

Theatre USA Presents
 William Shakespeare's
**THE COMEDY OF
 ERRORS**

This delightful comedy is one of audience's favorites world wide.

In *The Comedy of Errors*, Egeon, an old man from Syracuse, is arrested in Ephesus, which is at war with Syracuse. He explains that he and his wife had twins, both called Antipholus. They adopted twin slaves, both called Dromio. The wife, one son and one slave were separated from the other in a ship wreck. The other son and slave set off to look for them and have now disappeared. Now the old man is searching for his family.

The Duke gives Egeon a day to pay a ransom or be executed. It turns out that the shipwrecked Antipholus and Dromio have been living in Syracuse all along, while the other two have arrived there that day. Everyone gets the twins mixed up, with comic results. Finally, as Egeon is led to his execution, well, just how does this end happily? Do come and join us to see this jumble of coincidence.

William Shakespeare

William was born to John Shakespeare and Mary Arden April 23, 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. John was a prominent and prosperous alderman and was later granted a coat of arms by the College of Heralds. William attended the Stratford Grammar School, but did not proceed to Oxford or Cambridge. In 1582 he married Anne Hathaway. The next year she bore a daughter for him, Susanna, followed by the twins Judith and Hamnet two years later.

During the late 1580s and early 1590s, William traveled back and forth between London and Stratford-on-Avon, but by this time, the momentum of his life was toward his career and away from family, hearth, and home. He engaged in a variety of occupations, probably working with his father in commercial trades (leathers and grains), probably as a law clerk, and possibly as a soldier or sailor.

By about 1589, William was recognized as an actor, poet, and playwright. His rival playwright, Robert Greene, referred to him as "an upstart crow". Eventually, William joined up with The Lord Chamberlain's Men. When, in 1599, the troupe lost the lease of the theatre where they performed, they were wealthy enough to build their own theatre across the Thames, south of London, "The Globe." "The Globe" opened in July of 1599, with the motto "A whole world of players."

When James I came to the throne (1603) the troupe was designated by the new king as the "King's Men". The Letters Patent of the company specifically charged them "freely to use and exercise the art and faculty of playing Comedies, Tragedies, Histories, Interludes, Morals, Pastorals, stage plays ... as well for recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure."

William entertained at the Globe for another ten years until June 19, 1613, when a cannon fired from the roof of the theatre for a gala performance of *Henry VIII* set fire to the roof and burned the theatre down. The audience ignored the smoke from the roof at first, being too absorbed in the play, until the flames caught the walls and the fabric of the curtains. Amazingly there were no casualties. Although William invested in the rebuilding, he retired from the stage to Stratford, where he continued to write until his death in 1616 on the day of his 52nd birthday.



Droeshout Engraving 1623



Picasso Lithography 1965

Shakespeare — "It's Greek to me" NO — It's Shakespeare!

Many of the common expressions we use today are quotes from Shakespeare. If you act more in sorrow than anger, if your wish is father to the thought, if your lost property has vanished into thin air, you are quoting Shakespeare; if you have ever refused to budge an inch or suffer from green-eyed jealousy, played fast and loose, been tongue-tied, hoodwinked or in a pickle, have you knitted your brows, made virtue of necessity, insisted on fair play, slept not one wink, stood on ceremony, you have quoted Shakespeare. If you bid me good riddance and send me packing, if you wish I were dead as a door-nail, when they think I am an eyesore, a laughing stock, the devil incarnated, a stony-hearted villain, bloody-minded or a blinking idiot, then - by Jove! O Lord! Tut, tut! For goodness' sake! What the dickens! But me no buts - it is all one to me, you are quoting Shakespeare. So when you say you can not understand Shakespeare, maybe you understand more than you think.

Artist Spotlight

Director

Dr. Leon Van Dyke

"Do you know how cold it is in Wisconsin today?" That was one of Lee Van Dyke's answers to how he found his way to Mobile. "It's March 12. It's 20 degrees there and almost perfect weather here." His energy jumps out at you. He loves the idea of a new town in which to play and work sort of like "a huge new jungle gym. It's rejuvenating. Nothing is quite in the expected place and that keeps me on my toes."

He first came to Mobile two years ago when the department was the host to the Southeastern Theatre Conference to give a workshop at its convention. He was struck by the beauty and history of the area. "Actually I find the aesthetics of this place astonishing; the history, vegetation, diversity. Mobile is urban but hasn't lost its small town sensibility." Six months later he noticed the ad for a new Chair of Dramatic Arts here. "If I had not been to the SETC convention in Mobile that spring, I might not have considered the opportunity." He and his wife discussed it. It seemed like a great place for their daughter Tai to grow up. And there was the challenge. "To build something new charges your battery. I had built a department in the Midwest, but starting again gives a new chance to imagine what can be done."

He believes the department should be an Artistic Home, some place that is vibrant, supportive, and where you are surrounded by people you can trust. "I like to feel like I'm surrounded by family with similar aspirations, where no one feels used or cheated."

That philosophy is certainly seen in his approach to directing *A Comedy of Errors*. "I don't direct by myself. I love what my colleagues contribute to make the show all ours." He has strong views on the idea of producing classics as Museum pieces. "I don't want to present men in tights. So many have had Shakespeare killed for them with Museum like study. It is important to make the comedy work for NOW." He sees his job like that of a wine importer. "Wine doesn't travel well unless you wrap it with care. So we have to figure out what will make this play connect to the audience. It's all about making people see what's fun about it."

He was strongly influenced as a director by an influential theory first found in the writings of Antonin Artaud and expounded upon by Robert Brustein of the Yale Drama School which states "There are no more masterpieces." "We do classics in part because we are educators. But we are also theatre practitioners. It's a conflicting world at times, real theatre vs. educational theatre. But that's what makes it fresh. I get inspired to try to make it seem new so that it can touch the heart of all of us."

So come see Dr. Van Dyke's *Comedy of the Carribean* uh *Comedy of Errors* and see if you get caught up in our special approach to this Shakespearean classic.

BARDS QUIZ

There's not much information on the Bard's private life, which leads us to speculate on William Shakespeare's inspiration and influences in general. Imagine him then, during a typical day, speaking with those who knew him - in the language we love!"

Question 1:

William Shakespeare is visiting his mother - Mary Arden, in Stratford, and she asks him if he'd like a "sop 'o' the moon-shine?" What do you think she wants him to have?

- A. A dish of eggs cooked in oil
- B. A slap behind the ear
- C. A glass of whisky from her secret store
- D. A lucky charm

Question 2:

Later, on his way home, he's surprised to meet Christopher Marlowe whom he hasn't seen in years. He secretly feels the playwright has become very "hard-favoured". What does he mean?

- A. He's drunk and down on his luck
- B. He's bitter with age
- C. He's as ugly as sin

D. He's pompous and difficult to like

Question 3:

After their conversation, he realises he's a complete "Hecate" for thinking such a thing. What is he calling himself?

- A. The Grim Reaper
- B. An Old Saxon
- C. A Harpee
- D. The Queen of the Witches

Question 4:

No sooner has the Bard arrived home to Anne Hathaway, his "periwig pated" partner, when she tells him some bad news. Why is he so shocked?

- A. She's waving her arms wildly in the air
- B. She's an idiot
- C. She's heavily pregnant
- D. She's wearing a wig

Question 5:

On account of this latest upset to young Will's sensibilities, he tells her he's heading back to London and leaves Anne in tears as she struggles with the "batlet". What's that you say?

- A. A long forked iron rod for raking the fire
- B. A heavy rolling pin
- C. A sharp sword kept in a tight leather sheath

D. A wooden club used for beating clothes during washing

Question 6:

When Will arrives at the Globe Theatre, there's a group of "groundlings" all around him - so he hurries inside. What's he running from?

- A. The children that debt collectors pay to wait for their erring client
- B. The beggars who hang around the theatre
- C. The part of the audience who pay a penny to see plays
- D. The pigeons and rats on the dirty streets

Question 7:

As Shakespeare sits at his desk writing with his quill, he hears a "thostle" which distracts him for a few moments. What's he listening to?

- A. A vendor
- B. A musician
- C. A singer
- D. A thrush

Question 8:

It's nearly time for William's play to start, and the public are clamouring to get a glimpse of Queen Elizabeth who has turned up for a private showing. "Will you flap-dragon, your majesty?",

Will asks nervously. What is he expecting her to do?

- A. Be angry with the host
- B. Swallow or gulp down
- C. Remove her outer garments
- D. Faint in the close, heavy atmosphere

Question 9:

When yet another monarch is killed on stage, the Queen glances sharply over at Will who, catching her eye, becomes "a man of salt." What has he become?

- A. A man of tears
- B. A man of faith
- C. A man of stone
- D. A man of fear

Question 10:

When the long day comes to an end, William seeks out his friend Burbage at the local inn, and finds him "high-stomach'd" after a night's drinking. "All's well that ends well", thinks William but what is Burbage thinking?

- A. "I'm ready to be sick!"
- B. "I'm ready to sleep!"
- C. "I'm ready to pass wind!"
- D. "I'm ready for a fight!"

Crafted by Trivia Architect
Answers can be found in your *Comedy of Errors* program.

....From the clipboard of the director....or.....

....approaching the play.....

The story of *The Comedy of Errors* is of a family torn asunder by a storm on the high seas. Four boys, twins of different social standing are rescued from a storm tossed vessel, only to be split asunder during their very rescue. One of these pairs of grown twins shows up on the Isle of Ephesus, just after their equally lost father has been sentenced to death. Rescues, ships, adventures, sword play, stolen gold, and exotic islands all could be conceived as elements from a tale told about Pirates. Thus our version of the play will be set in an imagined piratical world. Closely corresponding to Shakespeare's factual time (1564 - 1619), we will hope such a tale about pirates will help in centering the play as unqualified fun for actor and audience alike.

In stealing a plot about twins from the earlier comedy of Plautus, Shakespeare shifts the focus from the brother who belongs to the island of Ephesus, who is an ordinary stay-at-home husband, to feature instead his brother who is more of a wandering adventurer. This brother in the original play was named Antipholus Erotos (which is thought to be a variation of *Erratus* or *Erans*). Translating this name into English brings us the key central word, errors, of our play's title.

Shakespeare's central character Antipholus from Syracuse is conducting a search for his brother, as the play begins. Antipholus says, *"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"*

His servant, Dromio, who is equally a twin without a brother, expresses a blinding moment of similar self-pity when he boldly asks, *"Am I not Dromio?"*

Both of these expressions of loss, or statements of confusion, would suggest that we've chanced upon a melancholy world, and a sad story which such lonely searching would create. At first glance it doesn't sound at all like a story which would fuel the ordinary world of comedy. But if the audience can trust the structure of this beginning, which is Shakespeare's early genius, the laughter will follow a less forced path than the one it would be asked to follow were we merely informed that the play is a comedy. This "back-story" becomes a kind of straight story, which should allow the warped and woolly comedy we will find as the play gets rolling. In a discussion of genre, the idea that twins are "parted shortly after birth," becomes the bright idea of the play, the comic premise which the audience is asked to accept so that the play can travel the comic distance it hopes to traverse.

What I am suggesting about joining us in approaching this play, is that understanding how it arrives at humor is more provocative than simply saying that it is funny. We struggle to make comedy in the theatre by struggling with technique. And within such technique, we depend upon staying a step ahead of the audience, while at the same time trying to be sure that all are capable of following along. .

Why "The Bard"

The term bard, which is sometimes extended to "The Bard of Avon", is a widespread nickname for Shakespeare. It identifies him as the chronicler of his tribe's golden age and suggests he is an English Homer. The term was first commonly applied to Shakespeare around the time of David Garrick, the great actor who established Shakespeare's popularity in the eighteenth century. One of Garrick's songs at the jubilee of 1769 proclaimed that "The bard of all bards was a Warwickshire bard."

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WITH YOUR

VISA OR MASTERCARD

TICKET & BOX OFFICE INFORMATION

PHONE (251)-460-6306

Tickets for Theatre USA's Production of *The Comedy of Errors*

General Admission \$10.00 Students * \$7.00

The Box Office will be open starting Monday April 12, 2004 from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday and one hour before each performance.

The Box Office is located in the lobby of the Laidlaw Performing Arts Center on the main campus of The University of South Alabama. Tickets are sold on a first come first served.

All seats reserved. All sales final. No refund or exchange.

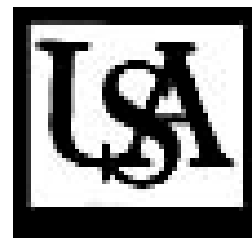
*Students tickets available for all students with valid ID.

One ticket per ID.

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Cast for The Comedy of Errors

Solinus, Duke of Ephesus Jared Peregoy
Egeon, Merchant of Ephesus Lou Courie
Antipholus of Ephesus Robert J. Wells III
Antipholus of Syracuse Paul Thomas
Dromio of Ephesus Jameel Lewis
Dromio of Syracuse Mason Merrill
Balthasar Nicholas Yohn
Angelo David Peden
Merchant/Friend Katie Vickers
Doctor Pinch Christopher Isbell
Emilia, an Abbess Jean Galloway
Adriana, Wife of A. of E Jamie Englehart
Luciana, her sister Jenifer Borntreger
Luce, maid to Adriana Danielle Norwood
Courtesan Jamie Lynn Barbour
Officer Roderick Aust





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The Department of Dramatic Arts
Theatre USA
Presents
William Shakespeare's
THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
Thursday, Friday, Saturday, April 22 - 24
and Monday April 26 at 8:00 pm
Sunday April 25 at 2:00 pm
Call (251) 460-6306 TO RESERVE YOUR TICKETS

Laidlaw Performing Arts Center at conor of University Blvd. North and USA South Drive.
on the University of South Alabama Campus