

CARDIFF OPEN AIR THEATRE FESTIVAL 2018

Sophia Gardens
Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9SQ



AUDITION NOTICE

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Director
Simon H West

“The pound of flesh which I demand of him is dearly bought: Tis mine. And I shall have it.”

In Venice, the centre of consumption, speculation and debt, Bassanio borrows money from his friend Antonio to finance his attempt to win the hand of Portia, a wealthy heiress. Antonio, in turn, takes out a loan from the moneylender Shylock. The loan will be repaid when Antonio's ships return to the city. But if they should fail, and the money cannot be repaid, Antonio shall give to Shylock a pound of his own flesh. And they do fail. And Shylock will have his 'bond'.

Performance Dates: Thursday 21st June to Saturday 30th June 2018

11 performances over 10 days at the Everyman Festival Theatre, Sophia Gardens, Cardiff.

Performances every evening at 8pm with matinees on Saturdays 23rd & 30th June.

No performances on Sunday 24th June.

Technical & Dress Rehearsals: Sunday 17th June to Wednesday 20th June.

The first rehearsal will be on Sunday April 15th (tbc) at Chapter Arts Centre

Rehearsals will continue from April 22nd (tbc) onwards.

Rehearsal days are likely to be Tuesday and Thursday evenings, Saturday afternoons and Sundays all day.

Rehearsals will be carefully scheduled and not everyone will be called to every session.

Additional rehearsal days may be called nearer production period.

Please note that all performances take place in the open-air.

THE PLAY

Antonio, the merchant of Venice, gives 3,000 ducats to his friend Bassanio so that he can marry the wealthy and beautiful Portia of Belmont. Since Antonio's money is tied up in business that depends on the safe return of his ships from sea, he borrows the money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender who he has previously insulted for his high interest. Shylock proposes a bond according to which if Antonio does not repay the loan, Shylock will have the right to a pound of Antonio's flesh.

Portia's father has decided that she will marry the man choosing the correct casket among three (gold, silver and lead). The Princes of Morocco and Arragon fail, but Bassanio succeeds by choosing lead.

News arrives that Antonio's ships have been lost, so he is unable to pay his debt. Shylock demands his pound of flesh and brings Bassanio and Antonio before the court of law. Portia disguises herself as a young lawyer acting on behalf of Antonio. She states that Shylock is entitled to his pound of flesh, but as the contract stipulates flesh and not blood, he is to spill not one drop of it. Shylock cannot carry out his revenge and Portia insists therefore that he should forfeit his life for having conspired against the life of a Venetian.

The judge pardons Shylock on condition that he gives half his wealth to Antonio and half to the state. Antonio refuses his portion on condition that Shylock converts to Christianity and leaves his property to his daughter Jessica, who had run away with her lover Lorenzo. Finally there is good news about Antonio's ships.

THE CHARACTERS

- The Synopsis and Character Breakdown apply to the play as published and do not take into account any creative decisions or cuts to the text that may be made prior to the start of rehearsals
- All roles are available, casting is open and newcomers to the Festival are welcome and encouraged
- Line counts are given in brackets; they are approximate and for guidance only
- Some roles can be played by male or female
- Smaller roles will be doubled / trebled and some characters may be combined
- There may be opportunities for non-speaking ensemble roles

Portia: A wealthy heiress from Belmont. Portia's beauty is matched only by her intelligence. Bound by a clause in her father's will that requires her to marry whichever suitor chooses correctly among three caskets, Portia is nonetheless able to marry her true love, Bassanio. Far and away the cleverest of the play's characters, it is Portia, in the disguise of a young law clerk, who saves Antonio from Shylock's knife. (600)

Shylock: A Jewish moneylender in Venice. Angered by his mistreatment at the hands of Venice's Christians, particularly Antonio, Shylock schemes to eke out his revenge by ruthlessly demanding as payment a pound of Antonio's flesh. Although seen by the rest of the play's characters as inhuman, Shylock at times, reveals himself to be only too human. These contradictions, and his eloquent expressions of hatred, have earned Shylock a place as one of Shakespeare's most memorable and controversial characters. (350)

Bassanio: A gentleman of Venice, and a kinsman and dear friend to Antonio. Bassanio's love for the wealthy Portia leads him to borrow money from Shylock with Antonio as his guarantor. Although an ineffectual businessman, Bassanio proves himself a worthy suitor, correctly identifying the casket that contains Portia's portrait. (330)

Antonio: The merchant of the title, whose love for his friend Bassanio prompts him to sign Shylock's contract and almost lose his life. Antonio is something of a mercurial figure, often inexplicably melancholy and, as Shylock points out, possessed of an incorrigible dislike of Jews. Nonetheless, Antonio is beloved of his friends and proves merciful to Shylock, albeit with conditions. (180)

Lorenzo: A friend of Bassanio and Antonio, Lorenzo is in love with Shylock's daughter, Jessica. He schemes to help Jessica escape from her father's house, and he eventually elopes with her to Belmont. (180)

Gratiano: A friend of Bassanio's who accompanies him to Belmont. A coarse and garrulous young man, Gratiano is Shylock's most vocal and insulting critic during the trial. While Bassanio courts Portia, Gratiano falls in love with and eventually weds Portia's lady-in-waiting, Nerissa. (170)

Launcelot Gobbo: Bassanio's servant. A comical, clownish figure who is especially adept at making puns, Launcelot leaves Shylock's service in order to work for Bassanio. (160)

Salerio: A Venetian gentleman, and friend to Antonio, Bassanio, and Lorenzo. Salerio escorts the newlyweds Jessica and Lorenzo to Belmont, and returns with Bassanio and Gratiano for Antonio's trial. He is often almost indistinguishable from his companion Solanio. (120)

Prince of Morocco: A Prince who seeks Portia's hand in marriage. The Prince of Morocco asks Portia to ignore his dark countenance and seeks to win her by picking one of the three caskets. Certain that the caskets reflect Portia's beauty and stature, the Prince of Morocco picks the gold chest, which proves to be incorrect. (100)

Jessica: Although she is Shylock's daughter, Jessica hates life in her father's house, and elopes with the young Christian gentleman, Lorenzo. The fate of her soul is often in doubt: the play's characters wonder if her marriage can overcome the fact that she was born a Jew, and we wonder if her sale of a ring given to her father by her mother is excessively callous. (80)

Nerissa: Portia's lady-in-waiting and confidante. She marries Gratiano and escorts Portia on Portia's trip to Venice by disguising herself as her law clerk. (80)

Prince of Arragon: An arrogant Spanish nobleman who also attempts to win Portia's hand by picking a casket. Like the prince of Morocco, however, the prince of Arragon chooses unwisely. He picks the silver casket, which merely contains a message calling him an idiot. (60)

Duke: The ruler of Venice, who presides over Antonio's trial. Although a powerful man, the duke's state is built on respect for the law, and he is unable to help Antonio. (60)

Solanio: A Venetian gentleman, and frequent counterpart to Salerio. (50)

Old Gobbo: Launcelot's father, also a servant in Venice. (35)

Tubal: friend to Shylock. (12)

Stephano: servant to Portia. (8)

Leonardo: servant to Bassanio. (2)

Balthazar: servant to Portia. (1)

Nobles of Venice, Officers of the Court of Justice, Gaoler, Servants, Attendants.

THE DIRECTOR

"Money. It makes the world go round. Portia has it; Bassanio wants it; Shylock lends it; Antonio borrows it. But what happens when the merchant has to sacrifice his flesh for the debt he owes and the friend he loves?"

For this production, I am looking for a company of players that excel in lead roles and smaller character parts. There will be plenty of opportunity for casting if you can offer the strengths of acting and story-telling plus the technical requirements of being heard in the open-air!

A quick note about rehearsals: BE THERE! I can work around scheduled unavailability and you will not be called unless I intend working with you; those who have worked with me before will know that rehearsals are busy and concentrated but always fun!

I'm looking forward to working with you all on this fabulously dark comedy of love, sex, power and revenge! See you at auditions."

SHW

Simon H West is a freelance director, performer and producer. Before he trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, Simon was a member of Everyman Theatre and appeared in many of their productions at Dyffryn Gardens and Chapter Arts Centre. Since then he has directed over fifty professional productions for the stage, appeared in theatre, television and commercials across Europe and lectures in Performing Arts. He directed his first production for Everyman – Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' – at the 2001 Festival. Other Festival shows include 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', 'Comedy of Errors', 'The Merry Wives of Windsor', 'The Gondoliers', 'HMS Pinafore', 'Blackadder II', 'Blackadder the Third', 'Allo 'Allo!' and last year's acclaimed production of 'Macbeth'. With GO Productions, Simon has also co-produced Everyman's Family Show since 2013. 'The Merchant Of Venice' will mark his nineteenth year as part of the Festival and his thirteenth production as a director.

Everyman Theatre Cardiff Ltd.

Audition Form for

The Merchant of Venice [2018]

To book your audition time please contact AMANDA SMITH on:
07540434046 or nearly50@outlook.com



Please write clearly and don't forget to bring this form with photograph to your audition!

Name.....

Date of audition..... time.....

Address.....

Postcode..... email address.....

Tel.no [home]..... [work/mobile]

Date of birth if **under 16** on 21st July 2017

ANY SPECIAL SKILLS – eg, dancing, singing, juggling, combat, etc.....

Please state **all commitments** [family/work/holidays/other shows etc] that **may** conflict with the rehearsal period!

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE [continue overleaf if necessary]

Is there a particular role in which you are interested?

If not cast in a principal role, would you be prepared to join the cast in an ensemble / non-speaking role – yes / no

Are you already a member of Everyman Theatre? yes / no

PLEASE NOTE – everyone cast must become an Everyman member.

PLEASE DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE

NOTES:

Not cast/recalled/cast as..... written acceptance rec'd **yes/no**