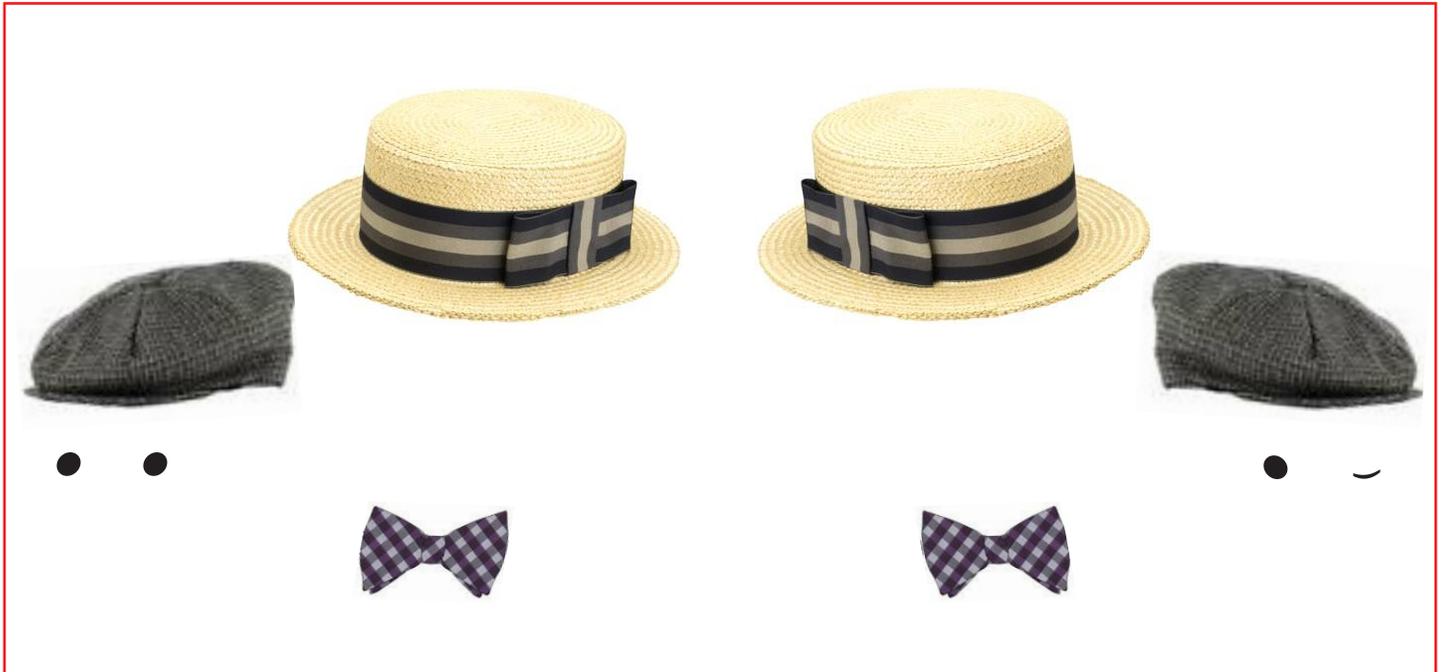


ASF 2015-16 Study Materials for



Same Face, Same Name, Two Guys? It Must Be...

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS!

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The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

Characters in this production:

Visitors to Ephesus:

Egeon, a merchant from
Syracuse

Antipholus of Syracuse, the twin
son Egeon is seeking, the
one he saved [A/S]

Dromio of Syracuse, his
servant, a lone twin [D/S]

Residents of Ephesus:

Solinus, Duke of Ephesus

Antipholus of Ephesus, raised
in Corinth, unaware he is a
long-lost twin [A/E]

Adriana, his wife

Luciana, her sister

Dromio of Ephesus, their
servant, the other long-lost
twin [D/E]

Nell, another servant

First Merchant

Angelo, a goldsmith

A Courtesan

Doctor Pinch, a conjurer

Emilia, abbess of the priory, the
long-lost wife of Egeon

An Officer

[the text also has two more
merchants and another
female servant]

Setting: Ephesus

"I see we still did meet
each other's man,
And I was ta'en for him,
and he for me,
And thereupon these
errors are arose."

—Comedy of Errors, 5.1

WELCOME TO THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* was long thought to be his earliest comedy because its source was a common Latin school text. More recently, however, critics have begun to credit the sophistication of its verse, the interplay of its relationships, and its Biblical allusions, so that now it is often seen as a precursor to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Whenever in the early to mid-1590s one dates the play, it is the product of a confident dramatist who knows how to use character, staging, and emotional build to maximum comic effect, not to mention jokes, physicality, and sheer, ebullient high spirits.

Shakespeare creates a hybrid with *The Comedy of Errors*, taking a Roman street farce of mistaken identity and wrapping it in a romance, the kind of tale the Renaissance adored. The physicality of farce entails comic beatings, outrages to dignity, lots of banter, and a very fast pace, culminating in a chase, while the romance relies on adventures, long-lost family members, mishaps, threats, and a final reunion.

He gives us the best of both comic worlds in a play filled with laughter and lively action—a great way to see what this master of comedy can concoct!



The Dromios at the door (Jeffrey de Picciotto and Chris Roe, ASF, 2009)

& WELCOME TO OUR TOUR

Our love of Shakespeare runs deep at ASF, and we are happy to share it with schools across Alabama and our neighboring states, because there is just nothing like the powerful effect of seeing Shakespeare live.

This version of Shakespeare's play trims *The Comedy of Errors* to fit a one-hour class period while keeping the great characters, the verse, and the compelling comic action. Directed by ASF's Greta Lambert, herself a renowned Shakespeare actress, the touring show features eight actors chosen from New York auditions who join the ASF company for the 2014-15 season.

These eight will perform all the roles in *Comedy of Errors*, doubling or tripling roles just as Shakespeare's own company did—some even sharing a role! They bring you a complete theatre with set, costumes, props and actors in a van and a trailer. In addition, we offer your students a series of workshops following the play, so they can work with the actors on theatre skills and Shakespeare's language. We're excited to be headed your way with the Bard!

The touring company: front: Kayla Eisenberg, Lilly Wilton, Noelia Antweiler; rear: John Carter, Christopher Lemieux, Parke Fech, Andrew Dahreddine, Michael Quattrone





The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

Online texts

The Brothers Menaechmi at:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0101%3Aact%3D1>

Amphitruo (Act 4, scene 2, the door scene) at:

<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0092%3Aact%3D4%3Ascene%3D2>

*Remains of the Roman theatre at Jerash in the Near East, showing the three doors of the classical stage. All action in Roman plays occurred in the street. Shakespeare's play uses *The Phoenix* (A/E's home), the *Porpentine* (courtesan's), and the *Priory*, all associated with women.*



SHAKESPEARE'S FARCE: FROM ROME TO EPHEBUS

Classical Elements

- The most notable classical aspect of the comedy is its unity of time/place/action—all the events take place in one day in one place. Only this play and *The Tempest* have this feature.

Shakespeare's Source

- The basis of Comedy of Errors's twin plot is *The Brothers Menaechmus* by the early Roman playwright, Plautus (c. 254-184 BCE). His play, *Amphitruon*, gives us the door scene.
- Plautus can seem harsh and bitter; Shakespeare usually softens the action

In the *Brothers Menaechmus*:

- The twin separation and reason for the shared name is very clear
- Only the two masters are twins; there is only one servant. The hometown Menaechmus steals his wife's clothes to give his mistress, the courtesan, and promises to dine there with his friend, a "parasite" (a moocher; both are typical supporting characters in Roman comedy).
- Instead, however, the twin who has just landed in Epidamnum (where the action is set) meets her and dines there and thus starts the mayhem. Both men are greedy and conniving.
- In the end, the husband divorces his wife to go traveling with his twin brother, and the servant is freed.

- Thus the misbehavior which is only threatened in Shakespeare actually occurs in the Plautus, and the ending does not include the restoration of the marriage but only the reunion (and escape) of scheming brothers.

In *Amphitruon*:

- The god Jupiter lusts after Alcmena, wife of a general away in battle, so he and Mercury show up disguised as the general and his servant Sosia to seduce the general's wife. But the general and his servant also show up at the locked outer door, and the two look-alike servants argue through it.
- Shakespeare gives us no text-based infidelity; he advocates love. He even adds Luciana, so A/S can have a girl, too.

Even Terence?

- Another classical Roman writer of comedy is Terence, a slave who wrote romances. The split family and last minute reunion are his kind of comedy.

For Discussion: Comparing Plautus and Shakespeare

Note: Any part of *The Brothers*

Menaechmus offers a good basis for comparative analysis.

- Plautus uses one set of twins; Shakespeare uses two (that is *Amphitruon's* contribution)—what are the implications for comedy?
- Compare how each play uses the husband twins, the wives, the doctors, the Roman father vs. the Ephesian Duke, the courtesans, the cooks, the lunch guests, the endings, the tone of the action. The character sets afford rich differences in how each play is handled.
- What is the attitude of Roman comedy if Plautus is typical (he was certainly famous and revered in Rome); what is the English Renaissance attitude toward comedy if Shakespeare is typical? What do the plays show us of each society and its values?



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare



The background of a Jacques Callot sketch, showing a commedia marketplace stage

COMMEDIA TYPES



Larnelle Foster, William Brock, and Johathan Gibson in ASF's 2004 MFA commedia production

COMMEDIA: ANOTHER STOP ON THE WAY TO EPHEBUS

Troupes of Italian actors toured Renaissance Europe and England sharing their distinctive style of farcical comedy known as **commedia dell'arte**. This comedy was improvised by a company of professionals rather than taken from memorized texts. Shakespeare may have seen such a troupe of Italian players in London, for he certainly understands their style of comedy and reflects it in his most fully farcical play, *The Comedy of Errors*.

A commedia dell'arte performance involves:

- the use of stock characters in set comic situations, often raucous, bawdy, or physically graphic.
 - within a planned order of events, the players would improvise on stage, playing to the crochets of the character opposite them and to the audience.
 - Standard props were slapsticks and wooden swords, so comic beatings and duels were common features.
 - the action had to be quick and compelling to hold its marketplace audience and to open its wallets, because the company passed the hat rather than selling tickets.
- The style of the play was fast and physical; the routines frequently involved stage combat, acrobatics, and dance. The characters postured and preened on stage, taunting and scheming to get money or the girl—or, preferably, both.
 - Specific comic routines were called *lazzi* (pronounced laht-zee; singular, *lazzo*), and many still survive, such as the standard banana peel on the floor, the pie in the face, the foot out to trip, and the picked pocket (the Renaissance's favorite was the enema *lazzo*).
 - Another distinctive aspect of commedia dell'arte is that many of the characters wore half-masks with exaggerated noses and eyebrows, fitting for characters whose traits are themselves exaggerated. Each character came from a specific part of Italy, spoke with that accent, and had identifiable traits and foibles modeled on early Greek and Roman comedies.

Commedia troupes were often families centered on a talented husband/wife team, and the roles were passed down generation to generation along with comic business and routines.



Commedia's Dottore (Doctor)



Pantalone—old, miserly, lecherous



Three clever commedia servants: 1 to r: the ominous Brighella, the aesthetic Pedrolino/Pierrot, and the ever-hungry Arlecchino/Harlequin, in his rags





The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

GENRE: THE SHAPE OF THE ACTION



THE ROMANCE TRADITION

Shakespeare is a good theatrical chef; he knows you mix a bit of salt in the sweet. He writes comedy into tragedy—*Hamlet's* gravedigger—and a whiff of the tragic into comedy—the twin Sebastian's purported drowning in *Twelfth Night*.

- In *Comedy of Errors*, however, he blends farce and romance. He works for the big reunion, but since it involves a reunion of twins, he shows the mayhem that the run-up to such a reunion can cause. Given the increasing misunderstandings, the reunion is a relief but often surprisingly heartfelt as all the family relationships are reconstituted.
- The romance tradition is a literary mode that changes form and focus through the centuries. Its roots are in the ancient world but its peak in the Middle Ages when it gave us the chivalric tales of King Arthur

and Roland. Originally it was an adventure tale spanning years and countries, featuring threatened lovers, peril, and promise along with a sense of the supernatural, with some romances ending happily and others tragically.

In the Middle Ages, the romance tradition took plot-driven tales of adventure and added a greater psychological awareness of motive on the part of the characters. Lovers could

now more fully explore and articulate their own feelings. Influenced by the Latin poet Ovid who depicted love as a "restless malady," the idea developed into the courtly love tradition so influential on Petrarch and subsequent courtly love poetry.

- Whereas in *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare follows the path of romance into tragedy, his late plays, including *The Tempest*, all use the happy-ending device of reunion with the added element of forgiveness.

- Shakespeare demonstrates his thorough knowledge of the romance tradition's psychology by riffing on it here in comic terms. Every aspect of the descent and ascent described below appears in the comedy. Both brothers experience a change in fortunes, confusion of identity, seem to be in dream logic (A/S meeting Adriana; A/E locked out), feel erotic intensity (A/E going to the Courtesan's and what Luciana takes as A/E's incestuous proposition when A/S describes his attraction to her). In farce, everything does become an object, and A/E devolves deeper and deeper into a nightmare scenario. Both brothers work to escape and get "free," and thereby find themselves and reintegrate their family.

Themes of Descent

amnesia

- break in memory
- change in fortunes

confusion of identity

dream state

- real dreams
- dream logic

increased erotic intensity

- animal imagery
- hunter and hunted

Themes of Ascent

reintegration

discovery of true identity

remembrance

growing freedom

escape

breaking of enchantment

The Night World

everything is an object

In distinguishing fictive romance from comedy and tragedy, Northrup Frye observes that "the essential component of romance is adventure, and the central theme is the hero's rescue of a princess from a dragon." How much fun Shakespeare has by inverting the romantic mode, for instead of A/E rescuing Adriana, he in fact becomes dragon-like in pursuing her—he wants to lash her and he burns Pinch.



Source for chart: Northrup Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (1976)



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

Exercises and Discussion

Topics

- Trace the plot complications by charting which Dromio each of the twin Antipholi meets, which errands each is sent on, and who each reports back to (and when) having done his task.
- Compare how the Dromios use language to defuse tension, make peace, or state their case, and how each responds to confusion and demands.
- The criss-cross effect feeds the farce by multiplying the mistaken identity, which expands beyond Dromio to include Adriana and Luciana, Angelo and other town merchants, and the Courtesan. Trace the growing concentric circles of complication.
- How does plot feed farce? If chase scenes and mayhem are expected at the climax of a farce, does Shakespeare meet our needs and expectations? Is a fast resolution the best idea? Why?

CHARACTER: HOW SHAKESPEARE BUILDS THE TWINS

Character Pair Basics

In crafting a double set of twins, Shakespeare pairs master and man in Syracuse and Ephesus, then lets circumstances mellow the relationships.

Syracusians: The Syracusan pair know they have twin brothers and want to find them. Master and servant travel together and become companions with a friendly, joking rapport. When the Syracusan master raises a hand to his Dromio, the servant is shocked.

Dromio's twin in Ephesus, however, is all too accustomed to beatings from his master and Adriana. The marital crisis expresses itself in the treatment, or mistreatment, of this servant, because, except for a one-line exchange through the door in 3.1, the spouses do not talk to each other until 5.4.

Ephesians: Where the Syracusans are compatible and genial with each other, the Ephesians have no comparable intimacy until, perhaps, they are bound together by Dr. Pinch. Neither of the Ephesians knows he has a twin; they think of themselves as orphans since they were separated from all vestige of family shortly after birth. They act as individuals of different status whereas the Syracusans act as a team.

- **Confusion/Inversion:** Why, then, do both Antipholi totally lose it this day in Ephesus? Because Shakespeare inverts their identities.
- The stranger from Syracuse has a dream day—he is invited to lunch, falls in love, is given a gold chain and a bag of money, is measured for a new suit of clothes, and greeted warmly by passersby. Yet all this kindness freaks him out because he has been told it is a mortal danger to be a Syracusan in Ephesus and he knows Ephesus's reputation for sorcery. The fears keep him from realizing that these people know someone who looks like him.
- Inversely, the Ephesian citizen, well-liked by all, a respected businessman and loved husband, takes friends home for lunch and finds himself locked out; he becomes a stranger to his own home and hometown; it's a nightmare. People deny him, challenge him, arrest him; they call him a madman when all he wanted was lunch. He reacts badly; in fact, he wants to retaliate for his mistreatment by going to lunch at the Porpentine and planning to give away the chain.
- The Antipholi tell the truth—"I am not your husband," "This is my house," "you did/did not give me the chain"—but are not believed. Everyone else insists the Antipholus s/he sees is the right "Antipholus." Identity is internal and external, individual and social, asserted and enforced in this play. The continuing contradictions that the Dromios bring—a dinner invitation rather than safely stowed gold, being locked out rather than welcomed home, news of a ship not a rope, or a rope not a ransom—escalate tension until the action becomes explosive. When the action does explode in 5.1, with recriminations before the Duke and contradictions about events, both sets of twins appear and recognitions and reunions bring a rousing finale.



The 2004 ASF MFA commedia-influenced production with partial masks for some characters: here, the Dromios at the door (Frederick Snyder and Christian Rummel).



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

Poem for Discussion

In considering the $2=1=2$ marital and twin relationships, look at the second half of John Donne's metaphysical poem "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," which also uses this mathematics in philosophical context to discuss marriage.

ACTION AND LANGUAGE IN COMEDY OF ERRORS

In the early scenes, the action of *The Comedy of Errors* sets itself several major objectives based on overcoming splits—a split ship/mast or a split relationship:

- to reunite Egeon's long-separated family
- to reunite the twin brothers
- to reunite husband and wife
- to give young love a chance to bloom.

In a play built on doubles, we have two sets of twins and at least two marriages. Marriage is a cognate to twinning here and an equally important concern. Each twin seeks his other half just as Adriana and the Abbess each defines herself as part of a "union" or "bond" with a missing piece.

Self and Loss of Self for the Syracusians

Based on the mistaken identity gambit at its core, the play builds self-awareness in its characters. First Antipholus of Syracuse, on entry, is told to "give out you are of Epidamnum" lest he be arrested. He must hide his identity. We realize, however, that his true identity is already hidden—Antipholus is not even his given name; it is the name of his twin brother, the name he has adopted in his twin's honor. We never learn his "real" name or his servant's.

Just before Dromio of Ephesus enters and starts the chaos in 1.2, Antipholus of Syracuse observes to himself:

*I to the world am like a drop of water
That in the ocean seeks another
drop,*

*Who, falling there to find his fellow forth,
Unseen, inquisitive, confounds himself.
So I, to find a mother and a brother,
In quest of them unhappy, lose myself.*
(1.2.35-40)

To lose oneself can mean in activity, but also a more existential loss of self; his quest to find his brother has also become a quest to find himself. He knows he is not Adriana's husband, but as he talks with Luciana, he

confesses himself to be "smothered in errors" and proclaims: "Are you a god? Would you create me new? / Transform me, then, and to your power I'll yield." Later he tells her she is his beloved: "It is thyself, mine own self's better part [soul] / My sole earth's heaven, and my heaven's claim... / I am thee. / Thee will I love, and with thee lead my life" (3.2.39-40 and 61, 64, 66-67).

Twins and Spouses

He describes a love that Adriana also describes having had and now misses with her husband, A/E (although she mistakenly says these words to A/S):

...O, how comes it,

*That thou art then estrangèd from thy self?
Thy self I call it, being strange to me,
That undividable, incorporate,
Am better than thy dear self's better part.*

(2.2.110-114)

Not only do these lovers describe the love bond with identical phrasing, but they use the same imagery for their agony of separation. Adriana continues, echoing Antipholus of Syracuse two scenes earlier:

*For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,
And take unmingled thence that drop again
Without addition or diminishing,
As take from me thyself, and not me too.*

(2.2.116-120)

Thus the metaphysical and spiritual image of twinning and wedding—that two are one and yet two—fills the play and challenges us to examine relationship and identity more closely. Love, we learn, is to lose and gain oneself; it transforms.

In 2.2, Antipholus of Syracuse deflates Adriana with one line: "Plead you to me, fair dame? I know you not," a true laugh line. He doesn't recognize her. He asks himself,

*What, was I married to her in my dream?
Or sleep I now and think I hear all this?
What error drives our eyes and ears
amiss?*

*Until I know this sure uncertainty,
I'll entertain the offered fallacy.*

(2.2.173-177)

and he steps into the world of paradox. Only Alice in *Through the Looking Glass* could comprehend his state of mind.



Adriana confronts her "husband" (A/S): Chris Mixon, Anne James, Carl Cofield, Grace Hsu (ASF, 2000)

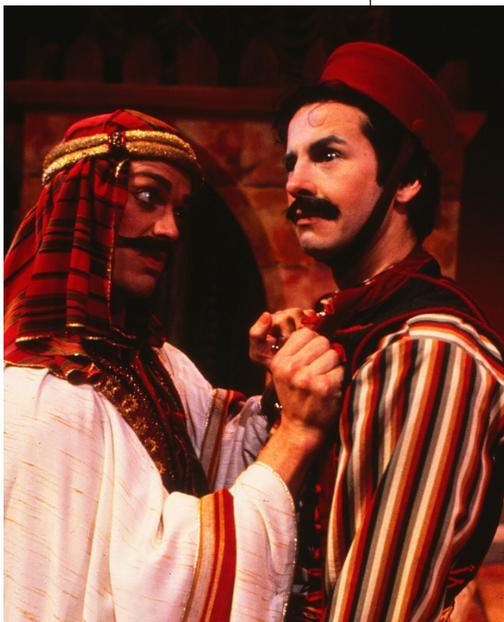


The COMEDY of ERRORS

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Things to Watch

- the money and the gold
- what is opened (purses, chests, invitations by women) and what is closed (doors, debts, and apparently hearts)
- how the at-home versus stranger motif plays out: the Syracusans, the real strangers, are welcomed to the town and home, while those who dwell there are treated as strangers and denied
- the business deals and idea of business reputation
- how the home world and marriage seem topsy-turvy due to Antipholus's absence and behavior
- the nature imagery, such as sea, tree and vine. For instance, how apt is Egeon's image of the sundering storm for the events through the middle of the play? Does the presence of both twins in Ephesus divide them from their lives as the rock split the mast?



Antipholus of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse at cross purposes about errands (Ray Chambers and Dan Cordle, ASF 1992)

ACTION AND LANGUAGE OF COMEDY OF ERRORS: II

Self and Loss of Self for the Ephesians

While his unknown Syracusan twin believes he is dreaming, the Ephesian Antipholus walks into a nightmare in 3.1. He is locked out of his own home and his authority denied by the porter, by Nell, and by his own wife.

Rejected by his wife and thus by implication not her "husband," he boldly decides to lunch with the Courtesan, feeding into his wife's great fear of his infidelity which has, he says, heretofore been "without desert." He acts unlike himself because he is not "recognized" at home. In the same way, Adriana's suspicions have her acting shrewishly, unlike herself, because she, too, feels unrecognized, unappreciated at home.

Dromio, too, feels attacked when the porter identifies himself as "Dromio": "O villain! Thou hast stolen both mine office and my name." He has no idea how true his statement really is.

Losing Oneself in Relationship

Luciana counsels the man she thinks is her brother-in-law to assume a false appearance, to lie about his presumed infidelity to preserve her sister's peace of mind, but when the Syracusan turns the tables and truthfully tells her he loves *her*, she believes it is her brother-in-law speaking and, trapped in true and false appearance, flees.

Where Antipholus of Syracuse tries to woo the girl in 3.2,

Dromio has the reverse identity crisis: "Do you know me, sir? Am I Dromio? Am I your man? Am I myself? ... I am an ass, I am a woman's man, and besides myself." He finds himself claimed by a woman he does not know or want, which echoes his master's experience in 2.2. Antipholus has now found his "proper" love; perhaps Dromio will also, if Luce and Nell are two separate characters rather than one (a dispute).

Likewise, Antipholus of Ephesus, the solid businessman, is twisted from himself when arrested for debt in the street. Ever the mirror image, his twin gets all the gold—both chain and bail money—just as he got the home-cooked meal. By the time the Ephesian confronts his wife in 4.4, he is truly angry, but his "incivility" just convinces her that he is crazy, and the more he protests the truth as he knows it, the crazier, the less "himself," everyone thinks him.

Finding Oneself through Others

The emphasis in the play is on family and marital relationships, so the crisis of denial in the Ephesians' household is one side of the issue. The other side is Egeon's family, which is teased with the Antipholi mistaking the Dromios, but they are not blood kin to the Antipholi. Thus the kinship crisis arises when Egeon truly sees his son Antipholus (A/E), but his son denies him, an action that is not funny but heartrending—and also where the play emerges from farce into romance again. The denial is another missed opportunity, but it puts the focus back on the parents. With the Abbess revealing the other set of twins, that crisis dissolves, and when she reveals herself as Emilia, the play's initial crisis resolves into a restored family and a host of paid or forgiven debts.



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

The Male Quest in Fairy Tale

- The male protagonist is often the youngest brother, sometimes called "Dummling." He is overlooked or scorned, but when his older brothers fail the story's tests, he proves to have the right qualities to succeed.
- Male-centered tales usually involve adventure and travel, conquest and daring.
- The quest often involves getting something tangible, such as a magic harp, or crossing a barrier (thorns, air/beanstalk).
- The male quest also can include finding and winning the maiden, who may be sleeping or in a glass case.
- The male may also through his selfish or passionate actions turn into a beast and need help reversing the transformation.

EXPLORING *IMAGERY* IN THE PLAY

The pattern of doubling and mirroring in *The Comedy of Errors* is very like that used in folk and fairy tales—such as the "good" (often dead) mother and the too often "wicked" stepmother through whose challenges the young protagonist is forced to mature (the step-relation protects the actual mother's tough love). Or the "home" one is forced from and the gingerbread "home" one devours—both the same home, since the challenge is self-control rather than selfishness. Fairy tales and the play share this mirror effect.

The goals of fairy tales are maturation and independence, ruling one's own life as an responsible adult (the royalty image) and learning what is important and valuable in life and what its dangers are—like that predatory, hungry "wolf" that may devour you if you're not careful. The elements of the tale, such as the gold one seeks or acquires by adventurous courage, is not so much monetary as spiritual or having "the right stuff"—confidence, good sense, self-reliance, friends, even good luck, and knowing the value of home, the "place" you live and belong in your life, where many of the tales end—whatever one's age.

DOUBLING and MIRRORING

The Antipholus twins are mirror images.

One knows his father and home in

Syracuse, but has become "homeless" in quest to find his missing twin brother, his "double," who does not know his actual home, parents, or that he is a twin. but who was raised in Corinth and brought to Ephesus, where he has found success and made his own home with his wife (though he, too, will become "homeless" today). Likewise his servant has no known

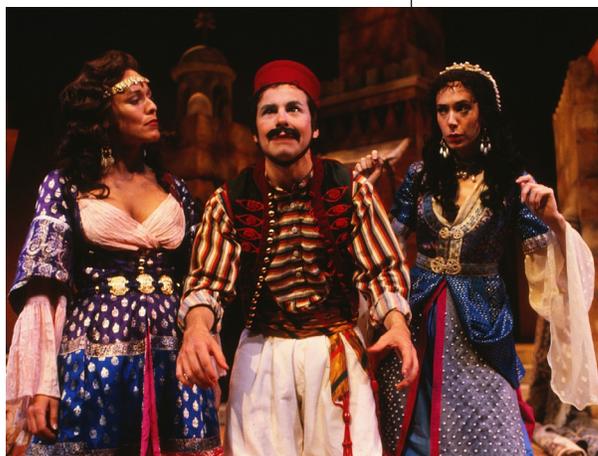
family roots except his service to A/E. Then the play reverses or mirror-images them.

HOME

- The Syracusians on entering Ephesus are told they are in a place of peril. That potential peril will test their nature and challenge them, especially with meeting women, since they are single.
- Although A/E is at home in Ephesus, his home is the focus of his challenge. Adriana chafes because business seems to trump his home life. Now she seeks him in the street—but finds A/S. In taking in A/S she will deny the very man she seeks; she doesn't "recognize" A/E or heed his needs.
- Her husband returns to find his door locked—he is without a home, "homeless." So what is the value of that home to him? At first, angry and hurt, he rejects it and pursues an alternate "home" and an alternate "woman"—the challenge of infidelity in marriage, the "wolf" factor. But when in peril—in debt, needing gold—he sends home to his wife for ransom.
- The door signals being in or out of home and its relationships. Being "locked out" of home is a challenge to grow in fairy tales and in this play a challenge to affirm or deny what home and marriage mean.

GOLD

- Something precious figures in many tales as gold or gold coins. Both Antipholi have gold safely stored.
- When A/S asks about his gold, D/E tells him of a home and wife—something precious he does not yet have, maturational steps he has foregone in his quest. The story lets him explore that life and even discover the right girl for him. Life comes looking for him, as it often does in fairy tales.
- When A/E is arrested for debt, he finds that he needs gold just when he has been "un-homed" and straying. Yet he immediately sends not to the Courtesan but to his wife for his "gold" at home—he knows what is precious and where it resides (even if it gets delivered to his brother).



"Home" proves difficult for D/S (Liisa Ivary, Dan Cordle, Suzanne Irving, ASF 1992)



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

The Female Quest in Fairy

Tale

- The adventures and travel of the female protagonist take a different course from the male's. She often goes from house to house, as Snow White flees from castle to dwarves' house, where she cooks and cleans for them, gaining new skills. If travel is involved, a wolf or other beast may make an appearance and pose a sexual threat as she matures/"travels".
- Like the male, the female may be outcast, a stepchild, and/or overlooked.
- Other women figure in these tales, either as a maternal figure (a fairy godmother who teaches or gives gifts) or as spiteful or jealous female rivals, who take the role brothers have in the male quest by venturing and failing due to character flaws

For Discussion

- Are the Antipholi (or Dromios) identical or mirror images?
- Do the Antipholi end up with the right women? The fiery A/E with fiery Adriana and more easy-going A/S with the more "obedient" or more "game"-savvy Luciana?
- Although we know their relationships less well, does the same seem true of the Dromios?
- What will happen to the Antipholi, who suddenly find themselves with parents?

A/E and D/E tied by Dr. Pinch while Adriana gets details from officer (ASF, 2000)



EXPLORING IMAGERY IN THE PLAY/ 2

DINNER

- Food sustains, and "feeding" the self is often contrasted with sustaining the group: self vs. others, devouring vs. sharing or nourishing all.
- A/S is invited to dinner by a stranger, his putative "wife." Wary as he is, he nonetheless goes with Adriana, exploring the unknown and meeting Luciana (is that love or "wolf"?), but flees the Courtesan (reversing A/E).
- For his part, A/E wants to share the bounty of his home, but finds himself locked out, exactly as Adriana feels figuratively "locked out" of his life and love. Handling a marital denial calls for assessment and problem solving, neither of which A/E accomplishes.

THE CHAIN

- A/E plans to give the chain to his wife, but when locked out decides to give it to the Courtesan. Since the chain is gold, it also suggests something precious, something more than just jewelry. It is a holdfast, a chain in the sense of a bond, a pledge.

Adriana fears his straying, and in seeking to hold him (chain him?) actually locks him out. So he impulsively explores that alternate lifestyle. In the end, however, he gives the chain to his wife and returns the Courtesan's ring. He reaffirms the union he wants, the one he turned to

ESCAPE

- A/S may get free food and find a new love in Luciana, but overall he decides he wants out of Ephesus. Feeling beset, he and D/S will pull rapiers and flee into the Priory. Suddenly events seem stronger than A/S is, and when it is fight-or-flight, his first reaction is to flee. Only with the Abbess's support does he emerge to face his future.
- A/E wants out and he wants in. He toys with escape but reaffirms his marriage. When tied up ("chained") and taken home to be "cured" by Dr. Pinch, he again fights and escapes to avenge his perceived mistreatment. Like his brother, he is soon brought face to face with the dilemma; he faces Adriana and the Courtesan and recognizes his true wife, his true life despite his "wolf" impulses.

SELF-DISCOVERY

- The Dromios, the perpetual motion machines of the comedy, do not get to make many independent choices in the play since they are repeatedly given new orders and do their best to fulfill them but are often beaten and contradicted for their pains.

The Nell issue differentiates them, for as with their masters, D/E has an established relationship and D/S does not want that one; he likes Luce (a parallel to *Luciana*?).

Whether D/E's beatings will diminish we can only hope as peace returns to the home, since stress, as we have seen, has caused angry reactions both spouses.

- At the end of the play, in fairy tale/psychological terms each Antipholus has faced his challenges and found, intentionally or unintentionally, a better and more stable self by living the experience of the other for a day. They gain brotherhood and spouses as well as parents. They are all finally together, in control, and "at home"—happily married?



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

Rhyme and Blank Verse in Comedy of Errors

Rhyme abounds in *Comedy*, and its role deserves consideration. A quick overview reveals:

- 1.1—all blank verse, with 2 couplets by Egeon
 - 1.2— all blank verse
 - 2.1—opens in blank verse; quickly shifts to **couplets**, a bit of prose on D/E's entry, then to blank verse and **couplets**
 - 2.2—blank verse and prose; Adriana's blank verse shifts to **couplets**, and so the scene continues with only a brief section of blank verse near the end
 - 3.1—blank verse gives way to **long-line couplets** (hexameters and even fourteeners), then returns to blank verse
 - 3.2—opens with 13 **quatrains**, shifts to **couplets**, and then to prose on D/S's entry; then to blank verse and some rhyme for the resolve to leave and meeting with Angelo
 - 4.1—blank verse
 - 4.2—potential **sexain** (or quatrain plus couplet), then **couplets, another quatrain, then couplets** intermixed with some blank verse
 - 4.3—blank verse, prose, blank verse
 - 4.4—blank verse, prose, blank verse, prose
 - 5.1—blank verse, a triplet
- Now we know where to pursue our analysis.

HOW THE PLAY USES RHYME—TEXT ANALYSIS

Facts about Playwright

- Shakespeare uses blank verse as a supple, evocative, and eloquent medium of expression.
- His main plot scenes are filled with verse, but the subplot or comic scenes are often in prose, for Shakespeare is also a gifted writer of prose.
- He uses couplets for closure at the end of scenes.

Rhyme in Comedy of Errors

- *Comedy of Errors* uses a great deal of rhyme within some scenes—see the breakdown to the left. Why rhyme here—couplets, quatrains, even perhaps a sexain?

Analysis of the Use of Rhyme in 2.1 & 2.2

- And who uses all this rhyme? In 2.1 it is Adriana and Luciana; in 2.2 it begins with Adriana, then spreads to all; in 3.1, the Dromios; in 3.2, Luciana and A/S. The women in private, the love concerns, and the door scene get rhyme.
- The rhyme works rhetorically, as we can see in 2.1 between Adriana and her sister.
- We meet them for the first time waiting to have dinner because A/E is late. Adriana is upset; her sister tries to calm her. In the 11th line, Luciana begins to rhyme her sister with the social facts of gender roles in the play—the husband/male may do as he likes:

Adr. Why should their liberty than ours be more?

Luc: Because their business still lies out o' door.

- Luciana's speech about male mastery and female subservience sits ill with Adriana, who protests at length, her five-couplet speech exactly matching the length of her sister's speech. Because Luciana begins the rhyme, we may start to associate the effect with reasonableness or submission (rhyme=order) until Adriana throws the form back in her face in protest.

- Dromio of Ephesus re-introduces the rhyme in protest just as Adriana used it. Adriana's tirade tries to discern what the problem is.
- She returns to couplets in 2.2 as she beseeches her "husband" (really A/S) to come home to dinner.
- She ends her 37-line speech to him with a couplet; his 5-line denial also ends in a couplet.
- Then just when it seems she might launch into scolding (lines 159-161), she begins to rhyme instead. The effect is almost as if she is channeling Luciana, for she seems self-deprecating and cajoling, the vine to his elm.
- Antipholus of Syracuse is mystified but picks up her couplet form in his aside. He denies her in blank verse, but agrees to follow her in couplets. Rhyme has a genuine potency here (as does the lure of a free meal).

Rhyme in 3.2

- The quatrains of 3.2 are equally interesting.
- Quatrains are the bulk of every Shakespeare sonnet, so to find thirteen of them opening this scene is notable, half teaching A/E stealth and lying if his love has strayed (Luciana ostensibly giving advice to her brother-in-law), half pledging a new but eternal and life-altering love to her (A/S talking to the young woman whose name he does not even know).
- Only when she protests his seemingly incestuous proposal do they shift to stichomythia and couplets, with him rhyming her protests with more love claims.

Rhyme in 4.2

- The aftermath of this scene, 4.2, between the sisters, completes the play's exploration of rhyme. Explore how.



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

Renaissance Usage Details

- *Thee* and *thou* are used in place of *you* in two opposing ways: 1) as a sign of intimacy to family and other loved ones, or 2) to belittle and scorn someone as lower in status than oneself
- *Mine* is sometimes used instead of *my* before a word beginning with a vowel, i.e. "mine eyes" (we still do this with the articles *a* and *an*)

VOCABULARY FOR COMEDY OF ERRORS (TOURING SCRIPT)

Because *The Comedy of Errors* is Shakespeare's shortest script, less had to be cut for the touring script. The play's language is remarkably accessible and familiar, as you will discover in performance. There are a few words, however, some particular to the Renaissance and some general vocabulary, that your students may not yet have encountered, so we provide a brief glossary here.

Comedy of Errors Glossary for the touring script—with usage examples

marks, ducats = gold coins used as money

The Centaur, the Phoenix, the Tiger, the Porpentine = buildings around the city square.

Centaur = a mythical creature with body of a horse and upper torso and head of a man; in the play, the name of an inn

Phoenix = the mythical bird (known to *Harry Potter* fans) that consumes itself in fire and is reborn from the flames. The Phoenix is A/E's home. Consider the aptness of its name as an image for the marriage.

Porcupine = consider the aptness of this name for a courtesan's house

hapless = without luck [*hap* = luck]

sconce and *pate* = head ["that merry sconce of yours"; "lest I break your pate"]

hie = hasten ["hie thee home to dinner"]

flout = to mock or scorn ["wilt thou flout me thus?"]

cozenage = deception, trickery ["this town is full of cozenage"]

lours = frowns ["how impatience lours in your face"]

shrewish = loud and brash (after the small rodent that fights by shrieking)

owe = own ["the house I owe"]

office = job, duty ["thou hast stolen both mine office and my name"]

troth = pledge, truth ["by my troth"]

dote = to love excessively ["and I will dote"]

mated = in this context means amazed (with pun on mated/marriage)

privy = private ["the privy marks" about his body]

chargeful fashion = workmanship

avaunt = go away ["Avaunt, thou witch"]

minion [said to Adriana in anger] = hussy

suborned = convinced ["thou hast suborned the goldsmith to arrest me"]

impeach = accusation ["what an intricate impeach is this"]

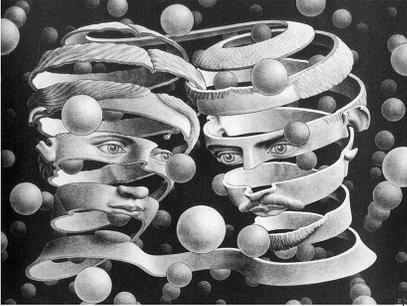


Adriana trying to cure her husband with Pinch's help in ASF's MFA modern dress/commedia production (2004): front, Suzanne Curtis, Julia Watts, Jennifer Hunt; rear, Jonathan Gibson, Larnelle Foster



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare



M. C. Escher in "Bond of Union" expresses the interconnectedness of a pair, be it spouses or twins.

THE LONE TWIN

Another phenomenon of twins is the lone twin, where one twin has lost the other, the feeling Antipholus of Syracuse has at the start of the play.

- Even when one twin dies in the womb, the remaining twin can have a long and profound sense of loss, feeling as if s/he must live for two, and it is not unknown to want to take the twin's name.
- *The Lone Twin: A Study in Bereavement and Loss* by Joan Woodward has many personal accounts of lone twins aware of and missing their "other halves."
- The lone twin phenomenon occurs whether the person knows s/he is a twin or not.
- Such is the case of Antipholus of Ephesus. He is off-kilter for some reason in the play, not himself, seemingly dissatisfied with his wife, but all his inner confusion may be solved when he realizes he has a twin. What he is missing is not marital or economic; it is sibling and family.

SOME AMAZING TRUTHS ABOUT SEPARATED TWINS

To most people, including most critics, the events of *Comedy of Errors* seem utterly improbable—long separated twins with the same name finding each other and being uncannily alike in appearance, even in clothing. In this case, truth is stranger than fiction, for there are many factual accounts of long-separated twins reuniting later in life and not only finding themselves alike but even wearing the same clothes to the meeting. *It really does happen.*

In his revealing book, *Twins*, Peter Watson details the findings of the Minnesota Twin Study and many more accounts of twins reunited after long separations and the amazing similarities they discover. Consider two examples:

The Jim Twins

The most famous of the reunited twins are "the Jim twins," Jim Lewis and Jim Springer, who met on February 9, 1979, thirty-nine years after they were separated at birth. Here are the facts:

- both were adopted by families in Ohio, 45 miles apart
- both were named James by their adoptive parents
- both had been married twice, first to women named Linda and then to women named Betty
- both had sons named James Allan
- both had owned dogs named Toy
- both had high blood pressure
- both suffered from migraines
- both chain-smoked the same brand of cigarette
- both had woodworking shops in their garages and both drove Chevys
- both vacationed on the same beach on the Gulf Coast of Florida
- both had served as deputy sheriffs
- their scores on psychological tests for personality variables "approximated one person taking the test twice"
- although living in different towns, they died on the same day of the same disease

The Giggle Twins

Separated at birth and brought up in distant English cities, these two women were reunited after forty-one years:

- both wore a beige dress and brown velvet jacket to the reunion meeting at King's Cross railway station
- both tinted their hair the same shade of auburn
- both met their future husbands at town hall dances when they were sixteen and married in their early twenties in big autumn weddings
- both worked for local government as did their husbands when they met them
- both suffered miscarriages with their first babies
- both hated math and games in school
- both drank their coffee black and cold (no sugar), which is very unusual in England
- both laugh more than anyone they know
- both are careful about money
- both prefer the color blue
- both had fallen down stairs when fifteen, an accident that left them with weak ankles
- both love chocolate and liqueurs
- both hate heights
- both lack a sense of direction

Go Ahead, Google It!

Confident that it doesn't happen in our world? Look at:

www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1567542/Identical-twins-reunited-after-35-years.html

OR SEE the *New York Times Magazine* cover story for July 12, 2015, about two sets of separated twins raised as brothers at: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/12/magazine/the-mixed-up-brothers-of-bogota.html?_r=0

The COMEDY
of ERRORS

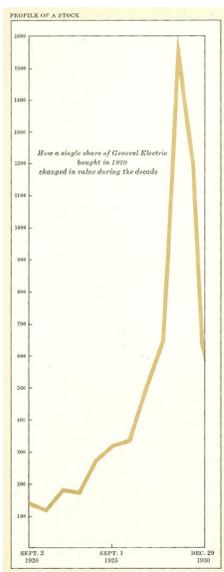
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John Held's cartoon of a flapper doing the Charleston—quintessence of the Roaring '20s



Cartoon of an big city speakeasy during Prohibition—alcohol readily available



The 1929 Stock Market Crash—chart of the value of one share of GE stock from 1920-1930

The Background of the Action: Life in the 1930s and 1940s

The characters' lives have been shaped by Prohibition, the Great Depression—during which Avery and Dixie were children and the other adults were trying to begin their adult lives—and by World War II.

Selective Time Line: Background for Play

1919-1929: The Roaring Twenties

- Life expectancy is 54 years; divorce rate 13%.
- Radio gains popularity.
- Car sales boom; 50% of cars sold are Fords.
- Work day cut from 12 to 8 hours.
- New: Miss America pageant, Wheaties, *Time* magazine, traffic lights, airmail, Baby Ruth candy, radio commercials, Yankee stadium, electric shavers, films with sound, Academy Awards, solo transatlantic flight, Mickey Mouse, the charleston

1929: Stock Market crash in October leads to severe economic downturn

1930-1933: Depth of Great Depression

- Many banks close; 56% of blacks and 40% of whites are unemployed. Wages drop to 60% of 1929 wages.
- FDR's "New Deal" creates jobs and changes national monetary system
- 5-day, 40-hour work week common
- FBI created due to rising gangster activity (a result of Prohibition)
- Dust Bowl in Midwest begins
- Hitler elected chancellor in Germany
- Prohibition repealed
- Cigarette smoking rises
- New: Empire State Building, "Star Spangled Banner" named national anthem



A bread line

1934-1938: Great Depression eases

- Lower unemployment, fewer bank failures
- Drought-stricken Midwestern farmers move west
- Germany annexes Austria
- Jesse Owens wins 4 gold medals at Berlin Olympics
- New: laundromats, Golden Gate Bridge, miniature golf, last public hanging



South Dakota, 1936

1939: War and rising economy

- World War II begins in Europe
- U.S. economy surges due to war
- *Gone with the Wind*, *Wizard of Oz*
- New: helicopter, goldfish swallowing fad

1941-1945: World War II for America

- First peacetime draft in 1940
- War declared Dec. 8, 1941 after Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor
- After early defeats in Pacific, U.S. forces begin to win and along with allies gain ground in Europe. D-Day; invasion at Normandy, June 6, 1944. Germans introduce V-1 & V-2 rocket bombs; Japanese begin kamikaze attacks. Napalm-bombing of Tokyo. War in Europe ends May 8, 1945. After dropping two atomic bombs on Japan, war with Japan ends August 15, 1945.



D-Day, Normandy, 1944



- Rationing of rubber, sugar, gasoline, shoes, canned goods, meat, cheese, and fat in U.S. during war
- Nuremberg war trials begin
- Polio epidemic
- New: M&Ms, the lindy hop dance



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

PRODUCTION DESIGN FOR ASF'S COMEDY OF ERRORS

If comedy is often bright, anything involving farce is thereby brighter, and so it is with ASF's touring production of *The Comedy of Errors*. The design choices were inspired by the play's genre and by director Greta Lambert's love of the swing music she heard while working on the script, music that seemed to express the mood. So the designers "swung" into the practicalities of a set that must be assembled and struck [taken down] for every performance and that must fit in the back of a trailer. Likewise, costuming must be efficient and, given the doubling in the piece, sometimes very quick.

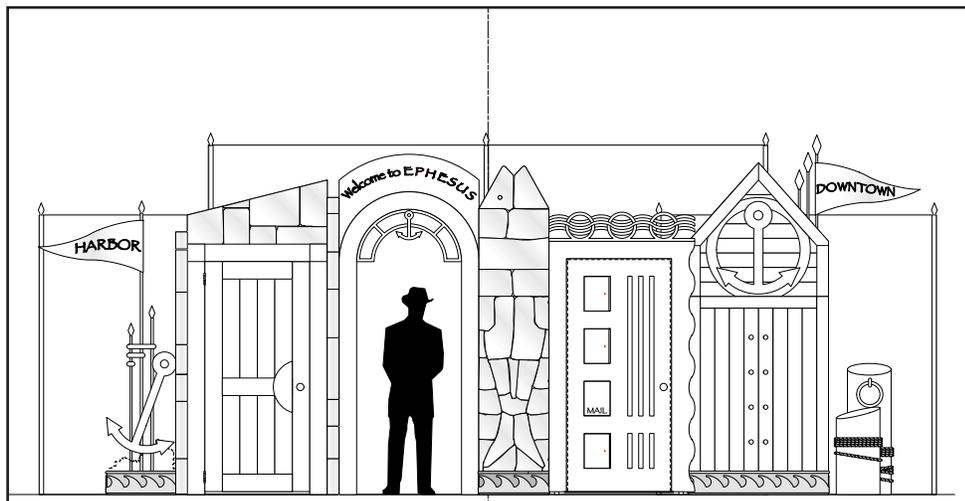
Set designer Rob Wolin, knowing how important the street front is, designed a riff on the Roman street set in abstract colors, so the playing space can be outside or inside depending on the scene. And since much is made in the script of Ephesus being a seaport, that element will be highlighted with anchor motifs and baskets of fish

(potential fodder for mayhem). Likewise, given the need to see both sides of the Phoenix door, that door will be hinged to swing 90° onto stage so we can enjoy both Dromios conversing through it.

Costume designer Elizabeth Novak embraced the swing era and designed costumes in the style of the 1930s and '40s, with a few film references, especially for Adriana and Luciana—as in Adriana's "Dorothy-Lamour-flowered" dress. The Antipholi will be resplendent in bright blue suits and hats, and the Dromios speeding about in bluejeans and wearing jackets with a Harlequin-type diamond pattern. Quick changes, some of which will be on stage, may include just a coat and a hat—and audience imagination, a vital theatrical ingredient.

With a nod to the commedia element, Novak uses consciously chose patterned fabrics with squares, polka dots, or diamonds and bright colors throughout the show's palate. While not using masks, the production is using glasses for characterization.

Left: Elizabeth Novak's costume sketches for the Antipholi, the Dromios, Adriana, and Luciana



Set designer Rob Wolin's elevation for the *Comedy of Errors*' port city of Ephesus; notice the number of doors, essential to farce



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

ACTIVITIES FOR WORKING WITH COMEDY OF ERRORS

Twins: Considering Production Challenges

- Finding two sets of identical twin actors to perform the play poses a real challenge (though it was done early in the 20th century), but since theatre thrives on illusion, do we need actual twins? How much identical appearance is enough for the audience to buy the twinness?

Costumes can effect much of the similarity, and costumes are also the key to differentiating the Syracusians and the Ephesians—a different color handkerchief or tie or socks will do it. Similar heights and body types also seem key. Will red noses on similarly sized and garbed Dromios work? Will similar moustaches or gestures work for dressed-alike Antipholi? How much latitude is there in theatre—how playful can an audience be with being asked to see likeness?

—Look at the pictures in the study materials—how are the twins portrayed and differentiated? How important is it to be able to distinguish the Dromios (who often run into scenes without introduction, so we just have to recognize which Dromio it is for the comedy to work)?

—Look around your class and see who could "twin" with another for the play—how many possible sets of "Dromios" can you find? how many possible sets of "Antipholi"?

- Some productions have solved the problem by having one actor play both Antipholi and another actor both Dromios and then using a body double for them as the re-entering Syracusians in the last scene. Is that a better or simply a different kind of choice? How important is that reunion moment? For the full emotional hit, do we need to see all four faces?

- The door scene is also a challenge for the production because the audience wants to see both Dromios, thus to see both inside and outside that door simultaneously.

With a Roman-based staging (see p. 2) that would be difficult. Some productions build a 90° door or have hinge the door frame or the wall so it can swing out 90° for that scene (see the pictures in the study materials). One production even had the actors holding the door in the air, unattached to the house. Do we really demand realism in that scene? What is important for the comic moment?

"Twin" a Character

- Pick one of the six major characters—an Antipholus, a Dromio, Adriana or Luciana—and live his or her life during this day, posting your views and responses to events for a Shakespeare Facebook and/or Twitter. The Dromios can have their own "Facelessbook" or "Servants' Twitter" that their masters cannot access. [Of course you can't "friend" or "follow" your twin!]



Top: The Antipholi meet in 5.1 in ASF's 2009 production (Michael Daniel Anderson and Blake Kubena); middle: the Dromios meet in ASF's 2004 MFA production (Frederick Snyder and Christian Rummel), and bottom: a p.r. photo of the two sets of twins for ASF's 1992 Comedy of Errors (Ray Chambers, Steven David Martin, Dan Cordle, John Preston)



The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

ACTIVITIES FOR WORKING WITH COMEDY OF ERRORS/ 2

The Commedia Element

- How do you feel about beating servants (or anyone)? Is it justifiable? Beatings were a common part of Renaissance life, and not just for servants.

(Look up the "rule of thumb" to see how harshly husbands/fathers could legally treat their "property," i.e. their families.)

The play does not intend to engage in a moral debate about physical violence; it's comedy, so it uses lazzi, what we might call cartoon violence. There are no physical consequences, no damage. We never see Dromio with a black eye. What is the effect of "comic beatings" on stage? Do we laugh?

Does laughter walk the line—or even go over the line—between what is appropriate and inappropriate? Is comedy an insulation to propriety? Assess the comic beatings in the play and their role in the comedy and also consider

Egeon (Wilson Cain) and Emelia (Sonya Lanzener) meet their long-lost sons and servants in ASF's 2000 production

how comedy involves action we might assess differently in another context. Find examples of comic "transgression" from current television shows and films and consider the role of their humor.

Genre Issues

- In farce, no one gets hurt; there are no ill results to the lazzi. If that is so, is Shakespeare's play a pure farce? Are there no consequences to any of the actions or behavior? any potential consequences along the way?
- One subset of farce that developed in the 19th century was French bedroom farce, where a husband or wife is tempted to stray and s/he may even get to the bedroom but never into the bed because of interruptions and complications, often including the arrival of the spouse!
Does the Courtesan's role in this play have a bedroom farce effect for us? Should we consider her a sexual temptation or just a friendly neighbor?



John Woodson as the Duke staring at two sets of twins (ASF, 2000)

The Love Plot's Role?

- A/S and Luciana's love plot seems to take a small part in the action. Once that happens the action pivots toward A/E. Is it necessary for the farce?





The COMEDY of ERRORS

by William Shakespeare

From Structure to Values and Theme

In Shakespeare (as in literature in general), the structure of the plotlines/action and relationships reveals the thematic concerns of the play.

- What is the action and/or interest of each plotline? What do they share?
- If an arranged marriage is a business deal rather than a love match, how does that aspect of marriage (the A/E-Adriana match) compare to the other relationships in the play? How many current relationship statuses are voluntary?
- How does love or concern for self factor into romantic love or a sense of reputation?
- How does the social setting work with or affect the individual crises of the play?

GENRE *WORKSHEET* FOR *COMEDY OF ERRORS*

The Structure of Comedy

Comedy

- divides a group and then reunites it
- excludes anyone who cannot join the final festivity
- engages the audience using sympathy and ridicule
- gains something of value

1. Identify the individuals, groups, and relationships **divided** in *The Comedy of Errors*. How many get **reunited**? How?

2. Is anyone **excluded** at the end? If so, why? How does inclusion work?

3. Which characters do we **sympathize** with? Why?

4. Which characters do we **ridicule**? Why? Are there varieties of ridicule?

5.. What is considered **valuable** in the various plot lines and how does that reveal the characters' values and purpose?

6. Is the play a farce or does each plot line have a romantic core (issues of wooing and wedding)?

Farce Elements

Farce relies on:

- fast-paced physical comedy
- character stereotypes (two-dimensional rather than three-dimensional figures)
- humans' primal urges—greed, lust, gluttony. Main plot characters want money or the sweet young thing; servants want food or power.

• Which parts of the production involved the fastest action? Why? What was its effect?

• Identify the *lazzi* in the play, the comic business (gags, setups for jokes or action), such as the comic beatings. How much of the production is based on *lazzi*? Is that appropriate to this play?

• Were all the characters "types" or did they become more three-dimensional? Effect?



by William Shakespeare



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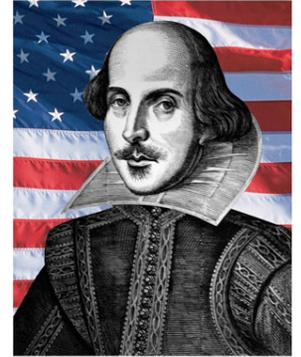
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