

Brigham Young University • Performing Arts Series

Shylock

Written and performed by
Gareth Armstrong

Directed by
Frank Barrie

Original music
Simon Slater



About the Play



Gareth Armstrong as Tubal in Shylock.

Who is Shylock?

"I am a Jew...Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is?"

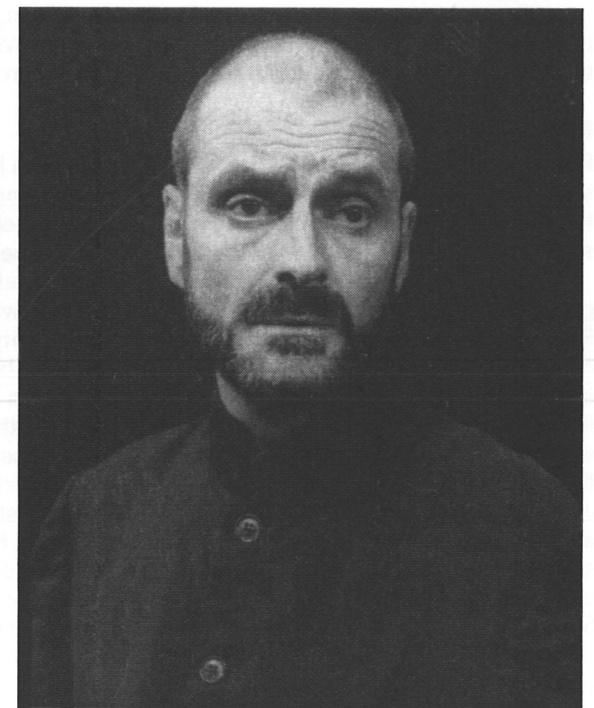
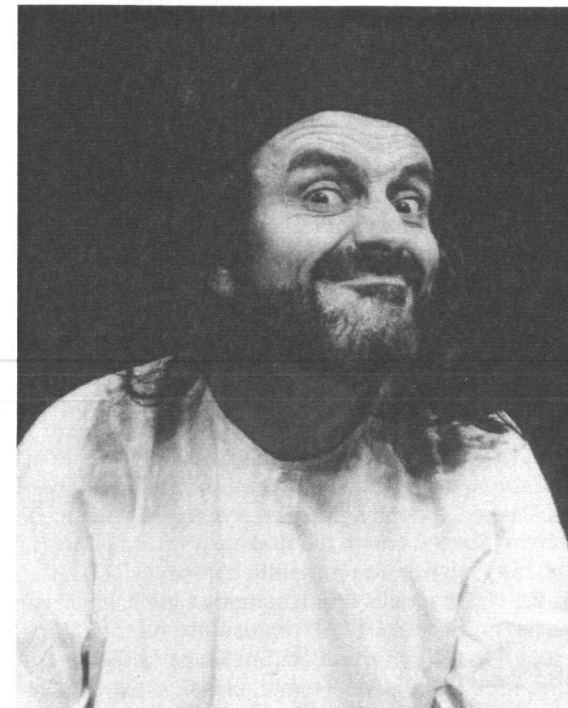
—Shylock, *The Merchant of Venice*

Playing Shylock in a production of *The Merchant of Venice* I became fascinated by this most controversial of Shakespeare's characters. Only Hamlet has inspired more debate and dissension, so there is plenty of scope for research. But no academic who writes about the play can know what it's like to be Shylock. Only an actor knows that.

Shylock is the ultimate outsider—and misfits are always the most interesting parts to play. Shakespeare only gives him five of the play's 20 scenes but his character is so intriguing that it has grown ever more resonant over the centuries—particularly the last one. Shylock is the only major Jew in Shakespeare. Is he the stereotype comic villain that his own audience expected, or is he something more complex, more demanding of our attention?

In this play I explore the character and his legacy through the eyes of the only other Jewish man in Shakespeare, and Shylock's only friend: Tubal. Through him I try to put Shylock in perspective. There are many sources to draw on—from theology to psychotherapy, from actors' anecdotes to Nazi doctrine. But above all, there is the richness of Shakespeare's text.

—Gareth Armstrong



Gareth Armstrong in Shylock

Gareth Armstrong

Born in Wales, Gareth Armstrong graduated in Drama from Hull University, and began his professional career in regional theatre. He has played in the West End and as a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company, has worked in Stratford and at the Aldwych.

His work as a director includes founding the "Made in Wales" Stage Company, formed to present new Anglo-Welsh play writing, and he was an artistic director of Cardiff's Sherman Theatre. As a freelance director Gareth Armstrong has worked in Salisbury and Northampton and on touring productions—most recently *Sherlock Holmes: The Last Act* and *The Gospel According to John*.

Shakespeare has taken him to over 30 countries worldwide as an actor, director, and teacher, and he has played roles ranging from Puck to Richard III, from Andrew Aguecheek to Macbeth.

In collaboration with the British Council he has toured *Shylock* all over Europe, as well as playing in New Zealand and extensively in the United States. He is an associate director of the American-based A.C.T.E.R Company.

Frank Barrie

Frank Barrie's career in repertory included seasons at the old Salisbury Playhouse and the Bristol Old Vic. He spent four years as a member of the National Theatre playing parts such as Bassanio to Laurence Olivier's *Shylock* in *The Merchant of Venice*. Leading roles have included Hamlet, Macbeth, Richard II, Richard III, Benedick, and Malvolio. Over 100 television appearances include the title role in *Coriolanus*.

Before working on *Shylock*, he directed John Fraser's one-man play *The Man Who Wrote Peter Pan*. He also tours with Gayle Hunnicutt in *The Lives and Loves of Edith Wharton* and in his latest piece *Playing Shakespeare*.

His scripts include *Wellington*, *The Family of Ham*, *The Other Woman*, and *The Devil You Know*. His hugely successful one-man show *Macready* played in the West End and on Broadway and won for Frank the coveted Best Actor Award for the Plays and Players London Critics.

Robert Friedman

President of Robert Friedman Presents, Mr. Friedman has been involved in San Francisco theatre management and production for more than 30 years. Beginning a family tradition that dates back to the beginning of this century, his grandmother sang with the San Francisco Opera and his grandfather, Jerry Friedman, was still running the concessions at the San Francisco Opera House until he passed away in 1991 at the age of 98.

While a student, Mr. Friedman was a singer as well as the manager of various contemporary music groups. However, the first concert he ever produced was that of a recorder player from Amsterdam in 1969. Following his graduation from Sonoma State University where he received his degree in psychology and education, he went on to study Indian music at the Ali Akbar Kahn School of Music. From there, he went on to study and work with Anna Halprin doing music for the Trance Dance, and later also worked with the Society for Eastern Art, all the while working with his grandfather house managing theaters and concessions. He went on to establish one of the largest concert artist series in the West, presenting San Francisco debuts of the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra, the Prague Madrigal Antiqua, the Black Light Theater of Prague, the Jose Limon Dance Company, Barry Tuckwell, the Batsheva Dance Company, and numerous other musical ensembles and dance companies. In fact, in 1973 Mr. Friedman started one of the first early music concert series in the country. In San Francisco he also co-produced the long-running romantic comedy which opened the Theater on the Square, *Talley's Folly*, as well as Caryl Churchill's biting comedy *Cloud Nine*, Neil Simon's *Biloxi Blues*, and A.R. Gurney's *Love Letters*. His artist management firm represents and tours both nationally and internationally such prominent companies and Il Giardino Armonico, Shakespeare Revue from London, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, Repercussion Theatre, Rick Miller's MacHomer, classical pianists Lara Downes and Angela Au, the Moscow Classical Ballet, Teatro delle Briciole, John Handy, Terry Riley, Le Concert Spirituel, Eliza Schneider's *911*, and Gareth Armstrong's *Shylock*.

In the event of an emergency, please exit in an orderly fashion to an area away from the building.