

A LEEDS LEISURE SERVICES PRESENTATION.

leeds arts centre

presents

The  
MERCHANT  
of VENICE.



by William Shakespeare.

civic theatre

## **The Play's Sources**

‘The Merchant of Venice’ was written in the period 1596–98. William Shakespeare was in his early thirties. The two themes of the story – love and money – were taken from an Italian tale, one of a collection titled ‘Il Pecorone’ written in the fourteenth century. The idea for the caskets of gold, silver and lead may have come from the Roman fables ‘Gesta Romanorum’ – still being published in 1595.

The character of Shylock had more topical origins. In 1589 a rival playhouse had presented Marlowe’s ‘The Jew of Malta’, which had a Jewish villain, and his daughter becomes a Christian. ‘Shylock’ is also believed to be based on a Dr. Roderigo Lopez, a Jew of Portuguese extract, who was hanged at Tyburn in 1594 on charges of plotting to poison Queen Elizabeth. The fact that the charges were false did not seem to matter – Lopez was executed.

Shakespeare, always eager to retain royal patronage, merely utilised the ensuing wave of anti-semitic feeling.

# The **MERCHANT**

## **VENICE**

THE DUKE OF VENICE

ANTONIO, a merchant of Venice

SALERIO } friends of Antonio  
SOLANIO }

BASSANIO, friend of Antonio and suitor of Portia

GRATIANO } friends of Antonio and Bassanio  
LORENZO }

LEONARDO, servant of Bassanio

SHYLOCK, a rich Jew of Venice

TUBAL, a Jew, friend of Shylock

JESSICA, daughter of Shylock

LAUNCELOT GOBBO, servant of Shylock

OLD GOBBO, father of Launcelot

GAOLER

## **BELMONT**

PORTIA, a rich heiress, Lady of Belmont

NERISSA, Portia's waiting-woman

BALTHASAR } servants of Portia  
STEPHANO }

LADIES in waiting to Portia

PRINCE OF MOROCCO                      suitors of Portia

PRINCE OF ARRAGON

SERVANT GIRL, a Moor

MUSICIAN

DESIGNED AND DIRECTED

of **VERICE.**

Tony Nelson  
Graham Alchorne  
Tim Powell  
Trevor Smith  
Martin Key  
Edwin Barraclough  
Alan Mitcheson  
Philip Pawson  
Leonard Sheldon  
Jim Young  
Anne Robinson  
John Biggins  
Geoffrey Mountain  
Philip Pawson

Pam Swift  
Monica Brown  
Gary Linley  
Andrew Butler  
Shirley Brearly  
Betty Johnson  
Christine Lamy  
Stephen Hill  
George Teale  
Elizabeth Key  
Michael Beardsell

BY MALCOLM BROWN.

**For the Arts Centre:**

**Stage Manager**

**Properties**

**Prompt**

**George Westmoreland**

**Doreen Parker**

**Betty Triggs**

**Christine Wilson**

**Music composed by**

**Set Construction**

**Gillian Thresh**

**George Westmoreland**

**Ray Spurgeon**

**Trevor Money**

**Leslie Wormald**

**Wardrobe**

**Maggie Rhodes**

**and members of the  
wardrobe team**

**Publicity**

**Box Office**

**Julian Norman**

**John Pemberton**

**For the Civic Theatre:**

**Theatre Manager**

**Lighting Technician**

**Mr. F. Mower**

**Julia Piggott**

**NOTE TO OTHER SOCIETIES –**

**WE HIRE OUT COSTUMES!**

**Enquiries to M. Rhodes Tel: 756796**

**There will be one interval of fifteen minutes, during which the theatre bar will be open. Ice cream will be on sale in the auditorium and coffee may be obtained in the bar.**

## **About the Play**

In Belmont lives Portia, a beautiful, rich and single heiress. Her father's will dictates that she may marry only to a suitor who chooses the casket which contains her portrait.

In Venice, Bassanio is eager to travel to Belmont to woo Portia, but lacks funds to equip himself and his party in order to impress her. Antonio, Bassanio's closest friend, agrees to lend him three thousand ducats, but as all his fortune is at present at sea, in the form of merchandise, he does not have money readily available. He acquires the money for his friend, however, by standing surety for a loan from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. Antonio and Shylock are old enemies, as the terms of the loan indicate. The money is to be repaid within three months – or a pound of Antonio's flesh will be forfeit!

Bassanio goes to Belmont and succeeds in winning Portia's hand. She gives him a ring which he promises never to lose, nor give away.

Back in Venice, Jessica, Shylock's daughter, unable to live under his tyranny any longer, robs her father and elopes with her lover, Lorenzo, a Christian. Shylock, enraged and embittered, seeks a target for his hate, and when Antonio's vessels are lost at sea, he claims his "pound of flesh".

Portia, disguised as a lawyer, comes to Venice, and defeats Shylock's plans. She then claims the ring she gave to Bassanio as payment for her services as a lawyer. Bassanio, unaware of her true identity, is reluctantly compelled to agree.

In Belmont, Portia returns the ring to Bassanio.

**“ ‘The Merchant of Venice’ is a fairy tale . . . but Shakespeare’s practical business . . . was simply, so to charge them (the stories) with humanity that they did not betray belief in the human beings presenting them.”**

**Henry Granville Barker.**

**“The play is about flesh and gold. Flesh is living and, through the music of love, capable of being transfigured above the muddy vesture of decay; gold is dead, but it breeds hate like maggots.”**

**G. Wilson Knight.**

**“ ‘The Merchant of Venice’ presents . . . Shakespeare’s ideal of love’s wealth, its abundant and sometimes embarrassing riches.”**

**John Russell Brown.**

**“Antonio and his friends do not realize . . . that their morality is essentially no finer than Shylock’s, or rather, that Shylock’s is the logical consequence of their own. Because they are unconscious they are forgiven – whereas Shylock, being conscious, cannot be. And that is true to life.”**

**J. Middleton Murray.**



COMING NEXT WEEK:

The William Sheafield Players present

# **SHELLEY**

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OUR NEXT PRODUCTION

enter a free man.

by Tom Stoppard.

**TUES. 9 DECEMBER – SAT. 13 DECEMBER**

**CIVIC THEATRE, Cookridge Street, Leeds.**

**In accordance with the requirements of the Watch Committee of  
Leeds City Council:-**

- (a) The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exit and entrance doors and such doors must at that time be open.**
- (b) All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any obstruction.**
- (c) The safety curtain must be lowered and raised once immediately before the commencement of each performance so as to ensure being in proper working order.**

