humor now.

....

[12] Plead you to me, fair dame? I know you not.

....

[13] Thou hast no husband yet—nor I, no wife.

....

[14] We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites! If we obey them not, this will ensue.

....

[15]   There's none but witches do inhabit here!

[16]   My door is locked!

[17]   Go fetch me something. I'll break open the gate!

[18]   Fetch the chain!

[19]   Arrest him, officer!

[20]   I am arrested in the street, and that shall bail me!

[21]   I charge thee, Satan, housed within this man, to yield possession to my holy prayers.

[22]   Stand apart! I know not which is which!

[23]   If I dream not, thou art Emilia!

[24]   We came into the world like brother and brother…

[25]   …And now let's go hand in hand, not one before another.

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