

Brigham Young University  
Department of Theatre and Cinematic Arts  
Presents



# The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare

Directed by  
**Bernard Brown**

October 16,17,18,21,22,23,24,25,28,29,30,31,Nov. 1  
at 8:00 p.m.

Matinee performance  
October 27 at 4:30 p.m.  
1980

# Director's Note

The Merchant of Venice is a fairy tale for grown-ups, with the message that if you treat men like beasts they may turn into monsters. It has much to do with money, love, and hate. Money and hate, for the hardness of hearts, are subject to the law. But mercy is above justice, and love must learn to "give and hazard all."

# Production Staff

Director	Bernard Brown
Light and Scenic Designer	Charles Henson
Costume Designer	Janet Swenson
Technical Director	O. Lee Walker
Costumer	Sandy Gray
Production Assistant	Charles Whitman
Assistants to the Director	Mary S. Carlson Leo Paur
Assistant to the Technical Director	Mark Williams
Resident Stage Manager	Jerry Dunn
Production Stage Manager	Leo Paur
Light Technician	Robert Saxon
Scene Shop Foremen	David Beukers Dean Lorimer
Scenic Painter	J. Lynn Bassett Timothy Sheppard
Property Supervisor	Lisa Bird
Property Assistants and Grips	THCA 242 Lab Students
Prompter	Heidi Olsen
Ticket Office Manager	Colleen Bird
House Manager	Mark Kirkwood
Publicity	D. Terry Petrie
Publicity Photographer	Rick Nye
Sound	Gary Christensen

# Cast (in order of appearance)

Antonio	Scott Wilkenson
Salerio	Keith David Dillon
Solanio	Keith Stepp
Bassanio	Greg Newman
Lorenzo	Scott Eckern
Gratiano	John Clark
Portia	Jennifer Olauson

Nerissa  
Balthazar  
Shylock  
Prince of Morocco  
Launcelot Gobbo  
Old Gobbo  
Leonardo  
Jessica  
Prince of Arragon  
Tubal  
Gaoler  
Duke of Venice  
Clerk of the Court  
Stephano  
Magnificoes, Pages, Soldiers, Attendants, Dancers, Masquers, Cardinal,  
Street Vendor, Choir Boys, Street Sweeper, Children and Citizens of Venice:

Jeana Anderson  
Jennifer Anderson  
Keoni Anderson  
Meg Bodily  
Robin Bowles  
Roy Brinkerhoff  
Jan Broberg  
Steven C. Carico  
Jennifer Carrillo  
Dalin Christiansen  
Leslie Crosland  
Alan W. Foutz  
Kenneth Harper  
Marie Hatch  
Mary Holland

Musicians

Understudy to Shylock  
Understudy to Bassanio

(Dalin Christiansen will understudy Shylock and play the performance on October 27.)

Cheryl Paxman  
Roy Brinkerhoff  
Bernard Brown  
Randall S. Parker  
Neil Webster  
James P. Parker  
Robin Bowles  
Liza Zenni  
James Hansen  
James A. Van Leishout  
Dalin Christiansen  
Ray Jones  
James P. Parker  
Mark Kirk

Mark Kennedy  
Julie Madsen  
Kristina Nelson  
Val Olds  
Erik Parker  
Tracy Paul  
Robin Rafik  
Airi Samuka  
Larry Steele  
Richard Stella  
Heidi Szabo  
Martha Watt  
Robert Webber  
David Whitehead

J. Russell Baird  
Deborah Hamson  
Luke Hauge  
David Laney  
Matthew Morrise  
Tia Rix  
David Rogers  
Tracy Shine  
Dalin Christiansen  
Doug Stone

# Letter from a Prophet

by Eric Samuelsen and Charles Metten  
Director: Charles Metten

The dramatic story of the Prophet Joseph Smith's powerful effect upon the jailor's family at Liberty, Missouri, in the winter of 1838-1839.

October 23,24,25,28,29,30,31, November 1,3,4,5,6,7,8, at 8:00 p.m. in the Margetts Arena Theatre. Tickets on sale October 13 at the Pardoe Box Office.  
Matinee performance Monday, November 3, 4:30 p.m.

## STARCHILD

by Doug Stewart and Gay Beeson  
Director: Harold Oakes

Elder Kessler and Elder Green of *Saturday's Warrior* fame return to BYU from their missions to look for what all returned missionaries look for . . . and in doing so meet a variety of interesting characters.

November 20,21,22,25,26,27,28,29, December 1,2,3,4,5,6, at 8:00 p.m. in the Margetts Arena Theatre. Tickets on sale November 10 at the Pardoe Box Office.  
Matinee performance Monday, December 1, 4:30 p.m.

# Christmas Carol

by Charles Dickens (adapted by Baizley)  
Director: Robert Stoddard

A new and refreshing improvised approach to the time-honored story of Scrooge and his world at Christmas time.

November 20,21,22,25,26,27,28,29, December 1,2,3,4,5,6, at 8:00 p.m. in the Pardoe Theatre. Tickets on sale November 10 at the Pardoe Box Office.  
Matinee performance Monday, December 1, 4:30 p.m.



## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Notes by David E. Jones  
Professor of Theatre, University of Utah

In the central body of his plays, say roughly *Merchant of Venice* through *Antony and Cleopatra*, Shakespeare is very much concerned with delineating the two main attitudes that human beings take up towards reality. One is closed or restrictive: it excludes a great deal of reality to make it possible to schematize the rest in a way that gives one a sense of control. The other is open or expansive: it tries to include as much as possible of the spectrum of awareness even at the risk of functioning less efficiently. Eventually, of course, the human being must take a stand against the flux of experience. But the second attitude involves putting this off as long as possible. From this point of view, the closed man conceptualizes reality too soon, reduces the enormity of human awareness to neat and tidy concepts which look ridiculous in the face of that enormity, though this does allow him to create a palpable order in his life. The open man takes the risk of seeming disorganized in the trust that a deeper, more organic order, an order which is the very nature of reality, will eventually reveal itself. What he wants above all is to remain responsive to the mystery of being.

*The Merchant of Venice* is the first of Shakespeare's plays in which the contrast between these attitudes is central. Shylock represents the restrictive attitude as it was fostered by the commercial ethos which had grown up since the Reformation. The old system of feudal loyalties in which public relationships were based upon personal service was being replaced by a system in which public relationships were dominated by money. Usury had been forbidden by the medieval Church, and, because Christians could not engage in it, it had passed into the hands of the Jews. Thus it is a historical accident that

Shakespeare took a Jew as the most obvious representative of the restrictive ethos. The racial question, though, it has played a large part in commentary on the play, has a very small part in Elizabethan life. But the commercial ethos, and the restrictive attitude it always tends to embody ("It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," Mark 10:25) was becoming increasingly prominent in that life. And it was this trend that Shakespeare was dramatizing rather than any racial characteristic.

What Shakespeare seems to have deplored was that human relationships should ever take second place to monetary gain:

When did friendship take  
A breed for barren metal of his friend? (I.ii.128-9)

Shylock would seem to be concerned about his money rather than his daughter:

I would my daughter were dead at my feet, and the ducats  
in her coffin! (III.i.94)

The vindictiveness of the man glimpsed here finds full expression in his plot against Antonio. It is typical of one who evaluates everything in terms of what can be measured that he should take his stand upon the letter of the law. The Elizabethans supposed that the principle of retaliation, of strict justice ("an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth") was basic to the Old Testament in contradistinction to the principle of forgiveness, of mercy, which was basic to the New Testament. And Shakespeare saw Shylock as living by the ideas of the Old Testament. Shylock's character becomes more and more inhuman as he insists upon the letter of the bond.

Eventually, Shylock stands alone, isolated by his attitude. But Antonio, his intended victim, is a member of a firmly linked group of friends and lovers: Bassanio-Gratiano-Solanio-Salerio-Lorenzo-Portia-Nerissa. For him, and the rest of this group, personal relationships come before everything, and money has no value except insofar as it furthers those relationships. Antonio is a merchant, but a merchant-adventurer who takes risks. Shylock refers to him as "the prodigal Christian" (II.v.16) and he certainly obeys Christ's injunction to take no thought for the morrow; he leaves the future to God, whereas Shylock prides himself on his "thrif," on his cleverness in safeguarding the future. . . . Antonio does not calculate, but is willing to risk all for his friend.

To Shylock's Old Testament ethic (as the Elizabethan saw it) is opposed the New Testament emphasis on the spirit rather than the letter of the law ("The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life") and on mercy rather than justice ("Judge not lest ye be judged"). Mercy involves an awareness of the precious uniqueness of the individual which the impartiality of justice necessarily ignores. "It is an attribute to God himself" because, as Creator, he most fully appreciates the unique identity with which he has endowed each of his creatures. The antithesis between mercy and justice grows to a sharp confrontation in the trial scene, where Portia, as spokesman for the attitude of the Antonio group, pleads with Shylock:

Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy,  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy, (IV.i.197-201)

referring, presumably, to the Lord's Prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us." But Shylock insists on justice, and finds himself caught in his own trap.

Shylock leaves the court a lonely and broken figure. Antonio's group can return to Belmont, where harmony prevails, literally as well as figuratively. There, a brilliant, starlit night puts Lorenzo in mind of the music of the spheres, which was for the Elizabethans a logical consequence of the orderliness of the Creation:

Such harmony is in immortal souls,  
But while this muddy vesture of decay  
Doth grossly close it in, we cannot hear it. (V.i.63-5)

But if we cannot hear that divinely implanted harmony, we can hear the sensuous equivalent of it and find ourselves "in tune with the infinite." Indeed,

The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,  
Is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils.  
The motions of his spirit are dull as night  
And his affections dark as Erebus:  
Let no such man be trusted. (V.i.83-88)

So Shylock, the man who instructed his daughter to "Stop [his] house's ears" against the music of the masque (II.v.34) is put into

perspective. In excluding himself from the harmony of human fellowship, he finds himself in danger of the dark loneliness of Hell.

The other phases of the play are all linked to some aspect of the central antithesis in an integration which is a mark of the mature Shakespeare. The caskets story, for example, illustrates the truth that love is total and unconditional surrender of the self: "Who chooseth me must give and hazard all he hath."

Not only does Shakespeare exemplify the two attitudes to reality, he creates two worlds embodying them—the world of Shylock in Venice and the world of Portia at Belmont. The story of Lorenzo and Jessica links those two worlds and demonstrates that temperament, not race, is at the root of the difference between them. The low comedy of Launcelot Gobbo presents a burlesque, but nonetheless basically serious, version of the choice between them. And it is he who sums up the difference when he says to his new master, Bassanio:

The old proverb is very well parted between my master  
Shylock and you, sir: you have the Grace of God, sir,  
and he hath enough. (II.ii.158–60)

I have presented the contrast quite as starkly as Launcelot. But, in fact, Shakespeare softens the antithesis between the two ways of life by such touches of feeling in Shylock as that suggesting that he has deteriorated since the time when he felt genuine affection for his wife-to-be (III.i.113–16) and by such flaws in the Christians as their spitefulness to the Jews (I.iii.103–26).

Sophisticated critics have argued that Shakespeare "doesn't take sides," and indeed a dramatist's value consists very largely in his not taking sides at all obviously. Above all other writers, the dramatist has to remain "open," has to identify with the different, even diametrically opposed, points of view of his characters. In the last resort, of course, a human being cannot escape preferences and prejudices. But a writer's, especially a dramatist's, greatness consists in large part in deferring judgment as long as possible; breadth and depth of sympathy preclude snap judgments. At the same time, a writer's greatness consists in the *quality* of judgment he ultimately makes. So although a dramatist's point of view is not to be isolated in any one character or any one statement, it does inevitably reveal itself in the whole movement of the play. Thus, in *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock eventually shrinks away into seclusion, whereas the Antonio group expands in a life-giving interchange.