THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

FRI & SAT
APRIL 30 & MAY 1
@7PM
WINEDALE THEATRE BARN
WINEDALE HISTORICAL CENTER
ROUND TOP, TEXAS
Tonight’s performance is the culmination of a semester of work by the students of E379M: Shakespeare Through Performance. These students have studied conflict and belief in Shakespeare’s plays from a variety of perspectives, reading, writing, discussing, and performing, both at the University of Texas at Austin and on weekends at the Winedale Historical Center. Our emphasis this semester is in conjunction with the Texas Institute for Literary and Textual Studies, or TILTS, which in its inaugural year is focusing on Literature and Religious Conflict in the Renaissance.

ABOUT US

Shakespeare at Winedale is a program of the University of Texas at Austin English Department that invites students from all disciplines to learn about Shakespeare through the intensive experience of performing his works. Since 1970, hundreds of students have taken the stage in the Winedale Theatre Barn, using all their intelligence, creativity and passion to bring these plays to life. Students in the course dedicate themselves to the principles of Shakespeare's own theatre: a bare stage, a creative ensemble, a focus on the text, and an appeal to the imagination of the audience.

SPECIAL THANKS

Winedale Historical Complex Staff
Elizabeth Cullingford, UT English Department Chair
Angela Barratt
Doc Ayres
DRAMATIS PERSONAE

THE DUKE OF VENICE ........................................... Christopher Fox
ANTONIO ....................................................... Elizabeth Rentfro
                 a merchant of Venice
BASSANIO ..................................................... Christopher Barton
                 his friend, suitor to Portia
GRAZIANO ........................................................ Ryan Cooper
                 a friend to Antonio and Bassanio
SALERIO ........................................................ Sarah White
                 a friend to Antonio and Bassanio
SOLANIO ........................................................ Michelle Lee
                 a friend to Antonio and Bassanio
LORENZO ........................................................ Brian Gumz
                 a friend to Antonio and Bassanio
SHYLOCK ....................................................... James Lamon
                 a financier
JESSICA ........................................................ Niki Demkowicz
                 Shylock's daughter
TUBAL ........................................................... Monica Gully
                 his friend
LANCELOT GOBBO ............................................ Shafayet Faraizi
                 a clown, servant to Shylock
OLD GOBBO .................................................... Christopher Fox
                 father to Lancelot
PORTIA ........................................................... Jillian Owens
                 an heiress
NERISSA ........................................................ Chelsea Bunn
                 her waiting gentlewoman
BALTHASAR ..................................................... Monica Gully
                 servant to Portia
STEPHANO ...................................................... Michelle Lee
                 servant to Portia
THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO ................................ Shafayet Faraizi
                 a suitor to Portia
THE PRINCE OF ARAGON .................................. Monica Gully
                 a suitor to Portia
THANK YOU

Shakespeare at Winedale thanks the following individuals, foundations, and organizations for their generous support of this program, Shakespeare at Winedale Outreach, and Camp Shakespeare. Your gifts make great Shakespeare and educational programs available to our entire community. Thank you for 40 years of enthusiastic support. We couldn’t do it without you.

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PLAY SYNOPSIS

Antonio, a rich merchant, enters a Venetian mart, and expresses his inexplicable sadness to his friends Salerio and Solanio. More friends arrive, Bassanio, Lorenzo, and Gratiano, but none can cheer the sad Antonio. Bassanio tells Antonio he needs 3,000 ducats in order to seek the hand of Portia, a rich heiress living in Belmont. Antonio agrees, and tells Bassanio to find someone in Venice to loan the money in his name. Meanwhile, in Belmont, we find Portia lamenting her present state. Suitor after suitor comes to win her through the test that Portia's deceased father has left, to choose correctly between three caskets.

Back in Venice, Bassanio talks to Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, about the loan he needs. Antonio and Shylock quarrel, but eventually agree upon a bond that lends Antonio 3,000 ducats, but stipulates that if it is not repaid in time, Shylock can take a pound of Antonio's flesh. Unknown to Shylock, Lorenzo, Bassanio's friend, is in love with Shylock's daughter, Jessica, who claims that living in her father's house is "hell." With the connivance of Antonio's friends and the comic servant Lancelot, Jessica and Lorenzo run off together, stealing some of Shylock's money as they go. In Belmont, meanwhile, the Prince of Morocco arrives and makes his choice of casket for Portia's hand in marriage, only to be disappointed. Subsequently, the Prince of Arragon picks the incorrect casket.

Through Salerio and Solanio, we find out that Shylock has been looking all over for his daughter and his money, and that Antonio's ships might not make it back in time to repay Shylock. Shylock appears and makes a passionate argument about the essential equality of Jews and Christians. After hearing news of Antonio's inability to repay the bond, and of his daughter, who has still not been found, he determines to take Antonio's pound of flesh.

Meanwhile in Belmont, Bassanio picks the correct casket, allowing him to wed Portia. Gratiano and Nerissa reveal that they wish to get married too. They celebrate and exchange vows of love, but the celebration quickly goes sour, when news of Antonio's plight reaches them by means of a newly arrived Lorenzo, Jessica and Salerio. Portia offers to pay the bond, and gives Bassanio leave to save his friend Antonio. After their husbands leave, Portia and Nerissa decide to disguise themselves as men and follow them to Venice.

The trial for Antonio's pound of flesh begins. Shylock is unyielding in his desire to take Antonio's flesh, citing Christian example as his main defense. Portia, disguised as a judge, comes in and seemingly sides with Shylock. However, she reveals a loophole in the law that makes it impossible for Shylock to take Antonio's flesh, and moreover puts Shylock's own life and goods in jeopardy. The Duke grants mercy to Shylock and the court takes half his goods, with the stipulation that he become a Christian. Shylock leaves the court, having accepted these demands. In repayment for saving Antonio's life, the unsuspecting Bassanio offers the disguised Portia 3,000 ducats. Portia refuses, asking instead for the ring that she gave Bassanio when he picked the right casket. Reluctantly, Bassanio agrees, and Gratiano does likewise with regard to Nerissa's ring. When they arrive back in Belmont, Portia and Nerissa pretend to discover that their husbands have given away their rings. After putting their husbands through some anguish, they reveal that they were the judges, and that Antonio's missing ships have safely arrived in port.
COMING UP

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Round Top, Texas

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