

the COMEDY of ERRORS



chicago
shakespeare theater
on navy pier

Teacher Handbook

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Cover illustrations: Original renderings by Costume Designer Ana Kuzmanic for CST’s 2010 production of *The Comedy of Errors*

Acknowledgments

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

Barbara Gaines
Artistic Director



Criss Henderson
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, a Teacher Resource Center, and a Shakespeare specialty bookstall.

In its first 24 seasons, 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*, *Hamlet*, *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*, *Henry V*, *Henry VI Parts 1, 2 and 3*, *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*, *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, *Timon of Athens*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *The Winter’s Tale*.

Chicago Shakespeare Theater was the 2008 recipient of the Regional Theatre Tony Award. Chicago’s Jeff Awards year after year have honored the Theater, 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 within a multicultural city, we are committed to bringing Shakespeare to a young and ethnically diverse audience of nearly 50,000 students each year. Team Shakespeare’s programming includes free teacher workshops, student matinees of mainstage shows, post-performance discussions, comprehensive teacher handbooks, and an abridged, original production each year for student and family audiences. Team Shakespeare offers a region-wide forum for new vision and enthusiasm for teaching Shakespeare in our schools.

The 2009–10 Season offers a student matinee series for Chicago Shakespeare Theater’s productions of Shakespeare’s *Richard III* in the fall and *The Taming of the Shrew* in the spring, as well as Noël Coward’s *Private Lives* this winter. Also this winter, Chicago Shakespeare presents especially for students a 75-minute abridged adaptation of *The Comedy of Errors*, at its theater on Navy Pier and on tour to schools and theaters across the region. We hope that you and your students will enjoy our work—and Shakespeare’s creative genius brought to life on stage.

Marilyn J. Halperin, *Director of Education*
Andie Thomalla, *Education Outreach Manager*
Rachel Hillmer, *Education Associate*

The Comedy of Errors

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
DIRECTED AND ADAPTED BY DAVID H. BELL

Production Sponsor

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ERROR. TO WANDER.

Our word “error” (that word we like to avoid whenever humanly possible), came to us from the Romans and from their word meaning “to go astray, to wander.”

The Comedy of Errors is a comedy like no other that Shakespeare ever wrote again. It is undeniably (unless *we’re* in error...) his fastest, wackiest, dizziest play—the result of having not just one, but two sets of identical brothers, and all four equally clueless that their twins are in town and causing total confusion. Everywhere they go, they’ve just been...

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 one time or other—we’re inclined, like the characters in Shakespeare’s *Comedy*, to wander. You’ll see them wandering. From place to place looking for family. Away from home looking for love. They even end up wandering into the arms of people they *think* they know but really don’t. (Does any of this sound in the least familiar?)

But Shakespeare lets us laugh, really laugh, at all those errors they—and we—make. In fact, he makes us laugh a lot at them. So, welcome to the world of Shakespeare’s play devoted to the comedy of human error!

PICTURED FROM TOP: DOUGLAS VICKERS, ROSS LEHMAN AND KEVIN GUDAHL, PHOTO BY LIZ LAUREN; TIMOTHY GREGORY, KRAIG SWARTZ, JAMES FITZGERALD AND TIM DECKER, PHOTO BY LIZ LAUREN; BLAINE HOGAN, BRADEN MORAN, KRISHNA LEFAN AND WILL DICKERSON, PHOTO BY MICHAEL BROSILOW; WILLIAM DICK AND NORM BOUCHER, PHOTO BY LIZ LAUREN; ANGELA INGERSOLL, SEAN FORTUNATO AND KYMBERLY MELLEN, PHOTO BY LIZ LAUREN; BLAINE HOGAN, JOE SCHENCK AND JOSÉ ANTONIO GARCIA, PHOTO BY MICHAEL BROSILOW



ART THAT LIVES

Drama is a living art. It is written to be performed live before a group of people who form an audience and together experience a play. Ancient cave paintings depict men disguised

as animals. Since ancient times, impersonation and imitation have served man in his effort to express himself and to communicate his experience. The drama of western civilization has its roots in the ancient Greeks' religious rituals and observances. Until the Renaissance, when Shakespeare wrote, drama was closely tied to religious beliefs and practice.

Drama not only depicts human communication, it *is* human communication. In theater, unlike television or film, there is a two-way communication that occurs between the actors and their audience. The audience hears and sees the actors, and the actors hear and see the audience. We are used to thinking about the actors' roles in a play, but may find it strange to imagine ourselves, the audience, playing an important role in this living art. Because the art lives, each production is guaranteed to be different, depending in part upon an audience's response. Live drama is the sharing of human experience, intensely and immediately, in the theater, which momentarily becomes our world.

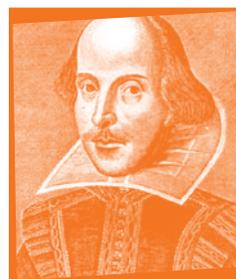
A live theater production depends upon its audience. The best performances depend upon the best actors—and the best audiences. When the actors sense a responsive, interested audience, their work is at its best—full of animation and energy. When the actors sense disinterest, they, too, are distracted, and the play they create is less interesting.

The experience of live performance is of a story told by the actors and audience together. In this sense, you are also a storyteller in the experience of live theater. We hope you'll enjoy your role—and help us give you a dramatic experience that you'll always remember.

[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

HOW CAN YOU HELP US GIVE YOU THE BEST PERFORMANCE WE CAN?

- ◆ Emotions are part of drama. We hope that you'll laugh, cry and even gasp—as an honest, spontaneous response to the story, not in order to distract attention from the stage.
- ◆ Please keep all “noisemakers”—food, gum, electronics, etc.—back at school or on the bus! In a quiet theater, wrappers and munching are heard by all, the actors included...
- ◆ All electronics must be fully turned off. Flashes on cameras, the glow of an open cell phone, or a lone iPod going off under someone's seat can all make the actors lose their focus and can even be dangerous. Digital cameras, along with all other kinds of recording devices, are prohibited, as is text-messaging.



BARD'S BIO

Some have raised doubts whether Shakespeare, with his average education and humble origins, possibly could have written what has long been considered the best verse drama composed in the English language. Was this man “Shakespeare” a mere decoy for the true author who, for his (or her) own reasons could not reveal his (or her...) true identity—someone, at least, who could boast of a university education, a noble upbringing, and experience in the world outside England's borders? There are worldwide societies, eminent actors, as

well as a few scholars who insist upon the existence of a “Shakespeare conspiracy.” But not until 1769, 150 years after Shakespeare’s death, did these theories arise. To all appearances, Shakespeare’s contemporaries and immediate successors never seemed to question whether William Shakespeare wrote the celebrated works attributed to him.

The exact day of William Shakespeare’s birth is not known, but his baptism, traditionally conducted three days after a child’s birth, was recorded on April 26, 1564 and consequently, his birthday is celebrated on April 23.

His father John Shakespeare was a tanner, glover, grain dealer and 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 some knowledge of Latin and Greek and the classical writers. There is no record that Shakespeare acquired a university education of any kind.

At 18, 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 11. 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 years are filled with legend and conjecture, and we do not know what brought Shakespeare to London or how he entered its world of 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 a mere actor) and copying the works of established dramatists.

Subsequent references to Shakespeare indicate that as early as 1594 he was not only an actor and playwright, but also a partner in a new theater company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, which soon became one of London’s two principal companies. The company’s name changed to the King’s Men in 1603 with the accession of James I, and it endured until the Puritans closed the theaters in 1642. From 1599 the company acted primarily at the Globe playhouse, in which Shakespeare held a one-tenth interest.

During his career of approximately 20 years, Shakespeare wrote or collaborated in what most scholars now agree upon as 38 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 *As You Like It*. His great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth*, were composed between 1599 and 1607, and were preceded by his last play traditionally categorized as comedy, *Measure for Measure*. The earlier histories, comedies and tragedies made way for Shakespeare’s final dramatic form—the so-called “Romances,” which were written between 1606 and 1611 and include *Cymbeline*, *Pericles*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Tempest*. These were the works of a playwright no longer bound in any way by the constraints of historical and tragic conventions.

Although single volumes of approximately half his plays were published in Shakespeare’s lifetime, there is no evidence that he oversaw their publication. It was not until 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, that 36 of his plays were published in the First Folio. Dramatic scripts were only just beginning to be considered “literature” as we understand it today, and so it is not at all surprising that so little attention was given to Shakespeare’s plays in published form until seven years after his death. However, we do know that Shakespeare oversaw the publication of three of his narrative poems and a collection of 154 sonnets.

By 1592, Shakespeare had emerged as a rising playwright in London, where he continued to enjoy fame and financial success as an actor, playwright and part-owner of London’s leading theater company. After nearly 20 years in the theater, in 1611 he retired to live as a country gentleman in Stratford, his birthplace, until his death on April 23, 1616.

Shakespeare was the man, who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes any thing, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning, give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read nature; he looked inwards, and found her there.
—John Dryden, 1688



THE FIRST FOLIO

Chicago Shakespeare Theater utilizes the First Folio as its script and acting “blueprint.” The First Folio serves as the most authentic and effective manual available to Shakespearean actors

nearly 400 years after its publication. Its punctuation gives clues to our actors about what words to emphasize and about which ideas are important. In Shakespeare’s own theater company, with only a few days at most to rehearse each new play, these built-in clues were essential. Today, they can still help actors make the language much easier to understand—even though you’re hearing language that’s 400 years younger than ours.

Shakespeare wrote his plays for the stage, not for publication. In Shakespeare’s day, plays were not considered 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 of his, dramatist Ben Jonson, published his own plays in an oversized book called a “folio,” that plays were viewed as literature worthy of publication. Jonson was chided as bold and arrogant for his venture.

Shakespeare, unlike Jonson, showed absolutely no interest or involvement in the publication of his plays, and during Shakespeare’s own lifetime, only half of his plays were ever printed—and those quartos. It was only after the playwright’s death when two of Shakespeare’s close colleagues decided to ignore tradition and gather his plays for publication. In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare’s death, the First Folio, a book containing 36 of his 38 plays, was published. The First Folio was compiled from stage prompt books, the playwright’s handwritten manuscripts, various versions of some of the plays already published—and from the memory of his actors. Its large format (much like a modern atlas) was traditionally reserved for the “authority” of religious and classical works.

Shakespeare’s First Folio took five “composers” two and one-half years to print. The composers manually set each individual letter of type by first memorizing the text line by line. There was no editor overseeing the printing, and the composers frequently altered punctuation and spelling. Errors caught in printing would be corrected but, due to the prohibitively high cost of paper, earlier copies remained intact. Of the 1,200 copies of the First Folio that were printed, approximately 230 survive today, each slightly different. Chicago’s Newberry Library contains a First Folio in its rich collections (and it can be viewed in small groups by appointment).

A key to understanding Shakespeare’s language is to appreciate the attitude toward speech accepted by him and his contemporaries. Speech was traditionally and piously regarded as God’s final and consummate gift to man. Speech was thus to Elizabethans a source of enormous power for good or ill... Hence the struggle to excel in eloquent utterance.

—David Bevington, 1980



SHAKESPEARE’S ENGLAND

Elizabeth I ruled England for 45 years from 1558 to 1603 in a time of relative prosperity and peace. “Few monarchs,” says Shakespearean scholar David

Bevington, “have ever influenced an age so pervasively and left their stamp on it so permanently.” The daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife Anne Boleyn, Elizabeth was regarded by many Catholics as an illegitimate child—and an illegitimate monarch. 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. Religious conflict during the Tudors’ reign pervaded every aspect of English life—particularly its politics.

Elizabeth had no heir, and throughout her reign the politics of succession posed a real threat to the nation’s peace—and provided a recurrent subject of Shakespeare’s plays. While Shakespeare was writing *Julius Caesar*, the Earl of Essex, one of the Queen’s favorite courtiers, rebelled



against her government. Shakespeare's portrayal of the forced abdication of a king in *Richard II* was censored in performance during Elizabeth's reign.

Elizabethan England was a smaller, more isolated country than it had been previously or would be subsequently. It had withdrawn from its extensive empire on the Continent, and its explorations of the New World had barely begun. 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 a serious problem. It was a time of change and social mobility. A rising middle class for the first time in English history aspired to the wealth and status of the aristocracy.

Under Elizabeth, England returned to Protestantism. But in her masterful style of accommodation and compromise, she incorporated an essentially traditional and Catholic doctrine into an Episcopal form of church government that was ruled by the Crown and England's clergy rather than by Rome's Pope. Extremists on the religious right and left hated her rule and wanted to see Elizabeth

overthrown. She was declared a heretic by Rome in 1569, and her life was endangered.

"Her combination of imperious will and femininity and her brilliant handling of her many contending male admirers have become legendary," says David Bevington, 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 might threaten her broad base of power and influence.

Throughout Early Modern Europe, governments were centralized, assuming the power that once belonged to city-states and feudal lords. The rule of monarchs, like Queen Elizabeth I was absolute. She and her subjects viewed the monarch as God's deputy, and the divine right of kings was a cherished doctrine (and became the subject of Shakespeare's history plays). It was this doctrine that condemned rebellion as an act of disobedience against God, but could not protect Elizabeth from rebellion at home, even from her closest advisors, or from challenges from abroad.

Childless, Elizabeth I died in 1603. The crown passed to her cousin James VI, King of Scotland, who became England's King James I. James, ruling from 1603 to 1625 (Shakespeare died in 1616), clearly lacked Elizabeth's political acumen and skill, and his reign was troubled with political and religious controversy. He antagonized the religious left, and his court became more aligned with the Catholic right. It would be James' son, Charles I, who would be beheaded in the English civil wars of the 1640s.



THE RENAISSANCE THEATER

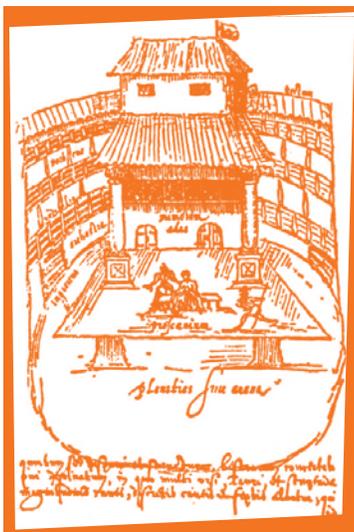
A man who would later become an associate of Shakespeare's, James Burbage, built the first commercial theater in England in 1576, not much more than a decade before

Shakespeare first arrived on the London theater scene—a convergence of two events that would change history.

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.” The name reflected the position of his theater, on the shore of the Thames River and just beyond the ditch created by the walls of London.

Burbage was not the only one to dodge the severe rules of the Common Council 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 became popular entertainment at Queen Elizabeth’s court as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and continued to enjoy court patronage after King James 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 Lord Chamberlain’s company the funds to build the Globe playhouse in 1599. The Globe joined a handful of other theaters located just out of the city’s jurisdiction as the first public theaters in England.



AN ELIZABETHAN TRAVELER’S SKETCH OF THE SWAN, ONE OF THE FIRST PUBLIC THEATERS IN ENGLAND

Shakespeare may have developed his love for the theater by watching traveling acting troupes temporarily transform the courtyard of an inn or town square into a theater. When he was a boy growing up in Stratford-upon-Avon, acting troupes traveled around the countryside in flatbed, horse-drawn carts, which did triple duty as transportation, storage for props and costumes, and as stage. Their horses pulled the

cart into an inn yard or the courtyard of a country estate or college. People gathered around to watch, some leaning over the rails from the balconies above to view the action on the impromptu stage below.

Many of these traveling performances staged religious stories, enacting important scenes from the Bible—the form of theater that endured throughout the Middle Ages. During the Renaissance, the enacted stories 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 physical, moral and social corruption were spread. They were frequently shut down by the authorities during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when the city was menaced by the plague or by political and social rioting. Even when the theaters were open, the Master of the Revels had to read and approve every word in a new play. The show could not go on until he gave his permission.

All kinds of people came to plays at the Globe, and they came in great numbers. A full house in the Globe numbered about 3,000 people. Though the same dimensions as the original structure, the reconstruction of the Globe holds 1,500 at maximum capacity—an indication of just how close those 3,000 people must have been to one another. They 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 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 at Chicago Shakespeare Theater) while the “common folk”—shopkeepers and artisans—stood for a penny, about a day’s wages for a skilled worker. They were diverse and demanding group, and Shakespeare depicted characters and situations to appeal to every level of this cross-section of Renaissance society. The vitality and financial success of the Elizabethan theater is without equal in English history.

There was no electricity for lighting, so all plays were performed in daylight. Sets and props were bare and basic.

A throne, table or bed had to be brought on stage during the action since Elizabethan plays were written to be performed without scene breaks or intermissions. When the stage directions for *Macbeth* indicate that “a banquet is prepared,” the stage keepers 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 “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting. The actors wore the same clothes on the stage as their contemporaries wore on the street. Hand-me-downs from the English aristocracy provided the elegant costumes for the play’s royalty.

Most new plays were short runs and seldom revived. The acting companies were always in rehearsal for new shows but, due to the number of ongoing and upcoming productions, most plays were rehearsed for just a few days.

It was not until 1660 that women would be permitted to act on the English stage. Female roles were performed by boys or young men. Elaborate Elizabethan and Jacobean dresses disguised a man’s shape and the young actors were readily accepted as “women” by the audience.

Shakespeare’s plays were performed primarily in “modern” dress—that is, the clothes of Shakespeare’s time—regardless of their historical setting.

In 1642, the Puritans succeeded in closing the theaters altogether. They 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 not open very long before the Great Fire of London destroyed them in 1666. During the 18 years of Commonwealth rule, years where the English theaters were closed, many of the traditions of playing Shakespeare were lost. The new theater of the Restoration approached Shakespeare’s plays very differently, rewriting and adapting his original scripts to suit the audience’s contemporary tastes. It is left

to scholars of Early Modern English drama to reconstruct the traditions of Elizabethan theater from clues left behind.



COURTYARD-STYLE THEATER

David Taylor of Theatre Projects Consultants has devoted a great deal of energy and imagination to the question of what kind of space is best suited

to presenting Shakespeare’s plays. Taylor, who worked as one of the primary consultants on the design of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, feels that this unique performance space reflects elements of both the Globe playhouse and the courtyards-turned-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 three galleries, 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.” The audience sits on three sides of the thrust stage, so the play is staged in the middle of the audience—much like the Elizabethan Swan Theater’s design, for which a traveler’s careful sketch still remains. This immersion of the stage and the action performed on it creates a three-dimensional theater that demands three-dimensional directing, acting, and design elements.

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. “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.”



CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER

“This close, close relationship with the performers on stage is the very essence of the courtyard experience,” according to Taylor. “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 a traveling troupe set up its temporary stage.

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.

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. “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 reflects. “That’s the reason why the courtyard theater shape is such a wonderful historical springboard for modern theater design.”

Speaking of his experience directing on a similarly designed stage in Stratford, Ontario, Tyrone Guthrie once said: “Theatrical performance is a form of ritual; the audience is not asked to subscribe to an illusion but to participate in the ritual. . . The attraction for me of the ‘open stage’ as opposed to the proscenium is primarily this: that it stresses the ritual as opposed to the illusionary quality of performance.”

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 Theater. With their deep thrust stages, both 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 acoustical choice. The angle of the bricks in the side walls help 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.

Shakespearean theater is about people. As Taylor concludes, “You’re the scenery. You’re the special effects. And the people you see performing this play are performing it in front of, and out of, you.”

MINSTRELS, MIRACLES, MAGIC, AND SHAKESPEARE: A BRIEF HISTORY OF TOURING

“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. And 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 *The Phantom of the Opera*, or as small as a juggler who wanders around the city, clubs in hand. 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—or perhaps more so—as those today: 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 basis 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 teaching. 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 reconstructing 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 once again small companies of actors 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 company was known as the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, and during King James’s rule (Elizabeth’s successor), as the King’s Men. 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 many months on end; during these periods, the 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 transformed into a stage, the actors performed to all who gathered around the makeshift stage.

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.

With theater’s resurgence in the Renaissance came playwrights, such as Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and Molière—men who wrote plays whose 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 18 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 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 for five weeks around the tri-state area. 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.

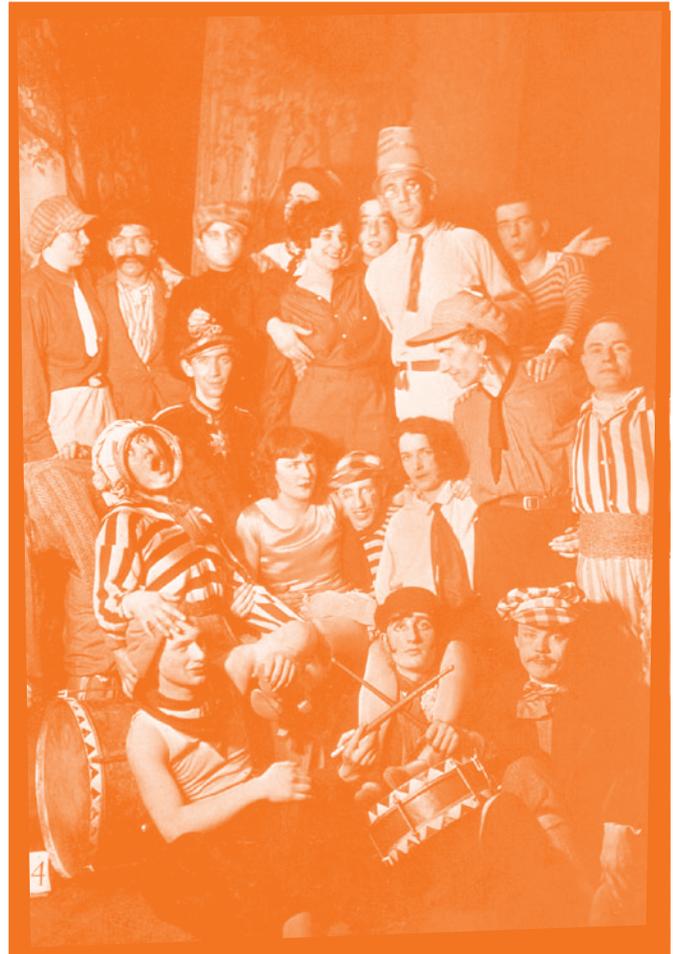


photo: Kölner Kunslerkarneval, 1931. The Cologne Artist's Carnival

THIS PHOTO OF TRAVELING CARNIVAL ARTISTS FROM 1931 INSPIRED THE CONCEPT FOR CST'S UPCOMING PRODUCTION.

World History

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*
- 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 Cape of Good Hope

1500

- 1501-4 Michelangelo's *David* sculpture
- 1503 Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa*
- 1512 Copernicus' *Commentariolus* published, theorizing that Earth and other planets revolve around sun
- 1518 License to import 4,000 African slaves to Spanish American colonies granted to Lorenz de Gominzot
- 1519 Ferdinand Magellan's trip around the world
- 1519 Conquest of Mexico by Cortez
- 1522 Luther's translation of the New Testament

1525

- 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 G.L. de Cardenas "discovers" Grand Canyon
- 1541 Hernando de Soto "discovers" the Mississippi

1550

- 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

1575

- 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

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

- 1, 2, 3 Henry VI
- Richard III
- King John

TRAGEDIES

- Titus Andronicus
- Romeo and Juliet

SONNETS

probably written in this period

- 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
- 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

- 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 Occurances 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
- 1611 The Authorized "King James Version" of the Bible published
- 1613 Globe Theatre destroyed by fire
- 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
- 1632 Ai due massimi sistemi of Galileo
- 1633 Galileo recants before the Inquisition
- 1636 Harvard College founded at Cambridge, Massachusetts
- 1642 Civil War in England begins
- 1642 Puritans close theaters throughout England until following the Restoration of the Monarchy, 18 years later, with Charles II
- 1649 Charles I beheaded
- 1649 Commonwealth declared

ca. 1596-1600

COMEDIES

- The Merchant of Venice
- Much Ado About Nothing
- The Merry Wives of Windsor
- As You Like It
- Twelfth Night

HISTORIES

- Richard II
- 1,2 Henry IV
- Henry V

TRAGEDIES

- Julius Caesar

ca. 1601-1609

COMEDIES

- Troilus and Cressida
- All's Well That Ends Well

TRAGEDIES

- Hamlet
- Othello
- King Lear
- Macbeth
- Antony and Cleopatra
- Timon of Athens
- Coriolanus
- Measure for Measure

ca. 1609-1613

ROMANCES

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

HISTORIES

- Henry VIII

The Comedy of Errors

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Solinus, *Duke of Ephesus*

Egeon, *a merchant of Syracuse and 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 brother of Dromio of Ephesus*

Dromio of Ephesus, *servant to Antipholus of Ephesus, twin brother of Dromio of Syracuse*

Luce (Nell), *Adriana's kitchen-maid*

Courtesan, *mistress to Antipholus of Ephesus*

Balthasar, *a merchant*

Angelo, *a goldsmith*

Dr. Pinch, *a schoolmaster and conjurer*

Abbess, *an abbess*

...PLUS, *assorted messengers, jailer and officers*

THE STORY

Egeon has sailed the seas for five years in search of his son. Harbored in Ephesus, where Syracusans are strictly forbidden, he is arrested on sight and sentenced for execution that very night—unless he can pay the hefty ransom.

Egeon tells his sad story to all who will listen. Long ago he and his wife, their infant twin sons and twin servants were shipwrecked and separated. Egeon, with one son named Antipholus and his servant named Dromio, were rescued and returned to Syracuse; his wife and the other two boys were never seen again. Eighteen years later, Antipholus and Dromio set out from Syracuse in search of their missing brothers. Egeon had not seen them since they left five years ago.

As luck would have it, that very same morning those same two young men arrive in Ephesus. And by another strange stroke of fate, Antipholus's twin (also named Antipholus) has been living in Ephesus for years with his servant—named Dromio... To everybody who comes upon one twin or another—including Adriana, Antipholus of Ephesus's wife—the brothers are indistinguishable, and mistaken identity, misadventure and mishap turn the once-ordered life of Ephesus topsy-turvy.

As the visitors grow ever more certain that this strange land is bewitched, the natives draw their own conclusions. All hope of sanity seems lost—until an Abbess with knowledge of life beyond the cloistered walls amazes residents of and visitors to Ephesus alike.



photo: Liz Lauren

NELL (DOUGLAS VICKERS), DROMIO OF SYRACUSE (ROSS LEHMAN) AND DROMIO OF EPHESUS (KEVIN GUDAHL) IN CST'S 2008 PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

The Comedy of Errors



photo: Liz Lauren

LUCIANA (LAURA LAMSON) AND ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE (TIMOTHY GREGORY) IN CST'S 1998 PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL.

ACT-BY-ACT SYNOPSIS

ACT I

A merchant from Syracuse named **Egeon** is arrested as soon as he sets foot in Ephesus, a town where 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 23 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 slave, named “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. And so for 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: only if he can gather that enormous sum of money will Egeon escape execution.

On that very same day, Antipholus of Syracuse and his slave 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.

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

The Comedy of Errors

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. But 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 the kitchen-maid **Nell** and Adriana inquire about what all the hubbub is below. 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. She 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, finding his master there, 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, 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 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

The Comedy of Errors

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.



photo: Liz Lauren

LUCIANA (ANGELA INGERSOLL), DR. PINCH (SEAN FORUNATO) AND ADRIANA (KYMBERLY MELLEN) IN CST'S 2008 PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

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. This comedy, written early in Shakespeare's career, was based largely on the work of Plautus, one of the most famous Roman comic playwrights. One hundred and thirty plays were written under Plautus's name, though his admirers and peers estimated only about 20 were actually the writer's work.

Plautus did not begin his writing career until he was 45 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 also 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. His plays were colloquial and lively, and performed in conjunction with other public events like chariot races or circuses. Plautus wrote neither to enlighten his audience nor to explore

The Comedy of Errors

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, and 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 marries a wealthy—and nagging—wife. Menaechmus develops a relationship with the Courtesan Erotium, to whom he gives countless gifts, 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.

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, *Amphitryon*) 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—a rotund woman ripe for comedic characterization. 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, as well. Plautus was famous for farce—loveless tales of absurd hijinks and comedic implausibility. 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 a nagging wife, Shakespeare makes sure she is also sympathetic to the audience. She quickly bails her husband out of jail, and her possessive instincts—though frustrating to Antipholus—are rooted in her love for him.



photo: Michael Brosilow

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS (BLAINE HOGAN), WAITER (JOE SCHENCK) AND ANGELO (JOSÉ ANTONIO GARCÍA) IN CST'S 2005 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL.

The Comedy of Errors

The conclusion of *Comedy* is quite different from Plautus's work. Plautus kills off the twins' parents early on, but Shakespeare's *Comedy* 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*. As he does, he reminds us of all the similarities that serve as threads between our seemingly unrelated lives—much as they do for the unsuspecting Menaechmi, Dromios and "Antipholi."

WHAT'S IN A GENRE? LOOKING AT COMEDY

Comedy is something we all know something about. Mention the word "comedy" and it brings something specific to mind. Will Ferrell or Tina Fey's movies. Friends' jokes and pranks. Sitcoms on Thursday night TV. *Saturday Night Live*. We all love to laugh—and look for opportunities to do just that. In this respect, Shakespeare's audience 400 years ago was no different from us. Comedy served them as it serves us—reminding us of the importance of laughing at ourselves and celebrating our capacity for play.

Shakespeare's humor is not limited to his comedies. Even his darkest tragedies have moments of welcome laughter, easing the dramatic tension. *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*—all of these disturbing stories have clowns and fools to provide amusement and commentary. So if we're meant to laugh even in the depths of a tragedy, what, then, makes comedy a comedy?

Shakespeare seems to give us a clue in his play's titles: *The Comedy of Errors*. *The Tragedy of Romeo and Juliet*. But Shakespeare did not publish his plays, so we don't know how he would have—or even if he would have—classified and organized them in a table of contents. When Shakespeare's friends from the Globe prepared his plays for publication seven years after his death, they categorized them into tragedies, histories, and comedies. Scholars and theater practitioners have been arguing about those First Folio labels ever since. Most modern editors divide Shakespeare's plays up into comedies, tragedies, histories and the late romances, including *The Tempest*. Then there are the so-called "problem plays," including some very dark shows like *Measure for Measure* that, despite their serious themes and ambiguous endings, are still classified as comedies.

Shakespeare's humor is not limited to his comedies. Even his darkest tragedies have moments of welcome laughter, easing the dramatic tension.

So what makes a Shakespearean comedy? When Shakespearean scholars speak about the genre of comedy, they mean not just that the play is funny, but that it follows a particular structure. Typically chaos, mistaken identities, disguises, confusion, even magical spells are followed by a return to order and a happy ending that wraps up all the loose ends—often with a marriage or two.

In *The Comedy of Errors*, these comedic conventions are fused with the highly improbable situations and physical humor of farce. Farce relies heavily on visual follies, like exaggerated gestures, big facial expressions and slamming doors, as well as an audience who knows more than the characters in the play so they can sit back and laugh at the absurdities—and often the pain. Scholar Charles Whitworth describes farce as "essentially a dramatic genre, viewerly, spectator-friendly... farce leaves little or nothing to [the imagination]." David H. Bell, who directs Chicago Shakespeare Theater's upcoming production of the play, calls farce a "manipulative form of theater, where the

The Comedy of Errors

photo: Michael Brosilow



photo: Michael Brosilow



TOP: DROMIO SYRACUSE (CHARLES ANTHONY BURKS), ANTIPHOLUS SYRACUSE (JOE HERNANDEZ-KOLSKI), ADRIANA (RANNEY) AND LUCIANA (CHRIS EDWARDS) IN CST'S 2002 PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY ANDY GOLDBERG **BOTTOM:** DROMIO OF EPHEBUS (BLAINE HOGAN), ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS (BRADEN MORAN), ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE (KRISHNA LEFAN) AND DROMIO OF SYRACUSE (WILL DICKERSON) IN CST'S 2005'S PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL.

author creates conundrum, confusion and despair for the delight of the audience.” It may seem cruel, but characters in farce are often caricatured and exaggerated to the point that the audience can take pleasure in their pratfalls because their pains and frustrations are writ so large. After all, has there ever really been a time when you wondered if Wile E. Coyote would be too badly injured after his fifth cliff fall to chase the Road Runner in the next episode? Cartoon and sitcoms, *The Three Stooges*, *Laurel and Hardy* and the Marx Brothers, are all famous examples of comedy rooted in farce.

The Comedy of Errors and *The Taming of the Shrew* are often paired as Shakespeare’s two most farcical comedies. But many scholars in recent years (along with director David H. Bell) agree that due to the complexities Shakespeare gives to his characters even in this very early comedy, *The Comedy of Errors* cannot be viewed merely as farce. The audience, Bell believes, can feel empathy toward these characters rather than merely reveling in their “errors,” as they would in response to a farce. The play deviates from true farce at the moments when Shakespeare affords us a look into the human psyche. David Bell sums it up this way:

In The Comedy of Errors, people are longing. Brothers are longing to find their brothers, fathers are longing to find their sons, women are longing to find their husbands. The show needs to add up to an overwhelming sense of yearning—not only in the character but also in us, giving the show a sense of romance, which is denied us for the majority of the play.

In contrasting farce to romantic comedy, David Bell says:

In a farce you never take the characters as realistic people. So their desires are not real, their hurts are not real—both literally and figuratively. When they’re thrown on the ground, pounced on and carried off the stage, the essence of farce is that they will bounce and not get hurt.

Comedy, like all drama, “holds a mirror up to nature” and shows our reflection from a distance, accentuating our human weaknesses. Comedy breaks down our sense of self-importance and allows us to make light of our own behaviors. In *The Comedy of Errors* we observe how a lack of self-awareness, and our preconceptions and prejudices can prevent us from seeing the truth.

Shakespeare’s comedies have a curiously paradoxical reputation. While they have remained some of the most popular plays to produce over the past four centuries, many theatergoers who imagine Shakespeare to be solemn and morose are surprised and even disappointed Shakespeare can be so funny—and even at times, as in *The Comedy of Errors*, downright ridiculous. What people sometimes forget is that the Elizabethan stage was part of England’s popular culture. Plays had to appeal broadly, delivering the same kinds of stories and stunts we still enjoy. The Elizabethans’ laughter—and ours—is definitely part of that equation.



FROM A SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE: SEVEN THEORIES OF COMEDY

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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 though 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*.

What the Critics Say...

1500s

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 the Players. 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.

—Gray's Inn Record, December 28, 1594

1700s



This Comedy is an undeniable Proof that Shakespeare was not so ignorant of the Latin Tongue as some wou'd fain make him...for 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 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

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

1800s



Matters are carried so far that one of the two brothers is first arrested for debt, then confined as a lunatic, and the other is forced to take refuge in a sanctuary to save his life. In a subject of this description it is impossible to steer clear of all sorts of low circumstances, abusive language, and blows; Shakespeare has however endeavoured to ennoble it in every possible way...In short, 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

[The Comedy of Errors] 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. We do not think his forte would ever have lain in imitating or improving on what others invented, so much as in inventing for himself, and perfecting what he invented,—not perhaps by the omission of faults, but by the addition of the highest excellencies. His own genius was strong enough to bear him up, and he soared longest and best on unborrowed plumes.

—William Hazlitt, 1817

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. A comedy would scarcely allow even the two Antipholuses; because, although there have been instances of almost indistinguishable likeness in two persons, yet these are mere individual accidents...But [Shakespeare's] farce dares add the two Dromios, and is justified in so doing by laws of its end and constitution. —Samuel Coleridge, 1836

The Comedy of Errors may, in a certain sense, be regarded as the pendant to As You Like It...Many circumstances tend to corroborate this opinion; among others, the frequency of rhyme and the doggerel verses, which are quite in the style of Shakespeare's predecessors, and which he has here retained; and also the greater carefulness of the diction and versification, which betray all the anxiety of a youthful poet to deserve the approbation of the public, by the employment of all the external means at his command.

—Hermann Ulrici, 1839

What the Critics Say...

1800S CONTINUED



In the exquisite and delightful comedies of [Shakespeare's] earliest period we can hardly discern any sign, any promise of them at all. Only one of these, the Comedy of Errors, has in it anything of dramatic composition and movement; and what it has of these, I need hardly remind the most cursory of students, is due by no means to Shakespeare. What is due to him, 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

In this light and lovely work of the youth of Shakespeare we find for the first time that strange and sweet admixture of farce with fancy, of lyric charm with comic effect, which recurs so often in his later work...The sweetness and simplicity of lyric or elegiac loveliness which fill and inform the scenes where Adriana, her sister, and the Syracusian Antipholus exchange the expression of their errors and their loves, belong to Shakespeare alone; and may help us to understand how the young poet who at the outset of his divine career had struck into this fresh untrodden path of poetic comedy should have been, as we have seen that he was, loth [sic] to learn from another and an alien teacher the hard and necessary lesson that this flowery path would never lead him towards the loftier land of tragic poetry.

—Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1880

1900S



Shakespeare's imagination could not rest satisfied with a farce, however laughable or however skillfully conducted. His vein of lyrical poetry breaks forth in the love-episode, for the sake of which he created Luciana. And he has set the entire comic business in a romantic and pathetic framework—the story of the afflicted old Aegeon and the Ephesian abbess, in whom he discovers his lost wife. 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

In so far as it is concerned with jealousy and the ethical problems which hinge upon jealousy, The Comedy of Errors has an undeniable claim to the title which it bears. 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 the fifth act Adriana is brought before the Abbess, and is proved to be a jealous scold. Shakespeare will not be satisfied till some impartial great person of Adriana's own sex has condemned her...But Adriana will not accept the reproof; she will have her husband at all costs. The whole scene discovers personal feeling. Adriana is the portrait that Shakespeare wished to give us of his wife.

—Frank Harris, 1909

It cannot be said that the verse, or the sense of character, or the invention is better than in the other early plays. It is not. The play is on a lower plane than any of his other works. It is the only Shakespearean play without a deep philosophical idea...It is also the first play that shows a fine, sustained power of dramatic construction.

—John Masefield, 1911

[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

1900s CONTINUED



In the theatre the weakness of The Comedy of Errors does not lie in the plot...The weakness lies in the thinness and occasionally the falsity of the characterization, and in the wordiness and at times the triviality and irrelevance of the dialogue.
—Alison Gaw, 1926

In Midsummer Night's Dream Shakespeare has learned to base his fun on farcical character instead of farcical situations. That, he had not yet learned in The Comedy...Instead, we have the characteristic, ingeniously artificial ornaments of puns and verbal quibbling of numerous varieties. Unless one enjoys the sheer nimbleness of mentality which these artificialities display, he will find little solace in the verbiage of this play. But if one can induce the mood of rollicking, farcical hilarity...and enter into the nimble spirit of the fun, The Comedy of Errors may prove to be his favorite farce-comedy.
—Thomas Whitfeld Baldwin, 1928

Shakespeare's first recoil from the insouciant romantic formlessness of Love's Labours Lost seems to have been a feeling that plays without backbone are hopelessly crippled. No plot, no play. And so apparently the recoil turned him to Classic comedy. Putting himself to school to Plautus for his Comedy of Errors, he submitted himself to a discipline which, however uncongenial to the spirit, was a salutary apprenticeship to the mechanics of play-building. But it was much more than that. When Shakespeare took the Roman comedians for his pattern, he was reverting to the practice on which his English predecessors, and French and Italian pioneers before them, had established the new comedy of modern Europe.
—H.B. Charlton, 1930

Many favoured incidents, which make a Roman intrigue, lose all semblance of credibility when assembled in a modern play. Loss of children by shipwreck, drastic penal laws to safeguard petty economic systems, summary courts of justice at the street-corner—these are details harder to bring to life on a London stage than on one in ancient Rome. But in taking his story from Plautus, Shakespeare frankly accepted all these limitations. The Dromios are mere stage clowns. Ephesus is a town where Lapland witches delight in playing spookish tricks on men and women. Farce expands to extravaganza. 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

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

I think the underlying reason for its success is the fact that Shakespeare was thoroughly penetrated by the comic horror, so to call it, implicit in the subject. Real horror attaches to the notion of the complete identity of two human beings...All normal persons (and especially Shakespeare) set so much store by human individuality that they shrink from the thought of its being submerged...There is something shuddery in the close resemblance of persons just when this appears to us intensely entertaining...The Comedy of Errors has a note of real weirdness just when its mirth is keenest.
—G. R. Elliott, 1939

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

1900S
CONTINUED



In The Comedy of Errors they are not men but twins. The two Antipholuses and the two Dromios exist for no other purpose than to be mutually mistaken. They may groan and seem to go mad in their perplexity, but we only laugh the louder; for it is the figure that gestures, not the man, and our expectation indeed is that the playwright will strain his ingenuity still further in the invention of new tortures, provided new ones are possible ...If Shakespeare's spirit reposed in comedy it was not in this kind of comedy. He could write it very well and be hugely funny; but the heart of his interest was elsewhere, and the poet had abdicated.

—Mark Van Doren, 1939

His rhymes, surviving from an old convention in comedy, rattle like bleached bones ...Even wit is unnecessary in a play which counts on beatings and beratings to amuse us, and indeed counts rightly. The mental fooling between Antipholus of Syracuse and his Dromio at the beginning of II, ii, is among the dullest things of its kind in Shakespeare...Yet there is no more need for such eloquence than there is for characters possessing qualities in excess of those required by the situation, or for verisimilitude in the plotted action. "What I should think of this, I cannot tell," says Antipholus of Syracuse [III.Ii.179]. What he should think of course is that his twin brother has turned up. He does not so think for the simple reason that he is in a conspiracy with Shakespeare to regale us with the spectacle of his talent for confusion.

—Mark Van Doren, 1939

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

"What I should think of this, I cannot tell," says Antipholus of Syracuse [III.Ii.179]. What he should think of course is that his twin brother has turned up.

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 speak and act what they believe to be truth while the audience, knowing the secret, chuckles in superiority. The recognition itself is held off until the latest possible time, an almost improbable time, since for either twin to see his fellow would have brought the comedy down like a house of cards. In dramatic manipulation The Comedy of Errors is not superior to Menaechmi, but it is far richer and of far greater general significance. It is worth pointing these things out because they show so well the difference between Elizabethan comedy and classical comedy.

—Hardin Craig, 1948

When Shakespeare began to study Plautus and Terence, his dramatic instinct, stimulated by his predecessors, divined that there was a profounder pattern in the argument of comedy than appears in either of them. At once—for the process is beginning in The Comedy of Errors—he started groping toward that profounder pattern, the ritual of death and revival that also underlies Aristophanes.

—Northrop Frye, 1949

What the Critics Say...

1900S
CONTINUED



Shakespeare's comedy is not Aristotelian and realistic like Menander's, nor Platonic and dialectic like Aristophanes,' nor Thomist and sacramental like Dante's but a fourth kind. It is an Elizabethan kind, and is not confined either to Shakespeare or to the drama...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

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

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

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. He does not expect us to be interested in the subtleties of character...We are not called upon for much sympathy of imagination: in fact we must not try to see through these characters' eyes, or feel what they feel. It would ruin everything to take the wife's troubles, or Dromio's many beatings, at all seriously. All we have to do is grasp the broadly absurd situation, and follow the ingenious fugue of the plot. To get the point, nothing beyond mental alertness of an easy kind is required. The foolishness presented in the play is that of the incredible and arbitrary basic situation, not the ineluctable folly of mankind.

—Francis Fergusson, 1954

The Comedy of Errors, like other comedies of that taste, is so clear that it ought to be reducible to a formula. Molière's comedies often strike us in the same way. Certainly one can find in them many standard and publicly available devices, whether of plotting, attitude, or conventional characterization. Without that heritage I do not suppose Shakespeare could, at so early an age, have written anything so easy and assured. Yet he uses it for his own purposes, 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

No one would argue that The Comedy of Errors is a very profound play, but reference to Shakespeare's ideas about love's wealth and its difference from commercial wealth, does suggest that its action is not merely that of a merry-go-round...It is a play of greater promise than the mere dexterity of its plotting suggests; its contrasts of love, commerce, and justice are simple enough but they foreshadow the more complex treatment of The Merchant of Venice.

—John Russell Brown, 1957

1900S CONTINUED



Every scene in the play (except for the first prologue, devoted to old father Egeon's misfortunes) is based on a mistake in identity. And yet, on this extremely simple situation, Shakespeare builds mounting excitement, and the appearance of variety, as more and more characters are added to the confusion without ever quite clearing up the error. We watch the fun as we might a juggling act, in which more and more balls are tossed into the air: we know that a single slip will bring the whole effect down with a crash.

—Francis Ferguson, 1958

If one remembers [his] works one can see more clearly just what Shakespeare's intention was in The Comedy of Errors. He sets it all in the streets of Ephesus, a place as public and objective as a baseball diamond or a chess board. There is no need there for psychology or individual portraiture to understand what happens...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

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.

This comedy has no Falstaff, Toby Belch, Dogberry—not even an Armado. Comic effect emerges not once from character as such. If the Dromios prove laughable, it is not in themselves but in the incompleteness of their vision of situation that they prove so...Here are no malapropisms, dialectical oddities, few quirks and twists of phrase: the very pun, hereafter ubiquitous, is scanted. With neither character nor language making notable comic contribution, then, 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...Not until The Tempest (in the comedies) did Shakespeare again hold one gap open so long for exploitation; never again did he place so great a responsibility on a single gap.

—Bertrand Evans, 1960

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

Like the other early plays, it will always be judged by two standards. One, quite properly, is the standard set later by Shakespeare himself. But the play should also be appreciated for what it is in its own right: still actable as a hilarious yet balanced comedy, more pregnant than has perhaps been supposed with Shakespearean ideas.

—Derek Traversi, 1960

Shakespeare's preoccupation with the comedy of mistaken identity, [shows him] first as a brilliant apprentice-imitator in The Comedy of Errors [and] later with an increasingly deep brooding over the truth hidden in the dramatic convention; for, if it is accepted that all our dealings with reality are affected by an inability certainly to distinguish between what is said and what is meant, between things as they are and as they appear to be, between Truth and Opinion, then the comic errors develop a peculiar relevance to life itself.

—Frank Kermode, 1961

What the Critics Say...

1900S
CONTINUED



The denial of identity has been most complete for Antipholus of Syracuse, but he is in a foreign country, in a city renowned for witchcraft and sorcery, and he clings to his reason by reminding himself of this fact. He can always get away and this he is always on the point of doing. For Antipholus of Ephesus the case is very different. He is in a town where he has been a person of importance for twenty years. Quite suddenly to have his orders disregarded by his servant, to be refused admission to his own house and to be denied by his own wife in broad daylight in the presence of others, to be arrested for debt and to be treated as a madman, all this makes a galling, infuriating experience for the Ephesian twin. He is a more violent character than his brother and he might quite easily have killed his wife.

—Gwyn Williams, 1964

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? In order that these questions might be tackled without in this case leading to madness and violent death, as they do in King Lear, Shakespeare added the twin servants.

—Gwyn Williams, 1964

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. . . The extent to which he indulged that instinct in The Comedy of Errors has not been fully recognized. . . the play has not been rated a major success only because it is Shakespeare's.

—E. M. W. Tillyard, 1965

It is comedy which typifies, where it is tragedy which individualizes; where tragedy observes the nice distinctions between man and man, comedy stresses those broad resemblances which make it difficult to tell people apart.

—Harry Levin, 1966

In style, The Comedy of Errors is a microcosm of early Shakespeare: the frequent rhymes, the endstopped lines, the quibbles, the rhetorical dialectic of question and answer in a single speech, the oxymoron and stichomythia, the echoes of Kyd and Marlowe, all are there. It is also a compendium of devices and situations Shakespeare used in other plays, early and late. The twins, the circumstances of the shipwreck, the kindly merchant, the comic exorcist, and the visitor who is convinced that the town is bewitched, appear in Twelfth Night, the turbulent wife lessoned in The Taming of the Shrew, the irrevocable law not enforced in A Midsummer Night's Dream.

—Marion Bodwell Smith, 1966

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

No one attaches a transcendent meaning to the 'errors' of comedy, much less of farce. Mistaken identities, misunderstandings about what some character said or meant, mistakes about bedroom doors—these help to complicate the plot and are all part of the fun.

—Geoffrey Brereton, 1968

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CONTINUED



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

Unlike Shakespeare's more mature comedies, its funniness is relatively uncomplicated by social criticism, by philosophy, or by characterization... There are no lingering notes of greater problems unsolved. The value of life itself is not questioned... all that matters is rearranging human puppets so that they can again go about their proper business. There are left over no Shylocks, no Malvolios. Indeed, there is left over nothing really to think about—except, if one wishes, the tremendously puzzling question of what so grips and amuses an audience during a play which has so little thought in it.
—Paul A. Jorgensen, 1969

Almost always, the theatre audience laughs when Aemilia identifies Egeon, but the laughter is not the laughter of farce.

[In The Comedy of Errors, the gold chain begins] as a simple object—a gift purchased by Antipholus of Ephesus for his wife; but as the action develops, the chain becomes considerably more important than as simply property. As Plautus uses the mantle, it is just a gimmick that allows a few jokes about perverse and bandy topics. Shakespeare's chain, on the other hand, naturally symbolizes the cohesion of society as it asserts its orderly supremacy over prostitutes, wayward husbands, shrewish wives, and lost brothers... [This] simple object becomes a complex symbol of the recommended norm in the play, the bridling of headstrong freedom and wandering individuality.
—Richard Henze, 1971

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

After the tension and accumulated mistakings of nearly five acts, [the] discovery generates an enormous sense of relief... The one surprise is Aemilia. When the Abbess recognizes Egeon as her longlost husband and the two Antipholuses as her sons, Shakespeare deals a shrewd blow at the seeming omniscience of the spectators... As with Egeon's initial narrative of shipwreck and loss, there is something consciously absurd about this reunion which happens not only beyond hope but beyond any expectation explicitly generated by the play. Almost always, the theatre audience laughs when Aemilia identifies Egeon, but the laughter is not the laughter of farce.
—Anne Barton, 1974

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

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

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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

Patience is a virtue whose absence among several main figures in the play promotes, perpetuates, and augments the 'errors' bedeviling Ephesus...the 'errors' derive from the confrontation of impatient, impetuous human beings with unusual or distasteful circumstances, individuals whose impatience before complexities and whose restless intolerance of disappointment and frustration generate errors that deepen their confusion and beget additional errors.

—James L. Sanderson, 1975

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

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

As they watch the play being concluded, the members of Shakespeare's audience may become aware that they must shortly surrender their perspective of godlike superiority and enter again a world where they themselves are characters. In this world, too, they may, like the characters of the play, be assailed by apparently discontinuous experience and perhaps observed by an audience which, from its godlike perspective, sees a comedy of errors in their fruitless efforts to understand a seeming discontinuity, whose meaning cannot be discovered without revelation.

—J. Dennis Huston, 1981

In the sixteenth century there were two traditions of comedy. One was the satirical revelation of human errors, played out so that the audience laughed to see their own follies so skillfully exposed. The other was to use as a setting some upset, sadness or problem that is subsequently resolved happily. [Ben] Jonson wrote in the first, more hard-hitting tradition, where we laugh at the characters; Shakespeare in the second where we laugh with them. 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

To see The Comedy of Errors as the first of the final romances is no great paradox of vision...Manifestly, the play works towards the experience of reconciliation and discovered identity, anticipating the drift of the romances.

—Ralph Berry, 1985

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 most Jungian. It is rooted in the collective subconscious, and archetypes of enduring power are presented.

—Ralph Berry, 1985

1900S CONTINUED



Shakespeare outdoes Plautus in brilliant, hilarious complication. He makes the arbitrary reign of universal misapprehension the occasion for a dazzling display of his dramatic control of his characters' separate perspectives, keeping track for our benefit of just what each participant has experienced and the conclusions he or she draws from it.

—C.L. Barber and Richard P. Wheeler, 1986

In the comedies, [Shakespeare] came as close to exposition of a system of practical values as he could, without creating characters to serve as mouthpieces for his own ideas. . . . At the core of a coherent social structure as he viewed it lays 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

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

*Mistaken identity is a staple ingredient in comedy, especially in farce. It is the basis, indeed the raison d'être for Plautus' *The Menaechmi* and *Amphitruo*, and admittedly likewise for Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors*. However, by contaminating *The Menaechmi* with the double-twin plot of *Amphitruo* Shakespeare complicates the mistaken identity and therefore darkens the clash between appearance and reality.*

—Danny Scheie, 1988

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 has been well served by its recent editors and critics who have drawn attention to its assured construction and psychological depth. Both aspects are reflected in the prominence Shakespeare gives to Aegeon's narrative. It 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

[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

What the Critics Say...

1900S CONTINUED



The puzzling, fragmented world they sense—using the best of their logic only to be defeated by illogical occurrences and responses—eliminates the force of reason, while the pressure of the unexpected robs them of any integrated consciousness.

—Arthur F. Kinney, 1996

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

Shakespeare, who will perfect the art of ellipsis, begins here by giving the two Antipholuses no affective reactions whatsoever to their reunion. The Syracusan Antipholus commands his Dromio: 'Embrace thy brother there; rejoice with him,' but then exits with his own brother, sans embraces or joy. . . 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

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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. Although smart, they are not cunning or at times maligning like Arlecchino or Pulcinella; nor do they trump up the sort of schemes (to win money or a wife or a fight) that generally fall to pieces or yield unwanted results. They are loyal and long-suffering companions, never insolent, not even mildly disobedient. They therefore have all the more reason for resenting the ingratitude they both receive from their masters' sticks when they have each carried out the precise errands the masters demanded. In addition, they emit most of the play's wit and word play, rather than being responsible, as in commedia scenarios, for inordinate settos of bumping and bruising. 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

Even in adapting the Menaechmi—where for once chaos is not created by a deceptive slave—Shakespeare makes the major characters of The Comedy of Errors susceptible to the confusions in a new way because of their insecurities.

—John Creaser, 2002

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

As we switch from the death sentence to the almost surreal quality of mistaken identities of both master and servant, it may seem easy to forget the opening scene and its foreboding. Quite possibly, the audience puts any concern about Egeon aside as he disappears from the action. . . But the play itself really won't let the audience forget the brief amount of time allotted to Egeon [before his execution at the end of the day].

—Kay K. Cook, 2003

What the Critics Say...

2000S CONTINUED



The play's central topic is the story itself. Here the motif of magic helps to draw not only characters but also spectators into the problem of constructing a narrative adequate to their experience... If Shakespeare... induces wonder and stitches into the play's action puzzles and surprises that involve the audience in a process of reinterpreting and reevaluating—one roughly parallel to that of the characters—then within this play of character misprisions there may also reside a potential comedy of audience errors.

—Kent Cartwright, 2004

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

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

—Wolfgang Riehle, 2004

Whereas the Syracusan Antipholus 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

*This is a play that celebrates its unities. Every syllable of *The Comedy of Errors* is spoken in one place, Ephesus, 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

Antipholus thinks of himself as a hero for whom chance encounters are really allegorical confrontations with good and evil; the audience knows that Antipholus is simply mistaken for his twin.

—Martine Van Elk, 2009

TO BE CONTINUED...

PLAYING AROUND WITH COMEDY: A LOOK BACK AT THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

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

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 (1777 words), and the briefest in duration of plot, with all of the action occurring in just one day. It also is 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 superior 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 furious with Shakespeare's story, bringing it to life, with varying degrees of success, through musicals, operas, circuses, puppetry, film noir, rock 'n' roll, and even hip-hop and rap. 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, *The 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—at least 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

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to the Turkish city of Ephesus, known at the time for the kind of inexplicable trickery and sorcery that appears to transpire in the play.

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 was perfect for such a neoclassical stage (never again used to such an extent by Shakespeare) 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 18 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 comedy of manners, there was probably little room for this “low” *Comedy*, with its absurd storyline, ribald humor, and physical buffoonery.

Those elements proved popular in the eighteenth century, however, 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 played for more than 70 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 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



photo: Liz Lauren

SOLDIER (SALVATORE VINCENZO INGURGIO), ANTIPHOLUS EPHESUS (TIM DECKER), ADRIANA (LISA DODSON) AND SOLDIER (DARREN BOCHAT) IN CST’S 1998 PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL

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 mad costumes from mismatched time periods, and singing and dancing to tunes by a mixture of musicians. 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. One 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 might 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

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photo: Michael Brosilow

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: THE DJ (KEVIN SHAND), AND THE CAST (CHARLES ANTHONY BURKS, CHRIS EDWARDS, JOE HERNANDEZ-KOLSKI AND RANNEY) OF CST'S 2002 PRODUCTION OF *THE BOMB-ITTY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY ANDY GOLDBERG

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, 16-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*.

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, this production was directed by Trevor Nunn—the acclaimed classical director who went on to helm the Broadway musical hits *Cats* and *Les Misérables*. 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*.

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 Bumbelini) 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 just past 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 gather on the fictional English movie set of Shepperton Studios in the midst of 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 also delving into the deep human truths present in the classic text and powerfully evoked by West’s frame and Gaines’s directorial vision.

The Comedy of Errors is a play that director David H. Bell has returned to numerous times, and is one of his favorites. This year’s production is actually a re-staging of his *Comedy* last seen on the CST stage in 2005. Set in Depression-era United States, the production features a “play-within-a-play” structure, in which a troupe of itinerant Shakespearean players travel 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 the props and costumes for their intended Hamlet become stranded in Nebraska. For more insight into the upcoming production of *Comedy*, take a look at “A Conversation with Director David H. Bell.”



A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR DAVID H. BELL

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

A Play Comes to Life

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 H. Bell is one of the leading directors in America today. With this production, he returns to Chicago Shakespeare, where he has directed the 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 ten Jeff Awards and 33 nominations. Internationally, he has staged productions in London, Paris, Berlin, Zurich, Vienna and the Barcelona Olympics. David sat down with the Education Staff to discuss his production of *The Comedy of Errors*...

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

DHB: I’ve directed six 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 really 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. We’ll set our production 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*. And so in a 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



photo: Michael Brosilow

LUCIANA (MICHELLE HENSLEY), ADRIANA (MCKINLEY CARTER) AND DROMIO EPHEBUS (BLAINE HOGAN) IN CST’S 2005 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL.

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 as *Hamlet*, 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 create that world for your production, what is essential to it?

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, 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. Here's what I'm imagining: before we hear Shakespeare's opening lines, we'll see the traveling troupe members enter. The two characters who play the "Antipholi" will be seated opposite one another, both thinking they're Errol Flynn and clearly not liking each other. We in the audience watch as that feud is played out "off stage." By contrast, the characters who play the Dromios might as well be brothers from the get-go, clowning around, etc. When they start the show, it feels like a real parting between them: "I don't get to see you for a whole 75 minutes? I don't know if I can stand it!" 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.

CST: How will the community that you’re creating 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 and are therefore surrounded by all the objects of comedy—like a baker’s

dessert bag that spurts out whipped cream, or a grocer’s oranges that can be propelled across stage as weapons.

CST: You’ve referred in our production meetings to the term, “New World Clowning.” What do you mean, and what role will it play in this production?

DHB: Cirque du Soleil 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.



photo: Michael Brosilow

ANTIPHOLUS EPHEBUS (BRADEN MORAN), WAITER (JOE SCHENCK) AND DROMIO SYRACUSE (WILL DICKERSON) IN CST’S 2005 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL

CST: Historically, hasn't this play's comedy been played broadly, resembling Old World Clowning more than New World?

DHB: I've done a full *commedia* production before, essentially Old World Clowning, and it wasn't satisfying to me because I didn't care for anyone. There were physical bits but it was alienating, distancing. You can't find the underpinnings of Shakespeare's play that way, whereas New World Clowning really invites the human being in. Imagine that I'm playing Egeon (who is also the actor/manager of this troupe) and I'm missing my actors and my set, and the show's starting. I grab the coat rack with a hat and overcoat on it, put my arm through one sleeve and, turning around, say the lines of Egeon. He wraps Egeon in care and concern, then turns and puts the hat on and suddenly it's the Duke speaking. All of a sudden I care more about the actor in this predicament in a way that parallels what I want to care about Egeon, and the weight of that character has meaning to me.

Imagine as Egeus is telling his story, you've got the Antipholuses here and he can actually point to them putting on their makeup. The whole first scene takes place while they're making up. And then he gets to the line about "this lesser woman had two sons," and in run the Dromios and they jump over the table and start putting on their makeup. So Egeon as actor/manager is guiding the audience through the Prologue. And there is something *commedia*, something so bald about it. In this theatrical world that we're creating, we're being equally bald, we're not trying to couch it in the realistic.

CST: And, as you mentioned right at the beginning, you've taken the "givens" of a smaller cast and a touring show and shaped your story, Shakespeare's story, around them.

DHB: Yes, and I love that. When I realized, "Oh, I've only got thirteen people to tell the story and that means I don't have a duke," I went, "Great! How can we tell the story without a duke?" Answering that question is like realizing that you don't need a balcony for *Romeo and Juliet's* balcony scene. It is a scene about distance that is overcome, and that distance can be the distance between you and me. There doesn't need to be a balcony, it is



photo: Michael Brosilow

ANTIPHOLUS SYRACUSE (KRISHNA LEFAU) AND ADRIANA (MCKINLEY CARTER) IN CST'S 2005 PRODUCTION OF *SHORT SHAKESPEARE! THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY DAVID H. BELL.

simply distance. So the metaphor, sometimes, can be more complete with less.

CST: And to still be rooted in human behavior, not treated simply as a theatrical device?

DHB: You're looking for a resonance, a metaphor. In our production, that metaphor plays out in the troupe's offstage life because you can see offstage in this production. And maybe the Dromio is not paying attention and misses his cue, and leaves Antipholus on stage hanging out there. Maybe that then defines the relationship and why he's hitting Dromio more convincingly than he might otherwise. That has nothing to do with the play that Shakespeare wrote but, as a metaphor, delivers the show that Shakespeare wrote in a way—that we understand better.

CST: In a world where violence never seems particularly dangerous.

DHB: Absolutely. 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.

CST: Why?

DHB: 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.

CST: How do you avoid making it about the same "beating" over and over again?

DHB: 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: In getting ready to direct *The Taming of the Shrew* for Chicago Shakespeare, I discovered that some now consider *Shrew* to be the earlier comedy and that *The Comedy of Errors* was done rather late in his first period, and I totally get that. This is a much better-written comedy in terms of comic plot than is *Shrew*, for example, but it doesn't have

the kind of complex richness of *As You Like It* or *Twelfth Night*, and none of the melancholy of his late plays, such as *The Winter's Tale* or *Cymbeline*.

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 of 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.

A Play Comes to Life

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, and it should affect a student audience at a number of levels. 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. Isn't it Dromio who says, "Am I myself?" And that's the heart of this

adolescent comedy, both because it deals with issues of adolescence but also because it is written in Shakespeare's theatrical adolescence, if you will.

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: Is there a particular visual inspiration for the show?

DHB: Yes, 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. One of his most famous murals appears in the State of Illinois Center in downtown Chicago.

CST: And to close our conversation, is there a line that for you is key, upon which Shakespeare builds his entire play?

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



photo: Liz Lauren

DROMIO SYRACUSE (ROSS LEHMAN), ANTIPHOLUS SYRACUSE (TIMOTHY EDWARD KANE) AND COURTESAN (NANCY VOIGTS) IN CST'S 2008 PRODUCTION OF *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS*, DIRECTED BY BARBARA GAINES

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.

SCENIC DESIGNER TOM BURGH SETS THE STAGE

CST: What was the inspiration for your set design, and how did you adjust it to fit Director David Bell's concept?

TB: David was very interested in setting this production in the American Midwest of the late 1920s, early 1930s. Given that time frame, I initially researched old circus and carnival pictures, particularly from the photographer August Sander, whose rugged photos of traveling circus troupes really capture the essence of the world David wanted to create. I also started looking at work by other artists of the period, like painters Grant Wood and Edward Hopper.

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 your set to accomplish in this play in particular?

TB: 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.



CITY ACTIVITIES WITH SUBWAY BY THOMAS HART BENTON

CST: What would you like people to notice about the way the set works for this piece?

TB: I would hope that an audience would come away thinking how well the entire thing worked together. For a show such as this, I'd hate for the set to call attention to itself, except as a springboard for the physical and emotional activity of the play.

CST: What made you decide to become a scenic designer?

TB: Initially I went to college to become a high school teacher. But then I took an Intro to Theatre Tech class, in which I had to design a set and build a rough model as a final project. I was hooked—I spent so much time on it that I almost failed my other classes! Scenic design is like a life-sized jigsaw puzzle, but better: I get to create the pieces in addition to figuring out how they fit together.

CST: What do you like most about your work as a set designer?

TB: I like that it's a "combination" career: I do research and I have to draft plans and build models, which appeals to my meticulous side, while I still get to create something artistic, which appeals to the bohemian in me. I also get to build and paint from time to time, so I have the chance to get my hands dirty. Plus, every day brings something new. Every show I work on brings me to a new world that I've never experienced before and that I get to create. Just look at the recent projects that have come my way: I've designed a tribal council ring in Africa including oversized masks, a period Victorian drawing room, a mythical Scandinavian countryside, a clearing in a bayou in turn-of-the-eighteenth century Mississippi, a Cuban dissident's decaying house in the early 1990's, a 1940's radio station, a comic-book urban jungle, a sci-fi spaceship, an Eskimo village, and, in *The Comedy of Errors*, a slapdash stage in post-depression America where a troupe of drifting actors produce one of Shakespeare's most chaotic plays. What other career could allow for such creative and intellectual travel?



COSTUME DESIGNER ANA KUSMANIC'S INITIAL RENDERING OF THE TWO SISTERS ADRIANA AND LUCIANA

A THREAD FROM COSTUME DESIGNER ANA KUZMANIC

CST: What was the inspiration for your costume designs, and how did you adjust it to fit the director's concept?

AK: My inspiration for *The Comedy of Errors* came from the aesthetics of classic comic and surrealist cinematography, especially Federico Fellini's films *La Strada* and *Clowns*, and Charlie Chaplin's movies. After researching these styles, I tried to develop a unique look for our production with costumes that not only suggest the remote period of this production, but also—through their assembled and collaged appearance—suggest an imaginary world.

CST: What would you like people to notice about the way your costumes work for this piece?

AK: The director's concept is very movement-oriented, so I designed the costumes to quickly morph and develop simply through the addition or removal of accessories and other details. This adaptability of the costumes also supports the actors' character progression throughout the

play. Some actors play multiple characters—for instance, the actor playing Egeon also plays the Duke, who would be embodied by an animated coat rather than by a fully dressed actor. I also had to keep in mind the costume development through the course of the play and design not only the final look, but also the developing stages.

CST: What made you decide to become a costume designer?

Ever since early age, I was interested in drawing the human form and researching different body silhouettes. What made me become a costume designer was my fascination with how costume silhouettes developed through history—and how they emphasized or reduced human shapes according to whatever was the current ideal of beauty.

ART AND AMERICA'S GREAT DEPRESSION

The Great Depression was a worldwide economic recession affecting 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, since historically recessions had lasted less than a year. But as time wore on, 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 these 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 and decided to put off direct aid to financial institutions and citizens. But

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, to ensure that such a harrowing economic downturn could be avoided by future generations.

The New Deal addressed problems within every facet of labor. New acts were passed encouraging labor unions' efforts 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. These acts included the creation of many public projects, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, which provided jobs in conservation projects—planting trees and building government structures like army barracks, which in many cases still stand today. Another project, the Public Works Administration, provided jobs for the construction of bridges, dams, and schools. Some 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 along with 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 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. With the government's help through federally funded programs like the Federal Theatre Project, the country was encouraged to partake in art as a relief seen as benefiting the whole of society.

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 and other government buildings throughout the U.S. Its 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 easel 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 22 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 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 guerilla-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, and 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. The programs also paved the way for an exploration and reinvigoration of the arts in America. Two decades after World War II, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was created to encourage and sustain an environment of creative expression and freedom. Since its inception, the NEA has awarded 130,000 grants to arts organizations and individual artists. The Great Depression ended more than half a century ago, but the legacies it left and the lessons it taught us remain with us today.



THEATER 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. And, perhaps most important, it helps students focus, as well as build community (“ensemble”).

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 tools.

PHYSICAL WARM-UPS

Getting started

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

Begin by asking your students to take a comfortable stance with their feet shoulder-width apart, toes pointing straight ahead, knees relaxed. Ask them to inhale deeply through their noses, filling their lungs deep into their abdomen, and exhale through their mouths. Repeat this a few times and ask them to notice how their lungs fill like a six-sided box, creating movement in all six directions.

Warm-up from the top of the body down *(This should take 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. Ask the students to shake things around, making sure their bodies are 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. Ask the students to bring their feet together, bend their knees, and keeping their knees together ask the students to rotate their knees 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 (*Approx. 7 min.*)

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

- Ask students to gently massage and pat the muscles of their faces. This will help wake up the facial muscles.
- Ask students to stick their tongues out as far as possible—repeat this with the tongue pointing up, down, and to each side. (This process will probably 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.
- Ask students to put their 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.

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, buggy, 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 can be a very physically demanding style. The physical and vocal warm-up is the actor’s basis for each performance.

Stage pictures

- ◆ show how varied interpretation is: there is no wrong answer
- ◆ encourage the students to interpret concepts with their whole bodies
- ◆ begin 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. Ask your actor-students to begin walking around the room. Ask them to fill up the entire space, exploring pacing, what it would feel like

to be a different weight, a different height, and ask them to move the center of their body into different places. Encourage them to see if they feel any emotional differences within these changes. Giving them about three minutes to explore these changes, see if you notice any particularly interesting discoveries. 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, ask your actor-students to find a “neutral” walk. Explain that they are going to create a stage picture as an entire group. You will give them a word, and then count down from seven. After those seven beats, you will say freeze, and they must create a photograph of the word you have given them, with their entire body, collectively. Comment on the emotions you feel from their stage picture. After a couple of words, split the group in half—half will be in the space and half will be audience. Repeat the process, encouraging the audience’s reactions after each tableau. This might be a good time to discuss balance, stage direction, and the use of levels as effective variation for the audience’s visual interpretation. (*This activity should take about 10 minutes.*)

Shakespeare’s characters are often very physically broad: crippled characters, old people, clowns, star-crossed lovers, and more. These characters call for the actors to figure out how they move. If the character is greedy, should his center be in a big fat belly? The actor must be prepared to experiment with the character’s body.

Mirroring

- ◆ 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

Either ask your actor-students to partner up, or count them off in pairs. Ask them to sit, comfortably facing their partner, in fairly close proximity. Explain to them that they are mirrors of each other. One partner will begin as the leader, and the other partner will move as their reflection. Explain to the actor-students that they must begin by using smaller, slower movements, and work up to the maximum range of movement that their partner can follow. Encourage the partners to 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, ask the actor-students to stand and increase their range of movement. Switch leaders and repeat. After the second leader has had a turn, tell them that they should keep going, but there is no leader. See what happens, and then discuss. (*This activity should last about 10 minutes.*)

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.

COMMUNITY BUILDERS

Each of these exercises is meant to open and expand your students’ imaginations, increase their sense of “ensemble” or teamwork, and bring them “into the moment.” These are some of the most fundamental and crucial elements of an actor’s training. Their imaginations will allow them to believe the situation of the play, their sense of ensemble will bring them together with their scene partners to create the relationships necessary to the movement of the play, and their willingness to be in the moment will allow them to live in the play in such a way as to make it believable to their audience. In each

of these exercises the use of students as audience, and constructive reflection from that audience, will be helpful to the ensemble of your classroom. Remember, there is no wrong answer, only different interpretations—encourage them!

Zing! Ball (*This exercise requires a soft ball 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

Ask the students to stand in a circle, facing in. Explain that the ball carries energy with it. 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 actor-student will throw the ball to next. As the ball is thrown, to keep the intensity of the energy, the actor-student must make eye contact with the person he is throwing the ball to, and at the moment of release, the throwing actor-student should say “Zing!” Note: Encourage the actor-students to experiment with the way they say “Zing!” It could be loud or soft, in a character voice, or in whatever way they wish, as long as it is impulsive and with energy. (*This activity lasts about five minutes.*)

Shakespeare has love scenes, sword fights, betrayals, and all sorts of relationships in his plays. An ensemble must have the trust in each other to make a performance believable, without any of the actors getting hurt. They must be able to experiment, follow their impulses, and create character without the fear of failure. Shakespeare wrote many clues about his characters in his text, but the actor must be given license to find his character, and his relationship with the rest of the characters in the script.

Zing! Ball without a Ball (*This activity takes 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 an actor-student across the circle, and as it floats down, ask the actor-student to catch it with the same weight and speed as you threw it. Then ask that actor-student to recreate the ball into a different weight and size, making it clear to the rest of the circle how they’ve changed it. 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.

To the teacher, please note: While act and scene numbers generally remain consistent across varying editions of Shakespeare, line numbering differs. The line numbers indicated here are based on the Cambridge School Shakespeare edition—an edition we highly recommend.

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 that's 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1b, 4ab)**
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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1b, 2ab, 5a)**
3. *(To the teacher: Choose evocative or important lines from throughout the play, create narration to string them together and tell the basic story)*
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 with quickly, with suspense, and with 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Cc, 2Ba, 3A)**

—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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2ab)**

5. Before you read the play, it’s helpful to know the story, especially in a play like *The Comedy of Errors* where you have two sets of twins who have the same name! Volunteers from the class are each given a character nametag with a line of text written on the back. These lines should be significant or evocative lines from the play. The teacher then reads a short synopsis and taps each character when it is time to say his/her line. Feel free to improvise with actions or gestures when you say your line. The more creative and energetic, the better! Students can also try their hand at choosing lines and creating the story—or determine motions or props for each character to use in addition to the lines. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Cd, 3A, 4Ab)**

—Adapted from Kevin Rich, CST teacher workshop activity

6. *(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.)* 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 different words, saying them in as many different ways, tones, inflections, volumes that 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.

Sit down in the circle to 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—and 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 begin to 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1ab, 2ab, 4ab)**

7. Get ready to tune your ear to the linguistic acrobatics throughout *The Comedy of Errors*! Stand in a circle with a soft ball. The person starting off will think of a word and as he says it, make clear eye contact with someone in the circle, tossing the ball to her at the same time. Once you catch the ball, say a word that rhymes with the last one and pass the ball to someone else, making direct eye contact as you toss it. Keep passing the ball around the circle until you run out of rhymes and then start with a new word. Soon your rhyming wit will be as quick as the characters in *The Comedy of Errors*. It’s no accident that a group of hip-hop loving undergrads chose *Comedy* to create an entire Shakespeare play in rap, called *The Bomb-itty of Errors* (which ended up playing all over the U.S. and Europe, including a summer-long run at Chicago Shakespeare Theater). **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3c, 4ab)**

8. Shakespeare often wrote in “iambic pentameter”—10 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 in perfect iambic pentameter. Now, as a class, get up and 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1b, 4ab)**

9. You know how sometimes it just makes you feel better when you've said a word or two to someone in anger? Words developed 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 below that characters from *Comedy* sling at one another. If the meaning of a word 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! **(English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab)**

<i>I shall break that merry sconce of yours.</i>	1.2.79-80
<i>Dost thou jeer and flout me in the teeth?</i>	2.2.22
<i>When the sun shines let foolish gnats make sport.</i>	2.2.30
<i>There's many a man hath more hair than wit.</i>	2.2.81-82
<i>Thou drone, thou snail, thou slug, thou sot.</i>	2.2.194
<i>If thou art chang'd to aught, 'tis to an ass.</i>	2.2.199
<i>I think thou art an ass.</i>	3.1.15
<i>Mome, malthorse, capon, coxcomb, idiot, patch!</i>	3.1.32
<i>She's the kitchen wench, and all grease.</i>	3.2.93-96
<i>I warrant her rags and the tallow in them will burn a Poland winter.</i>	3.2.96-97
<i>[She is] smart like my shoe, but her face nothing like so clean kept.</i>	3.2.100-1
<i>She sweats, a man may go over-shoes in the grime of it.</i>	3.2.101-2
<i>She is spherical, like a globe; I could find out countries in her.</i>	3.2.111-13
<i>As from a bear a man would run for life, So fly I from that would be my wife.</i>	3.2.153-54
<i>He is deformed, crooked, old and sere, Ill-fac'd, worse bodied, shapeless everywhere; Vicious, ungentle, foolish, blunt, unkind.</i>	4.2.19-22
<i>Thou art sensible in nothing but blows, and so is an ass.</i>	4.4.25-26
<i>The fiend is strong in him.</i>	4.4.105
<i>[What a] mountain of mad flesh!</i>	4.4.152

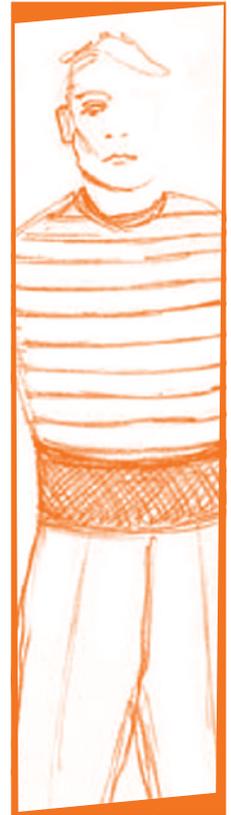
10. Still playing with dolls? Yes, when it helps, so have fun with it! Using Beanie Babies, action figures, Legos, etc. to represent the characters from the *Dramatis Personae*, as one person reads through the play's synopsis out loud, the others use the figures to enact the story. Repeat this activity 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1ab, 4a)**

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

11. 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 at a time when the English language was still so young that it was being constantly invented 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4a)**

—Adapted from CST teacher workshop activity



12. 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 the footnotes (or a lexicon if you have one in the classroom), 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 the word before. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2a, 4b)**

13. *(Find about five images of different moments from various productions/movies of The Comedy of Errors and give each group a set of the five pictures.)*

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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ba, 1Cb, 1Ce, 2Ba)**

—Adapted from Becca Manery, CST teacher workshop activity

14. 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*. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc)**

—Adapted from CST teacher workshop activity

ON YOUR OWN

15. Shakespeare was a descriptive writer—which any of us can be, too, when we know and observe our subject very closely. Choose a place to sit and write for 10 minutes on your own. Pick a location that is active, like a school hallway, the cafeteria, or the gym. 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 2a, 4ab)**
16. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1b)**
- ◆ 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 had the experience of people taking you for somebody else—not literally confusing you with another person, but rather thinking that you were somebody that you don't really see yourself as being? In other words, has your own perception of the kind of person you are been quite different from the perceptions of people looking from the outside in? What did you see, and what did they see? 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.

—Adapted from CST teacher workshop activity

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.

1. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4ab)**
2. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2a, 4ab)**
3. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 4ab)**
4. Imagine if Twitter 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc)**



ACT 1 AS A CLASS

1. 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 too 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? As you read through the play, place a big, bright yellow "street crossing" sign every time you see a stage direction indicating who's in, who's out. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc, 2A)**

2. 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... **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Bb, 1Bd, 1Cb, 1Cd, 3A)**
- ◆ 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 director David H. Bell will be doing in 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 “camera’s” subjects!

—Adapted from CST teacher workshop activity

AS A CLASS

3. 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, with sometimes only a 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? And one word to the wise: since Shakespeare isn’t around to check out our hypotheses with him, we can’t know his rationale for sure—but do make sure that your hypotheses make sense in terms of the text, and always respect him as the author... **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 2Ab, 4Ab)**

4. *(Select several students to lie on large sheets of paper to trace their profile.)* 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc)**

5. Antipholus of Syracuse, like all good travelers, 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 of what he expects to find in Ephesus. What differences and similarities can you find between Antipholus's description and your drawing? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2a**)

6. 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 and sounds that can occur. The scene should be produced with only sound effects, no lines or words. When your group presents your soundtrack, the class should have their eyes closed and you can decide how to seat everyone so they can best experience your soundtrack. (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ce, 1Cb, 2Aa, 4Aa, 4Ad**)

—Adapted from Christine Adaire, CST teacher workshop activity

7. This is a good refresher to do after you've finished reading an act—or finally, 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 he has 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! (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2b, 4b**)

8. 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.*) (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 2A**)

ON YOUR OWN

9. In order to understand their characters, actors use a number of different 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*. 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 he or she 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 in the play that my character doesn't understand? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab)**

10. 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 context as you come across each new important character. What predictions can you make from these first impressions? Then 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 5b)**

11. 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 start to be introduced to the different characters in *Comedy*, select one to keep an actor's journal about. Record the following clues:

- ◆ What the character says about himself (or herself)
- ◆ What other characters say about him/her
- ◆ What your character does in the play

If you own your text, you can use different color highlighters to mark the three character-indicators. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab)**

12. 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 that will happen? What do you most fear? Most want? Use text references and lines to supplement your journaling and personal thoughts. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab, 3abc)**

13. Before you move on to Act 2, for homework 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 (which, incidentally, 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc, 2Ab, 4Ab)**

ACT 2

AS A CLASS

14. Shakespeare uses words in his plays that we don't still. 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 help 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1ab, 4ab)**
15. In 2001, a group of college undergrads at NYU 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 U.S. 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 blonde bimbo, who had trouble remembering her name. Here's *Bomb-itty's* version of Luciana at the opening of Act 2:

*No wait, sister, I have 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
The 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 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 "her" photo. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 4Ab)**

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

16. "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 humanizes it, or personifies it. Make sure you understand the meaning of each word first since a couple of them have very different meanings—check the glossary in your book or a Shakespeare lexicon if your classroom has one. Then with your small group, create a tableau that brings your understanding of Luciana's into a three-dimensional sculpture. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A, 2Ab)**
17. In pairs, look at Dromio of Ephesus's lines in Act 2 scene 1, lines 58-65. 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 4Ab)**

18. In groups of eight, take a look at Act 2 scene 1, lines 138-71, beginning with Antipholus of Syracuse's line "Plead you to me, fair dame?" Read through the passage aloud a couple of times as a group. Then with two people assigned per character, one person will stand in front of the other and read the lines, while the other stands behind the reader and serves as the character's *alter ego*, the "other self" who speaks his or her private feelings following each segment of the 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 2Ab, 4Ab)**

19. Look back through Acts 1 and 2 and create a typical gesture for each of the characters you've already met. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1C, 2Ab)**

ON YOUR OWN

20. If Luciana and Adriana are any indication, 400 years ago when Shakespeare wrote *Comedy*, women were already engaged in debating appropriate gender roles! In fact, the only thing that's at all unusual is that they're doing it in rhyming couplets! So, try your hand at it. Taking up from Adriana's line, "Why should their liberty than ours be more?"—take either side of the argument and keep going! (And if it helps to invert your word order to make it rhyme, you'll be following a centuries-old tradition!) **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3A)**

ACT 3

AS A CLASS

21. Modern playwrights have a way of writing in long, copious 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 riddled 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Bc, 2A, 4A)**



22. 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B, 1C, 2A, 4Ab)**
23. She’s been spared long enough! It’s time to get that Luciana on the **hot seat** and check out her ideas about marriage, gender roles, cheating on your partner, etc. With one brave soul volunteering for the hot seat, 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc, 2Ab, 4Ab)**

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

24. At last we meet for ourselves the second 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 to distinguish 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1A, 1Bc, 2Ba, 4A)**
25. 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 you’ll see the actors’ do... (It’s contagious.) **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1B, 2A, 4B)**
26. As the characters get more 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, lines of iambic pentameter that are actually shared by two or more characters. So instead of one character filling out the full 10-syllable line, a couple of lines 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 left to right 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. No pauses!—and 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 1Bc, 2B, 4B)**

27. Another clue that Shakespeare gave his actors (and us) was in the use of **repetition**. In repeating words, he let them know that they 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ac, 1Bc, 4A)**



28. Luciana tells Antipholus what she thinks marriage means in the opening 28 lines of Act 3 scene 3. 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 the person she takes to be her sister’s husband? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ac, 1Ba, 2B, 4A)**

29. 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 to the man she assumes to be her sister Adriana’s husband, and Antipholus of Syracuse’s adoring reply are full of imagery. Here 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Ab, 2B)**

- ◆ The sweet breath of flatter 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?

30. When you reorganize two speeches as a conversation between two characters, the results can be very revealing. Taking one or two lines from Luciana’s speech (Act 3 scene 3, 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 to use—as often as you like, in whatever order you like. Practice your adaptation and 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3b)**

31. 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**, and now go back and, using them for emphasis, play off of each other’s words, like two opponents in a tennis match. Shakespeare often writes with antitheses—often within a single line spoken by a character, and sometimes in lines like these, spoken in a dialogue between two characters. At Chicago Shakespeare, actors

work with a verse coach to score their text, looking for all the antitheses and repetitions contained in their lines. Finding them and using them in their performance makes their performance much more clear and accessible to us. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab)**

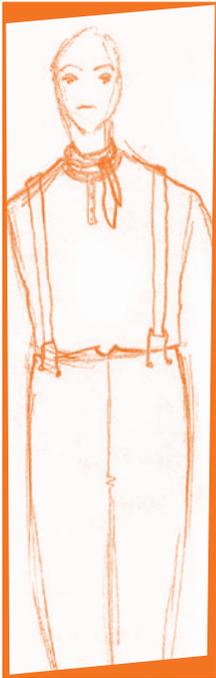
ON YOUR OWN

32. 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.” **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 3b)**
33. “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? You can make it outrageous, but make sure that he’s wrestling with this unbelievable sense of being totally changed by love (and, of course, a few examples wouldn’t hurt him any as he looks back and marvels at the change...). **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2b, 3b)**
34. 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”!) **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab, 3abc)**

ACT 4

AS A CLASS

35. In Act 4 scene 3, a very bewildered Antipholus of Syracuse has a moment alone on stage when, in a soliloquy, he shares with us 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab)**
36. 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 with guts enough to take the hot seat, 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab)**



IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

37. 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 above and Luciana’s reaction to them in lines 22-24, devise statues for each of Adriana’s descriptions (14 in all) and standing in a line, strike your pose—on cue, of course—as Adriana reads 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab)**

38. These Dromios love words. Why say just one when 20 come to mind? Here 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 in the context of his rant, at least. Talk in your small group about what a “backfriend” might be. 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1ab, 2a)**

39. When an actor takes on a role, he studies the text and looks for clues about his character, not only in the words he’s given to speak, but also in what his actions are, and in what others say about him. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 4ab)**

ON YOUR OWN

40. 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 began to redefine the Middle Ages’ understanding of madness, but there was in Shakespeare’s time, enormous misconceptions about 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*. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1b, 2b, 3abc, 5abc)**

ACT 5

AS A CLASS

41. 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’s contained in the lines, and what does each of them bring into the scene that may fuel their 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? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1ab**)

42. Whoa!!! Here we are in the final scene of the entire play and what do we have appear—but a new character, the Abbess, at line 38. Now before you read another line, stop right here and, acting as an office of private eyes, who is this woman and what role could she possibly be here to play? As always, base your discussion in reality (i.e. the script!), 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... (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab**)
43. 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? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab**)
44. Here in Antipholus of Ephesus, we have 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, and find all the people he characterizes and shape each of them into a statue—seen from the lens that is his own. 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? Remember, these are statues as Antipholus would see them... (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4a**)

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

45. 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 10 beats that stands on its own (without a shared line in sight to complete it, in other words). 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, “fills out” the missing beats. Not literally, of course, because no self-respecting actor is going to stand on stage and wipe his brow for the remaining four beats, but figuratively speaking... 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? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab**)
46. 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 (“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. (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab**)



- 47.** 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 speeches—to Luciana in Act 2 scene 1, and to Antipholus of Syracuse in Act 2 scene 2. Choosing key lines or words, 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, and 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 at this point, and whether her inner monologue at this point might be no more than self-criticism. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3b, 4ab)**
- 48.** Role reversal! Suddenly in the final act of the play, it's Luciana who is the fighter, and Adriana, the compliant, dutiful wife! What *happened*? Do you buy it? In groups of five, think back in 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 to you? It often happens—as though both sides of the argument have to be made, regardless of by whom! In pairs, talk about whether you've ever experienced this kind of role reversal. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3b, 4ab)**
- 49.** Throughout Act 5 scene 1, the director and the actor are given plenty of verbal clues about Antipholus of Ephesus's behavior. The question is, in part, is he going to play them all so that we (offstage) see what everybody onstage is seeing in him. 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, and things that everybody else says about him! What picture is emerging? Based on just how deranged you want your Antipholus to act, think about an actor whom 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab)**
- 50.** “I see thy age and dangers make thee dote.” The fickle finger of madness is now pointed at Egeon... In groups of five, go back through the play up to this point, and find every line that either accuses someone else of madness, or doubts instead the speaker's the own sanity. 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*? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab)**
- 51.** 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 now 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 add 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? (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab**)

AFTER YOU'VE READ THE PLAY AS A CLASS

1. *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.)

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. Don't chime in the correct "question" when the wrong one is given, so that the next group can choose the same category! (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 4ab, 5a**)

2. Choose a leader to stand in the middle of the circle, with the rest of you standing around her, 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... (**Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc**)



The **Bard Card Program** encourages Team Shakespeare students who first attend Chicago Shakespeare Theater on a field trip to return on their own with friends and family. Bard Card student members may purchase two tickets to each full-length, mainstage show at \$15

each through our 2010–2011 Season. The two-year membership is designed to bridge the gap between a school trip and a student's personal life. The program's mission is to make tickets affordable to students, so they learn how to make Shakespeare and theater a continuing part of their lives.

Students interested in becoming a Bard Card member should email us at bardcard@chicagoshakes.com. Please encourage them to become members!

3. 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 two minutes. Then it’s the other team’s turn. The team scores one point if it guesses correctly. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 4ab)**
4. As a class, take another look at Shakespeare’s *Dramatis Personae* 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 4ab)**

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

5. Chicago Shakespeare’s casting director 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, 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2b)**
6. 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, create your own children’s story or comic book detailing a part of *The Comedy of Errors*! In small groups, take an act or just a scene from the play and turn it into a children’s book. 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 online at www.pixon.com **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1Bc, 1Cd, 1Ce, 2Ac, 2Ba, 3Ba)**

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

7. 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3abc, 4ab, 5ab)**
8. 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 Western, blues, rap, pop, etc. Once you choose your character, think about what his or her “essence” is, and what words might communicate that best. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3abc)**

ON YOUR OWN

1. 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 much agreement among you

is there 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 3c)**

2. Choose a favorite line or passage that held some particular meaning for you. Pretend you are speaking at a conference where the theme of your quote is the focus. (It does not have to be a literary conference—be creative! Write a short talk exploring how you understand the line and why it holds this meaning for you. Read your presentation in small groups. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3abc, 4ab)**
3. 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, 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 as well as *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 his/her 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! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1c, 2a)**
4. 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 sighs and activities for people to visit and do. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 3abc, 5abc)**
5. 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.*

PREPARING FOR THE PERFORMANCE AS A CLASS

6. 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab, 3bc, 4ab, 5b)**

7. Part of the actor's job is learning why his character does what he 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 such an 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. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 4b)**
8. Often a director at the beginning of his/her production will 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 actually stands in stark contrast with the first words Shakespeare gives his characters. If you were directing *Comedy* and wanted to theatricalize a brief scene just prior to the first words spoken of Shakespeare's text by Egeon, what would your scene portray? When you see director David H. Bell's opening scene, compare it to those you and your classmates discussed. Why do you think he might have decided to frame his production in this way? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2a, 3c)**

ON YOUR OWN

9. 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 David H. Bell. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1c, 2a)**
10. 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. Director David H. Bell may see a different conclusion, but before you see his, 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 (thank goodness for the sake of theater) one or even two “more right” answers. BUT do ground your staging in your knowledge from the play, and be ready to defend it—both textually and psychologically! **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4ab)**

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM AS A CLASS

1. 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! The way we say, “I went to see a play at Chicago Shakespeare,” 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 4a)**

IN SMALL GROUPS OR PAIRS

2. 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, 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 profile in small groups or pairs. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3abc, 4ab, 5abc)**

3. 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. In *Comedy*, here are several of the words that Shakespeare repeats frequently throughout the play: “now,” “home,” “come,” “know,” “wife,” “see,” “man.” 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 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 **poem montage**. If you want certain words or phrases or lines to echo in your audience's ears, repeat them. **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1abc, 2ab, 3b, 4ab, 5abc)**

ON YOUR OWN

- 4 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? **(Illinois English Language Arts Goals 1bc, 2ab, 3abc, 4a, 5abc)**

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>

The Boys from Syracuse—Lyrics
<http://www.lorenzhart.org/syracuse.htm>

COMPREHENSIVE LINK SITES

William Shakespeare and the Internet
<http://shakespeare.palomar.edu/>

Shakespeare in Europe Shine (Basel University)
<http://www.unibas.ch/shine/home>

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

Absolute Shakespeare
<http://absoluteshakespeare.com>

Shakespeare Complete
<http://www.shakespearecomplete.com/>

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

Shake Sphere
<http://www.cummingsstudyguides.net/xShakeSph.html>

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: In Search of Shakespeare
<http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare High*
<http://www.shakespearehigh.com>

Web English Teacher*

<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/shakespeare.html>

Exploring Shakespeare (The Royal Shakespeare Company)

<http://www.rsc.org.uk/explore/>

Shakespeare Online

<http://www.shakespeare-online.com/>

Spark Notes*

<http://www.sparknotes.com/shakespeare/>

Shakespeare Resource Center*

<http://bardweb.net/plays/index.html>

Rare Map Collection (The University of Georgia)

<http://www.libs.uga.edu/darchive/hargrett/maps/maps.html>

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>

Queen Elizabeth I

<http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/eliza.htm>

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>

Shakespeare's Globe Education and Research Database

<http://www.globe-education.org/>

Proper Elizabethan Accents

<http://www.renfaire.com/Language/index.html>

The English Renaissance in Context: Multimedia Tutorials (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/eric/teach/index.htm>

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://costume.dm.net/>

The Costumer's Manifesto (University of Alaska)

<http://www.costumes.org>

TEXTS AND EARLY EDITIONS

The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (Massachusetts Institute of Technology site)

<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html>

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)

<http://etext.virginia.edu/frames/shakeframe.html>

Furness Shakespeare Library (University of Pennsylvania)

<http://dewey.lib.upenn.edu/sceti/furness/>

The Internet Shakespeare Editions (University of Victoria, British Columbia)

<http://ise.uvic.ca/Foyer/index2.html>

Shakespeare: Subject to Change (Cable in the Classroom site)

<http://www.ciconline.org/shakespeare>

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

Alexander Schmidt's Shakespeare Lexicon and Quotation Dictionary (Tufts University's Perseus Digital Library site)

<http://old.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus:text:1999.03.0079>

Word frequency Lists (Mt. Ararat High School)

<http://www.mta75.org/Curriculum/english/Shakes/index.html>

SHAKESPEARE IN PERFORMANCE

Touchstone Performance Database

<http://www.touchstone.bham.ac.uk/performance.html>

Shakespeare Production Photos

<http://www.shakespearegallery.org/>

Designing Shakespeare Collection

<http://www.ahds.ac.uk/performingarts/collections/designing-shakespeare.htm>

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

Portraits of Queen Elizabeth I

<http://www.marileecody.com/eliz1-images.html>

Tudor England: Images

<http://www.marileecody.com/images.html>

Absolute Shakespeare

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

AMERICA IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Contextual sites for David H. Bell's *The Comedy of Errors*, and its Depression-era setting

Teaching the Great Depression (National Park Service)

<http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/great-depression.htm>

WPA Art Curriculum Sites

<http://www.wpamurals.com/curricul.htm>

A Great Depression Art Gallery (University of Illinois)

<http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/artgallery.htm>

Library of Congress: Federal Arts Project Resources

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal/fap.html>

Library of Congress: Memory Project Lesson Plan—FWP Poetry

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/98/poetry/poem.html>

Art Institute of Chicago Collections: Thomas Hart Benton

http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/search/citi/artist_id:4311

Suggested Reading

Andrews, Richard, ed; Rex Gibson, series ed. *Cambridge School Shakespeare: The Comedy of Errors*. Cambridge, 1992.
(This excellent series is used extensively as a resource in Chicago Shakespeare Theater's education efforts.)

Barton, Anne. "Introduction," to *The Comedy of Errors* in the *Riverside Shakespeare*, Boston, 1974.

Berry, Ralph. *Shakespeare's Comic Rites*. Cambridge, 1984.

Bevington, David. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*. New York, 1992.

Boyce, Charles. *Shakespeare A-Z*. New York, 1990.

Champion, Larry S. *The Evolution of Shakespeare's Comedy: A Study in Dramatic Perspective*. Cambridge, 1970.

Charlton, H.B. *Shakespearean Comedy*. London, 1961.

Eagleton, Terry. *William Shakespeare*. Oxford, 1986.

French, Marilyn. *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*. New York, 1981.

Goddard, Harold C. *The Meaning of Shakespeare*. Chicago, 1951.

Hills and Öttchen. *Shakespeare's Insults: Educating Your Wit*. Ann Arbor, 1991.

Mason, Pamela, ed. *Shakespeare's Early Comedies: A Casebook*. London, 1995.

Miola, Robert S., ed. *The Comedy of Errors: Critical Essays*. New York, 1997.

Miola, Robert S. *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy: The Influence of Plautus and Terrence*. New York, 1994.

Mullaney, Steven. *The Place of the Stage*. Chicago, 1988.

Nevo, Ruth. *Comic Transformations in Shakespeare*. London, 1980.

O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York, 1993.

(This three-volume set is one of the finest, most creative approaches to teaching Shakespeare in the English classroom. Though *The Comedy of Errors* is not included, *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry V* are, among others—and the exercises are adaptable to any text.)

Ornstein, Robert. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. Newark, 1986.

Stone, Lawrence. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800*. Harper & Row, 1979.

Weiss, Theodore. *The Breath of Clowns and Kings: Shakespeare's Early Comedies and Histories*. New York, 1974.



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Major annual support for Team Shakespeare provided by **The Lloyd A. Fry Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Nuveen Investments, Sheila Penrose and Ernie Mahaffey, Carol and Gordon Segal and the Segal Family Foundation II, Walt and Judy Skowronski, The Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, and Anonymous donors.**

Additional funding courtesy of **Baxter International, Inc., Helen Brach Foundation, The Brinson Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, Nellie and Sheldon Fink, Grover Hermann Foundation, Illinois Tool Works, Mazza Foundation, The Col. Stanley R. McNeil Foundation, Edward and Lucy R. Minor Foundation, Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Foundation, Dr. Scholl Foundation, Charles and M. R. Shapiro Foundation, The Siragusa Foundation, Stefani's Children's Foundation, and Anonymous donors.**

