Melbourne University Shakespeare Company

presents

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

by William Shakespeare

The Guild Theatre
April 18th · 27th, 2013
A Melbourne University Shakespeare Company Production

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
by William Shakespeare

Directed by Casey Bradley

Assistant Director Ben Stanford
Producer and Production Manager Georgia Vann
Stage Manager Yane Cheung
Deputy Stage Manager Danielle Ridgway
Dramaturgy and Play Adaptation Casey Bradley

Set and Properties Design Fiona McKeon
Set Realisation Fiona McKeon
Properties Manager Mel Lane
Costume Design Leech King
Sound Design and Composition Leech King
Sound Operator Christie So
Lighting Design and Operation Beppe Abiuso
Hair and Makeup Design Miranda Millen
Hair and Makeup Assistant Tatiana Kotsimbos
Dressing Assistant Melissa Ho

Publicity Manager Alastair Clark
Sponsorship and Fundraising Manager Danielle Ridgway
Treasurer Jack Fleming
THE DIRECTOR’S NOTE

The Merchant of Venice is one of Shakespeare’s most vibrant and interesting plays. Meant to be a ‘comedy’, Shakespeare blurs genre with his intense dramatic scenes rife with catharsis, creating a comedy-tragedy hybrid. All the characters are unique and fascinating, and Shakespeare’s language never fails to be pervasively athletic and intelligent.

The initial appeal of this play was that it was a challenge. It’s a long play, and all the characters are so complex both for the actor and for the director. But it has been a challenge that has been faced with enjoyment, excitement, curiosity and persistence throughout the rehearsal process. I began working on the script adaptation for The Merchant of Venice around mid-2012. The first step was deciding what I wanted the vision of the play to be. I wanted to find what spoke to me about the play, and work around that.

I chose to focus on the monetary aspects of the play. Money could be seen as an influencing factor in the relationship between Bassanio and Portia, and Lorenzo and Jessica. Both men pursue women of higher social class and obscene wealth. Money is also the business in which all the characters deal with. The men are merchants who deal with trades, lending, and interest. Shylock has too much money; Bassanio does not have enough, while Antonio lies about how much he has and the stability of his assets and Lorenzo is not shy in admitting that he is an “unthrifty love” to Jessica. Money could also be attributed to the mutual disdain between Shylock and Antonio. Shylock characteristically charges an obscene amount of interest to those who borrow money from him which ethically does not sit well with Antonio who contrarily does not charge any interest. In a Romeo and Juliet-esque manner, this longstanding grudge between the two men, who channel their hate through religious insults, has been perpetuated and taken to new levels from the younger generations of merchants.

I also wanted to explore a more empathetic portrayal of Shylock. In Shakespeare’s time, ‘Jews’ were caricatured onstage as ‘bad’ and laughable characters, like Marlowe’s Barbaras. However, Shakespeare humanised Shylock by giving him a soliloquy and a monologue where we get to hear his feelings and sympathise with him. I wanted to explore this by portraying Shylock as a sympathetic character, flawed nonetheless as he still does an appalling deed by pursuing his bond to cut the flesh from Antonio, but he still has the potential for pathos.

For my adaptation of the script, I used the First Folio (1623) spelling and punctuation. This is because modern editors modernise punctuation and spelling, sometimes to regularise the text, and sometimes to make it ‘make sense’ in a neater and more logical fashion. However in the process, a lot of Shakespeare’s hidden direction to the actors is lost. I felt that by providing the actors with this as a tool, it would enable an ease of access to the play and the characters, and provide somewhat of a guide for performance. In the initial rehearsal period, I spent a lot of time reworking this to provide the actors with the knowledge needed to approach a Shakespearean text.

It has been a pleasure working with the talents of my Assistant Director, Ben, who has a keen skill for nuances and character development. He has complimented my work in the rehearsal room with extensive character building work with the actors, and detailed scene and text studies. I thank him for his commitment, his intellectual contribution, and his ability to make us all smile.

The Creative Team behind the scenes have designed some absolutely beautiful and clever production aspects for the show, from our stunning publicity posters to the sleek Set Design. Georgia, my wonderful Producer has been the consummate professional, guiding the show neatly through the Production week and overseeing the mechanics of the production. The cast, a group of kind and intelligent people, have presented themselves with commitment and dedication to the production, and we have all enjoyed finding the humour in Shakespeare’s words and the joy in performing them. I also want to thank Jean Goodwin who, at the very last minute, saved our show by coming on board as our Portia after someone had to pull out.

I hope you, the audience – made up of our friends, family, colleges and fellow Shakespeareans all enjoy the show. It’s for you, and we hope you have as much fun watching it as we did putting it on.

by Casey Bradley
Director and Dramaturge
THE SYNOPSIS

Bassanio, needing money to be a suitor to Portia, asks his friend Antonio for a loan. Antonio’s money is all tied up in shipments away from Venice, so he approaches Shylock, a money-lender. Shylock agrees to lend the money, on condition that if Antonio does not pay it back by an appointed time, Shylock may cut a pound of flesh from him. Not taking him seriously, Antonio agrees. Bassanio prepares to leave, allowing his friend Gratiano to accompany him.

Launcelot Gobbo, Shylock’s servant, decides to leave his service, telling his father about his plan. Lorenzo, with the help of Salanio and Gratiano, plots to help Jessica, Shylock’s daughter, to escape. While Shylock is out dining with Antonio, Jessica and Lorenzo elope with some of Shylock’s money.

Meanwhile Portia is unhappy with her suitors. Her father has decreed that she must marry the man who chooses from three caskets the one containing her picture. Fortunately for Portia, both the Prince of Morocco and Arragon both fail, being seduced by the external glamour of the two incorrect caskets. When Bassanio arrives, he chooses the right casket. Gratiano falls in love with Nerissa, Portia’s waiting woman.

In Venice, Salanio hears that some of Antonio’s ships are lost, and Shylock promises to redeem his bond. Another Jew, Tubal, brings him news of Antonio’s loss and Jessica’s fortune.

Portia and Nerissa give Bassanio and Gratiano rings in honour of their love, and make them vow never to be parted from them. Salanio arrives with Lorenzo and Jessica, bringing news that Antonio, unable to repay his loan, has been arrested and that Shylock is demanding his bond. Bassanio returns to Venice with money from Portia to repay the loan. Shylock refuses to listen to Antonio’s pleas. Portia and Nerissa travel to Venice, disguised as a lawyer called Balthasar and his clerk, to defend Antonio against Shylock, leaving Lorenzo and Jessica in charge of the house.

At the court, the Duke hears Shylock present his case, protesting but accepting the legal validity of the claim. Shylock rejects the offer of money from Bassanio. Balthasar arrives and agrees that Shylock must take his bond, if he will not be merciful, but only if the pound of flesh is exactly excised and no blood is spilt.

Realizing this cannot be done, Shylock tries to leave, but because he has tried to take the life of Antonio, his goods are confiscated, and his life falls into Antonio’s hands. Antonio lets him live if he agrees to become a Christian and gives his possessions as a dowry to Lorenzo and Jessica when he dies. Shylock agrees, and leaves. By way of thanks for their work, the disguised Portia and Nerissa each ask for the ring they had given Bassanio and Gratiano in their true identities. Reluctantly the men agree.

Jess Newman as Shylock.

Portia and Nerissa then return to Belmont, where Jessica and Lorenzo are waiting. When Bassanio and Gratiano arrive soon after, along with Antonio, the woman trick their men into begging forgiveness for giving their rings away. They then reveal their identities at the court. Antonio learns that his ships are safe. The couples prepare for their marriage.

by David Crystal and Ben Crystal
Shakespeare’s Words
THE CAST

SHYLOCK  Jess Newman
PORTIA   Jean Goodwin
BASSANIO Declan Mulcahy
ANTONIO  Alexander Thom
NERISSA  Annika Hobart-Topp
LAUNCELET Scout Kain-Bryan
GRATIANO Al Meredith
LORENZO Nicholas Langford
JESSICA  Beth McKay
SALANIO  Kat Bransgrove
MOROCCO/ARRAGON Luke Peverelle
OLD GOBBO/DUKE Matthew Ducza
TUBAL/GAOLER Emma Head

CAST AND CREW PROFILES

Casey Bradley - Director and Dramaturge, MUSC Artistic Director
Casey Bradley is a Melbourne based Actor, Director, and Dramaturge. Bradley is the Artistic Director of the Melbourne University Shakespeare Company, her directing credits for the company including MACBETH (2012) and The Merchant of Venice (2013). Over the past three years Bradley has also performed with the Australian Shakespeare Company’s in productions of A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Peasblossom) – Directed by Syd Brisbane, Romeo and Juliet (Lady Capulet) – Directed by Anna McCrossin-Owen & Glenn Elston, and As You Like It – Directed by Christine Best (Celia). In 2010 Bradley was selected as one of the inaugural Melbourne Theatre Company Youth Ambassadors. Bradley has also worked as an actor for Drama Victoria, and has appeared on Skizhause and Toyota commercials. In 2013, Bradley was invited to audition for Shakespeare’s Globe’s International Actors Fellowship in London. Bradley is currently completing her Bachelor of Arts at the University of Melbourne, with a double major in English and Theatre Studies and Creative Writing. In 2012 she worked with PlayWriting Australia on the ‘National Play Festival – Departures’ on Destination: Scotland, Destination: Broome, and Destination – Melbourne with several Australian playwrights and directors including Anne Louise Sarks and Susanna Dowling. Over the years Bradley’s writing has been published in Drama Victoria’s Education Magazine Mask, in the Melbourne Theatre Company Subscriber Magazine Scenes, The Age Online, Union House Theatre Online, as well as her online Blog STAGE WRITE being promoted on the MTC website. Bradley is currently a Theatre Sub-Editor for Farrago Magazine at the University of Melbourne. Later this year, Bradley has been commissioned to dramaturge for the South Australian Shakespeare Company’s production of Macbeth (2013-14) and will travel to London to pursue studies into Shakespeare.
Ben Stanford - Assistant Director
Ben Stanford has been involved in the performing arts for many years. From a young age he was a member of the Young Australian Broadway Chorus, appeared in an advertisement for the VACC, and played the role of the Crocodile in the children's pantomime The Witch, the Sunflower and the Crocodile. Later, he trained vocally as a member of the St Paul's Cathedral Choir, and played roles in a number of musical productions including Les Miserables (Gavroche), Return to the Forbidden Planet (Cookie), and Thoroughly Modern Millie (Jimmy Smith). He has completed workshops with the Malthouse Theatre and the Melbourne Theatre Companies as well as two short courses with the National Institute of Dramatic Art. His past direction credits have included productions of The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui by Bertolt Brecht, Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street by Stephen Sondheim and Shakespeare's The Tempest. More recently, he was invited to New York by The Juilliard School to audition for their Bachelor of Dramatic Art, and in the coming months will be appearing on stage as Lewis in the Kew Court House Arts Association's production of Cosi, by Louis Nowra.

Jean Goodwin - Portia
Jean began performing at age 10 with the QLD Crossfire Youth Theatre. In 2005, she graduated with an advanced diploma in Live Production and Theatre from the Southbank Institute and played the role of Angela in Hillary Bell's Wolf Lullaby. After which, she studied for 3 years at The Queensland Actors' Playhouse. In 2007, Jean moved to New York to study at The New York Film Academy. In 2009, Jean played Natella in the Forbici Ensemble's tour of The Caucasian Chalk Circle. In 2010 she was accepted into the Victorian College Of the Arts, Graduating in December 2012. While at VCA credits include Helen of Troy in The Trojan Women - Directed by Tanya Gerstle, Olga in The Three Sisters, Anton Chekhov - Directed by Melanie Beddie, Sister Aloysius in Doubt, John Patrick Shanley - Directed by Alister Smith. Portia in The Merchant of Venice - Directed by Richard Murphet and Die Alter in A Bright Room Called Day, Tony Kuskner - Directed by Tom Healy. Jean was the 2011 recipient of the Richard Pratt Bursary for achievements and excellence throughout 3 years of actor training. Since graduating Jean has played the role of Lead Women in We Are Perpendicular by Emily Stewart - Directed by Emma Hall.

Jess Newman - Shylock
Jess Newman most recently appeared as Reuben in J.Y.M's Chaim's Love Song and co-wrote and directed Sharp Point, a short play presented at M.U.S.T. Newman has starred in several student short films and in 2011 played Friar Laurence in the Australian Shakespeare Company's Romeo and Juliet. In high school Newman played the Scarecrow in The Wizard of Oz and the title role in Susan Nanus' The Survivor as well as being short-listed for the VCE season of Excellence- Top Class as King Berenger from Eugene Ionesco's Exit the King. Newman has also appeared on stage for theatre companies such as Fantasia Drama Academy and Drama with a difference. He has studied acting in a multitude of courses at National Theatre, VCA, 16th Street and NIDA.

Declan Mulcahy - Bassanio
Declan Mulcahy first acted in a Shakespeare production at the age of twelve, reciting his lines from under a sheet as the Ghost of King Hamlet. Since then, he has appeared in numerous productions, including the Australian Shakespeare Company's Henry IV Part 1, and As You Like It (Orlando). Putting Shakespeare aside, Declan has acted in a wide range of roles from the titular character in Gogol's The Government Inspector to Kenickie from the musical Grease. The Merchant of Venice is his first of what he hopes to be many MUSC productions.
Alexander Thom - Antonio
Alexander Thom is a third year Bachelor of Arts student at Melbourne University. He previously performed in MUSC’s 2012 MACBETH (Banquo) and is currently rehearsing as Dr. Forscythe in ...Until Monstrous' original production Hotel.

Annika Hobart - Nerissa
Annika Hobart is in her third year of her Bachelor of Arts at Monash University. Her background has been mainly in musical theatre, having played Eponine in Les Misérables, Mrs Sowerberry in Oliver!, and has been involved in productions of Jesus Christ Superstar, Little Shop of Horrors, and Iolanthe. She has taken acting and directing short courses through NIDA’s Open Program in Melbourne and has studied classical and contemporary voice since 2002.

Scout Kain-Bryan - Launcelot
Scout featured in a 2003 LCM commercial, igniting a love of acting which has only intensified. She has had roles in school plays such as Dario Fo’s Can’t Pay, Won’t Pay! and The Jungle Book, and has been seen under the lights at Sydney’s Ensemble Theatre in the two-actor short play Mississippi. Also involved with improv comedy and Theatresports, Scout has adapted and performed a number of Shakespeare’s best offerings at the Youth Shakespeare Festival in NSW. Scout has also performed in a production of Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night (Viola).

Al Meredith - Gratiano
The Merchant of Venice is Al’s first foray into performing Shakespeare. Having acted for only a few years now, he has performed in Spring Awakening, Anything Goes and various other smaller productions. Al plays Gratiano, a facetious and obtuse merchant and friend of Antonio, Lorenzo and Bassanio. Gratiano’s journey is a simple one; his insights are protracted and yet their truth is poignant. In the denouement of the play though, it is his nonsense as well as his loyalty that ultimately serve him well.

Nicholas Langford - Lorenzo
Nicholas Langford has performed variously as A Midsummer Night’s Dream (Lysander), Hamlet (Horatio), Much Ado About Nothing (Benedick), The Tempest (Prospero), Hamlet (Claudius), and in MUSC’s 2012 MACBETH (Prince Malcolm). Outside Shakespeare, Nicholas has an abiding love of musical theatre, sparked originally by taking on the Sergeant of Police in Gilbert and Sullivan’s Pirates of Penzance and reigned more recently by his being cast as Professor Henry Higgins in Lerner and Loewe’s My Fair Lady. Other roles include A Chorus Line (Bobby), Alan Bennett’s The History Boys (Mr Irwin) and Sherman Brothers’ Mary Poppins (Mr George Banks).

Beth McKay - Jessica
Beth is currently undertaking her second year at Melbourne University, studying a Bachelor of Arts. Although this is her first Shakespeare play, Beth is no stranger to the stage. Beth was awarded a Performing Arts Scholarship to attend high school at Ballarat and Clarendon College and has been completely consumed by musical theatre since. In 2011, Beth was nominated for a Victorian Music Theatre Guild Award for her performance of Jane in the Witches of Eastwick. Theatre credits also include: Guys and Dolls (Sarah Brown), Peter Pan (Mrs Darling), Joseph and his Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat (The Narrator), Cinderella (The Queen), Big (Susan Lawrence).

Emma Louise Head - Tubal/Gaoler
Emma has dabbled in the arts throughout her school and studies including productions of ‘A Mid Summer Nights Dream’ and ‘Shakers Re-Stirred’ and various TV ads. Emma has studied acting casually at City Acting in London and Ann Peters Acting School.
Katherine Bransgrove - Salanio
Katherine Bransgrove recently moved to Melbourne from Adelaide and is studying Journalism at Melbourne University. A big fan of theatre and Shakespeare in particular, she completed the VCA Acting Foundation Course in 2012 and is now in the one year full time acting course at Howard Fine Australia. At VCA her credits include As You Like It (Rosalind), Dead Man’s Cell Phone by Sarah Ruhl (Hermin), While You Were Sleeping (Lucy), and Howard Barker’s She Sees the Argument But (Woman). This is Katherine’s second role with MUSC. Last year she played Lady Macduff in MUSC’s production of MACBETH. In 2010 she was part of the ensemble in Adelaide University Theatre Guild’s Adumbrations production of Crooked by Catherine Trissmann (Maribel).

Luke Peverelle - Morocco/Arragon
The Melbourne University Shakespeare Company’s production of The Merchant of Venice is Luke’s first venture into performing Shakespeare. Gaining a vested interest in theatre during his senior years of secondary education, he studied drama, yielding his first major role as Moon in Tom Stoppard’s The Real Inspector Hound, put on as part of a VCE production. Other productions in which Luke has had a hand include It Was A Dark and Stormy Night, Murder at Mornington Manor, Blood on Their Hands, Quotidian and is also currently preparing for a production of Arsenic and Old Lace for the Moredland Theatre Company. Luke currently studies drama as part of a double degree at Deakin University and hopes to continue to act in the future, wherever and whenever he can.

OUR SPECIAL THANKS
Melbourne University Shakespeare Company would like to thank the following organisations...

MU Student Union Ltd., Melbourne Theatre Company, Mirror Paints, The University of Melbourne

and the following people...

David McInnis, Erin Adams, Tom Gutteridge, Clyton Jones, Gus Macdonald, Ruth Blair, Jack Fleming, Sasha Gattermayr, Lucy Thornett, UHT Staff, General Assistants and our Ushers and Front of House Volunteers

and all the cast and crew who assisted in set construction

for their gracious support.

Fiona McKeon
Set and Costume Designer & Maker
Ph: 0408 727 190
Email: inboxdesign@gmail.com
Website: http://fionamckeon.com
musc.
Matthew Ducza is completing his fourth year Bachelor of Arts with Melbourne University. Passionate for the art of voice acting Matthew participated with Union House Theatre in their 2012 radio play Sherlock Holmes, playing the contrasting roles of Watson's Butler and one of Moriarty's criminal associates. Matthew again takes up two contrasting roles in MUSC's The Merchant of Venice, playing the Duke and Old Gobbo, exploring the alternative elements of humour and drama that both contribute to Shakespeare's narrative.