

THE MASKERS THEATRE COMPANY presents

WILLIAM THE SHAKESPEARE'S

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

Directed by Brian Stansbridge



www.maskers.org.uk

The Maskers Theatre Company is a Registered Charity — No 900067

Wed 16 - Sat 26 July 2008 at 7.45

Except Monday 21st July

The Maskers at Hamptworth Lodge

Welcome to the Masker's Theatre Company's open air production, which for the first time we are presenting on the Archery Lawn at Hamptworth Lodge.

Many of you will have seen our previous productions at Mottisfont Abbey and may have been disappointed at the change in National Trust policy which led to us moving. I am sure you will agree, however, that Hamptworth Lodge is an equally beautiful location and the Archery Lawn and its terraces are the perfect place in which to perform. We are deeply grateful to the Hamptworth Estate and the Anderson family for allowing us to perform here and for all their help in putting this years play, *'The Comedy of Errors'*, together.



The Maskers Theatre Company is delighted to be celebrating its 40th Birthday here at Hamptworth and hopes to continue to bring quality theatre to its audiences at the Nuffield Theatre, the Maskers Studio and at Hamptwoth Lodge for many, many years to come.

We hope you enjoy the performance and your visit to this lovely house, gardens and grounds. If you would like to receive details of future Maskers productions please complete the form at the back of this programme and leave it in the box provided on the Front of House table or bar area.

We request that you take all your picnic leftovers and empties home with you - thank you.

We look forward to seeing you again next year.

The Maskers Theatre Company

You are invited to relax a little and finish your picnics after the play finishes but we would ask that you vacate the grounds by 11pm. Car park stewards will direct you to the nearest exit.

A variety of refreshments are available throughout the evening and you are advised to pre-order your interval drinks.

Smoking is not permitted in the grounds of Hamptworth Lodge.



The Comedy of Errors

Ramblings from the Director



I have loved the *Comedy of Errors* ever since I played Dromio of Syracuse in our first production of the play in 1980 and I still have the scars to prove it - literally. As you will see, the play requires that the Dromio twins are subjected to much physical abuse, but the esteemed actor who was playing Antipholus of Syracuse was pulling his punches and it didn't look very realistic. So, I suggested he should hit me for real, but in places where it didn't hurt too much. This worked fine in rehearsal, but as soon as he discarded his glasses for the actual performances, his vision went a little fuzzy and so did his aim. I emerged from the run of the play with bruises all over my body.

Me and my big mouth! Having had to suffer for my art, I have made sure Matt Avery and Rob Praine suffer at least as much as I did!

Now you may wonder why we have set the play in the Ottoman Empire, circa 1850. Yes, well, the explanation is a little complex but it goes something like this:

- Shakespeare clearly wasn't too fussy about historical accuracy. *The Comedy of Errors* is based on a play by the Roman playwright Plautus, who was writing around the end of the second century B.C., but the bard includes a Christian Abbess and refers to political events in late 16th century France and to the Americas which had not been discovered by Europeans until relatively recently. It was probably first performed in Elizabethan costume. So, all things considered I don't see why I shouldn't choose the period in which we set the production.
- It is set in Ephesus and Ephesus is in modern day Turkey which was the centre of the Ottoman Empire. It requires a lot of paranoia amongst the rulers of the City, whereby visitors from certain destinations are regarded with so much suspicion that they are executed unless they can pay a heavy fine. In the mid 19th Century, the Ottoman Empire was very worried about foreigners (especially Russians), so might feasibly have been tempted into taking such drastic measures.
- The Ottoman Empire, whilst fundamentally Muslim, gave sanctuary to people from many persecuted religious minorities (at a price), so might easily have allowed a Christian Abbey in its midst, if they complied with certain conditions
- The Ottoman Empire in the mid 19th century was, in many ways drawn towards Europe and the dress of the upper echelons of society increasingly reflected that, many adopted European fashions (but retained Muslim headwear, so that they could touch the ground with their forehead whilst praying). Of course, the low strata of society didn't have anything to do with such fripperies and retained Middle Eastern costume. So, by setting the play there and then, we had some great opportunities to create interesting costumes.

It's a bit of a romp and nothing bears too close scrutiny. Look too deeply, or too long and you start to say 'Hang on a minute, wouldn't they have realised that...' I hope you enjoy the show as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

Thanks to my wife Angela for her unending support and to all the cast and crew.

Brian Stansbridge



The Comedy of Errors

The precise year when William Shakespeare penned *The Comedy of Errors* is unknown, but most experts agree that it is one of his earliest plays. It was written some time between 1589 and 1594, and is possibly his first comedy and certainly his shortest play.

It was first performed on December 28, 1594, at the Gray's Inn Christmas Revels, to an audience that would have been largely composed of lawyers and law students. It may have been specifically written for this occasion (although it may not). If it was, then that may explain why, unlike his other comedies which rely on verbal humour, this play employs far more 'slapstick' humour.

The basic plot was not dreamed up by the bard himself. His primary source was clearly the *Menaechmi* of Plautus, a Roman comic playwright, but he also borrowed from another play by Plautus, *Amphitruo*. From the *Menaechmi* Shakespeare took his central plot, which revolves around "errors," or mistaken identity, involving identical twin brothers. To this he added additional characters and episodes, including a second set of twins.



The tone of the play is drawn from Italian comedy of the period, and it is said that the shrewish wife Adriana, is a characteristic figure in English comedy. However, is she 'shrewish' or is she justifiably discontented with the way she is treated by her husband? Listen to what Adriana says about men, women and marriage in Act II Scene 1, then think about the characters of Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Kate in *The Taming of the Shrew* and you might consider

that Shakespeare's musings on the lot of women were remarkable for the period. He might not have been a 'feminist' as some have claimed, but, as one writer on such matters, Liz Lewis wrote, he "depicts the condition of women within a patriarchal system and created women characters which in their richness transcend the limitations of his time".

The play has always been very popular with audiences, if somewhat less so with critics, and in the 20th century, the plot was borrowed by Rodgers and Hart for their musical, *The Boys from Syracuse*.

In many ways it is a perfect play for an outdoor production. It is relatively short, involves lots of physical (and therefore visual) humour and business and it all takes place within the space of a single day, starting in the morning and ending at night, so there is no need to ask our lighting designer to turn night into day or vice versa (a tough call, that one).



William Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon A brief history

1564	Baptised April 26th, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire
1582	Marries local girl, Anne Hathaway who bore him a daughter and twins
1584	Living in London and emerging as a rising playwright
1590's	Earliest major plays written, mainly comedies, romances and histories
Early 1600's	Great tragedies written
1610	Retired from London and went back to Stratford-upon-Avon to live as a country gentleman
1610/11/12	Last plays written combining elements of romance, comedy and tragedy
1616	Died April 23 rd , Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire



What do we really know about Shakespeare?

The travel writer, Bill Bryson published a fascinating book on Shakespeare in 2007. It contained some interesting facts that show how little we really know about him:-

- We don't really have any idea what he looked like. There are three likenesses from which all others are derived. There is no evidence that the best known – the Chandos portrait – was actually him and the other two were both painted long after his death.
- The earliest written description of him ('he was a handsome, well-shap't man; very good company, and of a very readie and pleasant smooth witt') was written sixty four years after his death by John Aubrey who wasn't born until ten years after Shakespeare's death.
- We don't know exactly how many plays he wrote or the order he wrote them.
- We only have fourteen words written in his own hand, comprising six signatures and the words 'by me' written on his will.
- We are not sure how to spell his name. Neither was he. In all six surviving signatures it is spelled differently and none of those spellings is the same as the way we spell it today.
- We are not even sure how to pronounce his name. There is a view that he may have pronounced it with a short 'a' as in 'shack' and rhyming with 'back'.
- We celebrate his birthday on 23rd April (St. George's Day), but the only fact we have is that he was baptised on 26th April. He was probably born a short period before that, as it was the custom to baptise babies soon after their birth, in case they didn't survive, but there are plenty of exceptions to this. In any event he was born under the old Julian Calendar and under today's Gregorian calendar, 23rd April becomes 3rd May!



Cast

Solinus	Alan Watson
Egeon	John Souter
Antipholus of Syracuse	Pete Burrows
Antipholus of Ephesus	James Norton
Dromio of Syracuse.....	Rob Praine
Dromio of Ephesus.....	Matt Avery
1st Merchant.....	Lewis Brunt
2nd Merchant	David Collis
Angelo.....	Paul Baker
Balthasar.....	Bruce Atkinson
Pinch.....	Albie Minns
Officer	Adam Taussik
Executioner.....	Tony Lawther
Adriana	Rachael Courage
Luciana	Joanna Russel
Luce	Suze Provins
Nell.....	Meri Mackney
Courtesan	George Moody
Emilia	Jenni Watson

The Chorus Erroneous - Courtesans, Nuns, Market Traders, Juggler, Snake Charmer, Belly Dancer, Café Waiter, Customers and Crowd :-

Brenda Atkinson, Chris Baker, Lewis Brunt, David Fancett, Jo Fox, Angela Stansbridge, Joanna Iacovou, Clare Minns, Albie Minns, Sylvia Warren, Daniel Humphrey, Suze Provins, Meri Mackney,

The play takes place in the City of Ephesus
over the course of one day

**There will be an interval of 20 minutes
(We recommend you pre-order your interval drinks)**



Production Team

Director	Brian Stansbridge
Director's Assistant.....	Angela Stansbridge
Production Manager.....	Christine Baker
Technical Manager	Tony Lawther
Technical Assistants	David Ilsley, Nathan Weeks, Clive Weeks
Stage Manager	Angela Barks
Set construction	Roger Lockett, Graham Buchanan
Set painting	Ken Spencer, Graham Buchanan
Lighting.....	Tony Lawther, David Ilsley
Sound	Jamie McCarthy, Tony Lawther, David Ilsley
Costume design	Serena Brown
Properties	Ella Lockett, Gill Buchanan, Alison Tebbitt, Liz Hill
Set dressing.....	Angela Stansbridge, Luciana Lattanzi, Angela Barks Gill Buchanan, Ella Lockett, Sarah and Steve Russell
Flag design.....	Hazel Burrows
Flag painting.....	Sarah and Steve Russell
Special effects	Tony Lawther, Bob and Molly Gibson, John Hamon, Pete Burrows, George Moody
Pyro operator.....	David Fancett
Fight arrangements	Paul Benzing
Back stage assistants.....	Katy Mortimer, David Fancett
Front of House Managers.....	Geoff and Pam Cook Maskers Members and Friends
Safety Officer	Ken Hann
Publicity	Sarah Russell, Angela Stansbridge Ian Morley, Pam and Geoff Cook
Publicity artwork design	John Hamon
Programme.....	Luciana Lattanzi
Photography.....	Clive Weeks

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful thanks are extended to:

The Hamptworth Estate • St Edward's School, Sherfield English
Students of Swanwick Lodge • World of Water, Romsey
Greta Paxton, Dee Cee Upholstery
Costume Workshop, Sandown • Cedar Group, Romsey
White & Black Coffee • Butlers Events

Everyone who has turned out their attic to help create the market!



Hamptworth Country Fayre and Companion Show Sunday 17th August 2008, 10am-5pm

We welcome The Pike and Shot Tour and Event Company with their 17th century living history 'village' with costumed villagers giving various demonstrations.

You will also be able to enjoy the usual country activities:

- Clay Pigeon Shooting ❖ Gundog displays ❖ Archery
- Ferret and Terrier Racing ❖ Falconry
- ❖ Parading of the New Forest Hounds and Beagles
- ❖ The Companion Dog Show with fun classes and the ever popular Waggiest Tail Competition!

Adults £5, concessions £4, children under 6 free - family ticket £15
Bring a picnic and stay all day!

The Tudor Rose, Fordingbridge

The Tudor welcomes families to enjoy great pub food, with large garden, Koi pond and miniature golf course.
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Butlers Events offers hog roast hire, BBQ's and bars (staffed or unstaffed) for any occasion either at Butlers, The Tudor or a venue of your own choice. Butlers Events are pleased to have been chosen as food and beverage co-ordinators for 'The Comedy of Errors'



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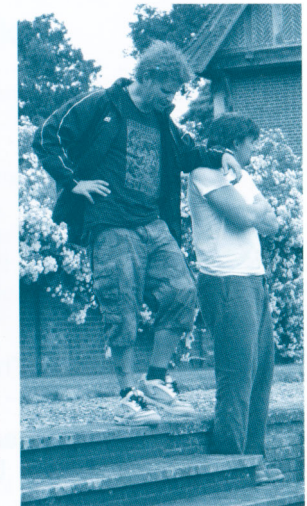
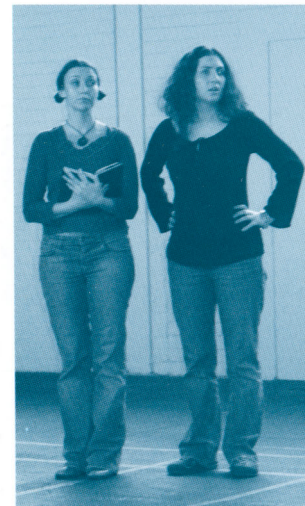
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Comedy of Errors in Rehearsal!



Maskers Forthcoming Productions

20-25 October 2008
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Shirley, Southampton

Beggar's Opera

By John Gay

Directed by Philip de Grouchy

Tickets: 023 8055 1489

Available from 1 September 2008



8-13 December 2008

Christmas at Tudor Merchants Hall

off Bugle Street, Southampton

Directed by Avril Woodward

Tickets: 023 8055 1489

Available from 1 October 2008



27-31 January 2009

The Nuffield Theatre Southampton

Little Women

Adapted from the novel by Louisa May Alcott

Directed by Sheana Carrington

Box Office: 023 8067 1771



March 2009

The Maskers Studio
Shirley, Southampton

The Homecoming

By Harold Pinter

Directed by Ron Stannard

Tickets: 023 8055 1489



Why not join The Maskers as a Full Member or a Friend?

The Maskers Theatre Company is keen to welcome new members.
If you are interested in joining please contact us for further information.
Or you can sign up to become a friend of Maskers to receive regular
updates on Maskers productions

Post the slip below with your details on
in the box in the Front of House tent on your way out

Contact Joanna Iacovou our Membership Officer
Telephone 023 8055 1489

www.maskers.org.uk

The Maskers Theatre Company is a Registered Charity — No 900067

Win a pair of **FREE** tickets to see
Little Women at The Nuffield Theatre in January

To enter just complete this slip asking to be sent details of
Maskers productions... Pop it in the box on your way out and
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- I am interested in becoming a member of Maskers Theatre.
- Please add me to your database and send me details of forthcoming productions.
- Please enter me in the prize draw. Winners will be notified by 1st September 2008.

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