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Dramatic Publishing

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

the comedy of errors

One Act Adaptation

by

ROBERT M. SINGLETON



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(THE COMEDY OF ERRORS)

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ORIGINAL CAST LIST

The LITTLE THEATRE COMPANY of
Anderson High School
presents

William Shakespeare's THE COMEDY OF ERRORS
adapted and directed by Robert M. Singleton

Duke of Ephesus	Ralph De La Cruz
Egeon	James King
Antipholus of Ephesus	Steve Hauck
Antipholus of Syracuse	Jeff Broyles
Dromio of Ephesus	Quinton Wiles
Dromio of Syracuse	Vincent Herod
Angelo	Matt Lyons
A Merchant	Andy Smith
Doctor Pinch	Larry Evans
Emilia, the abbess	Carole FitzPatrick
Adriana	Peggy Clikeman
Luciana	J.A. Marshall
Nell	Diane McDaniel
A Courtesan	Pamela Wolf
An Officer	Matthew Davis
Another Officer	Ralph De La Cruz
Running Crew	Karen Taylor
	Robyn Lucas
	Mike Boswell

Scene: Once upon a time.

Place: In Ephesus.

A NOTE FROM THE ADAPTOR

In our production of *THE COMEDY OF ERRORS* we tried to solve the problem of the identical twins through casting, make-up, costumes, and acting styles. When casting, I tried to cast actors who were not too very different physically. Similar height and body size were of primary importance because facial differences could be lessened with make-up. Hair color and length were easily changed. Another director might consider the use of identical beards on the Antipholi to make dissimilar actors appear more similar.

However, we put our primary emphasis on costume. The costumes were designed along early Renaissance lines but were kept very simple. Solid-colored tights and leotards were the basic garments for all the actors, to which were added one or maybe two simple pieces to suggest a Renaissance look. The design metaphor was that of a troupe of traveling players who, pulling out an item of clothing from their trunks, go on to perform. The Antipholi wore doublets and the Dromios wore tabards of the same pattern. We used materials for these which had exactly the same print but which were colored differently. The Antipholus of Syracuse and his Dromio were in browns and golds, with their twins in greens. Adriana of Ephesus also was in greens while her sister, who eventually ends up with Antipholus of Syracuse, picked up gold tones.

Finally, we spent some time rehearsing the Antipholi and Dromios together so that they would move in similar rhythm patterns. It was useful to have the actors trade roles in rehearsal so that they would understand each other's reactions and movement patterns better. For this to work, it was imperative for the actors to watch each other closely at work.

My experience through seeing various productions of the full-length play has been that it is not absolutely necessary to make the twins fully distinguishable to the audience. The audience quickly figures out that if there are confusions on stage, the wrong twins must be together. Besides, they seem to enjoy being confused along with the characters on stage.

Robert M. Singleton

PROPERTIES

GENERAL:

Four pylons, small table and three stools.

PERSONAL:

NELL: Signs: EPHEBUS: A PUBLIC PLACE
THE MARKET (reverse: AGAIN)
AT HOME (reverse: AGAIN)
BEFORE THE HOUSE
THE MARKET (reverse: STILL)
BEFORE AN ABBEY
QUESTION MARK (the symbol)
opens to reveal: THE END

Platter.

FIRST OFFICER: Halberd, handcuffs, axe.

ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE: Money bag,
sword, gold chain (which Angelo gave him
earlier).

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE: Large trunk, key,
purse given him by Luciana, sword.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHEBUS: Key.

DROMIO OF EPHEBUS: Length of rope.

LUCIANA: Purse.

ANGELO: Gold chain.

MERCHANT: Sword.

the comedy of errors

Curtain rises to reveal NELL standing center with a sign saying: EPHEBUS. A PUBLIC PLACE. Four pylons mark imaginary doors UL and UR. NELL exits DL. Enter the DUKE with EGEON and an OFFICER, UR.)

DUKE. Merchant of Syracuse, plead no more! If any Syracusan born come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies, unless a thousand marks be levied to quit the penalty and to ransom him. Thy substance, valued at the highest rate, cannot amount unto a hundred marks. Therefore, by law, thou art condemned to die.

EGEON (dropping to his knees). Yet this my comfort: when your words are done, my woes end likewise with the evening sun.

DUKE. Well, Syracusan, say in brief for what cause thou cam'st to Ephesus.

EGEON. In Syracuse was I born and wed unto a woman. She became a joyful mother of two goodly sons. And, which was strange, the one so like the other as could not be distinguished but by names. That very hour, and in the self-same inn, a meaner woman was delivered of such a burden, male twins, both alike. Those — for their parents were exceeding poor — I bought, and brought up to attend my sons. A league from

Epidamnum had we sailed when our ship was wrecked by a storm. My wife, more careful of the latter-born, had fastened him unto a small spare mast. To him one of the other twins was bound, whilst I had been like heedful of the other. The children thus disposed, my wife and I fastened ourselves at either end of the mast. But ere we could be rescued, we were encountered by a mighty rock. Our helpful mast was splitted in the midst. Her part was carried with more speed before the wind, and in my sight they three were taken up by fishermen of Corinth. At length another ship had seized on us and would have caught up with her had not our bark been very slow of sail.

DUKE. What have befallen of them and thee till now?

EGEON. My youngest boy at eighteen years became inquisitive after his lost brother, and importuned me that his attendant might bear him company in quest of him. Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece, roaming clean through the bounds of Asia, and coasting homeward came to Ephesus. But here must end the story of my life.

DUKE. Hapless Egeon, were it not against our laws, my soul should sue as advocate for thee. But though thou are adjudged to the death, yet will I favor thee in what I can. Therefore, merchant, I'll limit thee this day to seek thy health by beneficial help. Beg thou, or borrow, to make up the sum, and live. If no, then thou art doomed to die. Jailer, take him to thy custody. (Exits DL.)

OFFICER. I will, my lord. (Prods EGEON up with

his halberd.)

EGEON. Hopeless and helpless doth Egeon wend,
but to procrastinate his lifeless end. (EGEON
and OFFICER exit DL.)

(NELL enters UL carrying a sign saying: THE
MARKET. She crosses DR and exits.
ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE and DROMIO
OF SYRACUSE enter UR. DROMIO carries
a large trunk. They cross C.)

ANTIPHOLUS S. Therefore give out we are of
Epidamnum lest that our goods too soon be
confiscate. Go bear our things and my money –
(Hands DROMIO a money bag.) – to the Centaur
where we host, and stay there, Dromio, till I
come to thee. Within this hour it will be dinner-
time. Till that I'll view the manners of the town,
peruse the traders, gaze upon the buildings, and
then return and sleep within mine inn, for with
long travel I am stiff and weary. Get thee away.

DROMIO S. Many a man would take you at your
word and go indeed, having so good a mean.
(Indicating the money bag.)

ANTIPHOLUS S.(chuckling). Farewell till then.
I will go wander up and down to view the city.

DROMIO S. Sir, I commend you to your own
content. (Exits DR.)

ANTIPHOLUS S. He that commends me to mine
own content commends me to the thing I cannot
get. I to the world am like a drop of water that
in the ocean seeks another drop. So I, to find a
mother and a brother, in quest of them, unhappy,
lose myself.

(During this last speech DROMIO OF EPHESUS

enters UL, exits UR, reenters UR, exits DL, reenters DL, crossing R backwards so that he doesn't see ANTIPHOLUS S. After he has crossed to the right of ANTIPHOLUS S he turns and sees him, giving the impression of having entered exactly where Dromio S. has just exited.)

DROMIO E. Master, come quick.

ANTIPHOLUS S. What now? How chance thou art returned so soon?

DROMIO E. Returned so soon! Rather approached too late. The capon burns, the pig falls from the spit. The clock hath stricken twelve upon the bell, my mistress made it one upon my cheek. She is so hot because the meat is cold, the meat is cold because you come not home . . .

ANTIPHOLUS S. Stop in your wind, sir!

(Suspiciously.) Tell me this, I pray: where have you left the money that I gave you?

DROMIO E.(puzzled). Oh! The sixpence, that had on Wednesday last?

ANTIPHOLUS S. I am not in a sportive humor now. Tell me and dally not. Where is the money?

DROMIO E.(laughing). I pray you, jest, sir, as you sit at dinner. I from my mistress come to you in post.

ANTIPHOLUS S. Come, Dromio, come! These jests are out of season. Where is the gold I gave in charge to thee?

DROMIO E. To me, sir? My charge was but to fetch you from the mart, sir, to dinner. My mistress and her sister stay for you.

ANTIPHOLUS S.(threatening). Where is the thousand marks thou hadst of me?

DROMIO E. (cowering). I have some marks of yours upon my pate, some of my mistress' marks upon my shoulders, but not a thousand marks between you both.

ANTIPHOLUS S. Thy mistress' marks? What mistress, slave, hast thou?

DROMIO E. Your worship's wife, my mistress at home.

ANTIPHOLUS S. What, wilt thou flout me thus unto my face, being forbid? (Beats him.) There, take you that, sir knave.

DROMIO E. (trying to hide behind him). What mean you, sir? Hold your hands! Nay, if you will not, sir, I'll take my heels. (Exits DL.)

ANTIPHOLUS S. I'll to the Centaur, to go seek my purse. I greatly fear my money is not safe. (Exits DR.)

BLACKOUT

(During blackout, the two right pylons are moved further center and perpendicular to the curtain line. A small table set for a meal is placed between the two upstage pylons and three stools are placed around it.)

(When the lights come up ADRIANA is on the right stool, LUCIANA is on the center stool. NELL stands before the table with a sign saying: AT HOME. She pauses a moment, then exits UL.)

ADRIANA (very vexed). Neither my husband nor the slave returned that in such haste I sent to seek his master. Sure, Luciana, it is two o'clock.

LUCIANA. Good sister, let us dine, and never fret.
A man is master of his liberty.

ADRIANA (even more angered). Why should their
liberty than ours be more?

LUCIANA. The beasts, the fishes, and the winged
fowls are their males' subjects, and at their
controls. Man, more divine, the master of all
these, are masters to their females, and their
lords. Then let your will attend on their accords.

ADRIANA. This servitude makes you to keep
unwed.

(Enter DROMIO E.UR. Breathless, he crosses to
the imaginary door between the pylons, throws
it open, and crosses DL, where he collapses.)

LUCIANA. Here comes your man. Now is your
husband nigh.

ADRIANA (looking out the door). Say, is your
tardy master now at hand?

DROMIO E. Why, mistress, sure my master is
horn-mad. When I desired him to come home to
dinner, he asked me for a thousand marks in
gold. "Tis dinnertime," quoth I. "My gold!"
quoth he. "Your meat doth burn," quoth I.
"My gold!" quoth he. "My mistress, sir —"
quoth I. "Hand up thy mistress! I know not
thy mistress, out on thy mistress."

LUCIANA. Quoth who?

DROMIO E. (sheepishly). Quoth my master.
"I know," quoth he, "no house, no wife, no
mistress."

ADRIANA (sending DROMIO back to the door).
Go back again, thou slave, and fetch him home.

DROMIO E. Go back again, and be new beaten

home? (Beseechingly.) Send some other messenger!

ADRIANA. Back, slave, or I will break thy pate across.

DROMIO E. Between you, I shall have a holy head.

ADRIANA. Hence, prating peasant! Fetch thy master home. (Shuts the imaginary door.)

DROMIO E (shouting through the door). If I last in this service you must case me in leather.
(Exits UR.)

LUCIANA. Fie, how impatiencē frowns in your face!

ADRIANA (pacing). His company must do his minions grace, whilst I at home starve for a merry look.

LUCIANA. Self-harming jealousy! Fie, beat it hence.

ADRIANA. I know his eye doth homage other-where, or else what keeps him from here.
(Breaking into tears and sitting at the table.)

Since that my beauty cannot please his eye,
I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die.

LUCIANA (crossing to her). How many fond fools serve mad jealousy!

(LUCIANA and ADRIANA freeze and the lights darken on them. NELL enters DR with sign saying: BEFORE THE HOUSE. She crosses C, beckons ANTIPHOLUS S on from DR, and exits DL. ANTIPHOLUS S enters from DR, crosses C.)

ANTIPHOLUS S. The gold I gave to Dromio is laid up safe at the Centaur, and the heedful slave is wandered forth to seek me out.

(DROMIO S. is heard singing off L.) See where he comes.

(DROMIO S. enters DL.)

ANTIPHOLUS S. How now, sir, is your merry humor altered? As you love strokes, so jest with me again. Wast thou mad that thus so madly thou didst answer me?

DROMIO S. What answer, sir? When spake I such a word?

ANTIPHOLUS S. Even now, even here, not half an hour since.

DROMIO S. I did not see you since you sent me hence.

ANTIPHOLUS S. Villain, thou didst deny the gold's receipt, and told'st me of a mistress, and a dinner.

DROMIO S. I am glad to see you in this merry vein. What means this jest? I pray you, master, tell me.

ANTIPHOLUS S. Yea, dost thou jeer, and think'st thou I jest? Hold, take thou that! And that . . . (Beats DROMIO.)

DROMIO S. (hiding behind ANTIPHOLUS S. and holding on to him). Hold, sir! Now your jest is earnest! Oh! Aow! . . . (Ad lib.)

(During the beating and Dromio's yelling, ADRIANA and LUCIANA break the freeze, exit out the imaginary door, and cross into the downstage lighted area to watch the commotion.)

DROMIO S. (breaking free). Well, sir, I thank you.
ANTIPHOLUS S. Thank me, sir, for what?

DROMIO S. Marry, sir, for this something that
you gave me for nothing.

ADRIANA (beckoning). Hum-hum!

ANTIPHOLUS S. But soft, who wafts us yonder?

ADRIANA (crossing to him). Ay, ay, Antipholus,
look strange and frown. Some other mistress
hath thy sweet aspects. (Holding on to him.)
How comes it now, my husband, oh, how comes
it? (ANTIPHOLUS S. pulls away.) Ah, do not
tear away thyself from me. (Beginning to cry
and crossing back to LUCIANA.) If we two be
one, and thou play false, keep then fair league
and truce with thy true bed. I live unstained,
thou undishonored.

ANTIPHOLUS S. Plead you to me, fair dame? I
know you not. In Ephesus I am but two hours
old.

LUCIANA. Fie, brother, how the world is changed
with you. When were you wont to use my sister
thus? She sent for you by Dromio home to
dinner.

ANTIPHOLUS S. By Dromio?

DROMIO S. By me?

ADRIANA. By thee, and this thou didst return
from him: that he denied my house for his, me
for his wife. (Cries again.)

ANTIPHOLUS S. (pulling DROMIO aside). Did
you converse, sir, with this gentlewoman?

DROMIO S. (whispering). I, sir? I never saw her
till this time.

ANTIPHOLUS S. (twisting Dromio's arm, but
still in a stage whisper). Villain, thou liest, for
even her very words didst thou deliver to me
on the mart.

DROMIO S. I never spake with her in all my life.

ANTIPHOLUS S. How can she thus then call us
by our names? (Pause.) Unless it be by . . .

(Both ANTIPHOLUS S. and DROMIO, together,
in fear.) . . . witchery!

ADRIANA (crossing to ANTIPHOLUS S. and pulling
him back C). How ill agrees it with your gravity
to counterfeit thus grossly with your slave.

(Wrapping herself around ANTIPHOLUS S. like
a vine.) Thou art an elm, my husband, I a vine,
whose weakness, married to thy stronger state,
makes me with thy strength to communicate.

ANTIPHOLUS S. (aside). To me she speaks. Or
sleep I now, and think I hear all this? Until I
know this sure uncertainty, I'll entertain the
offered fallacy. (Puts his arms around her.)

LUCIANA. Dromio, go bid the servants spread for
dinner.

DROMIO S. (falling to his knees and praying). Oh,
for my beads! I cross me for a sinner. This is
the fairy land. We talk with goblins, owls, and
spirits.

LUCIANA (crossing to him and grabbing him up).
Why prat'st thou to thyself and answer'st not?

ADRIANA. Come, come, no longer will I be a
fool. (To ANTIPHOLUS S.) Come, sir, to
dinner. (To DROMIO.) Sirrah, keep the gate.
If any ask you for your master, say he dines
forth, and let no creature enter. (To LUCIANA.)
Come, sister.

DROMIO S. Master, shall I be porter at the gate?

ADRIANA. Ay, and let none enter, lest I break
your pate.

LUCIANA. Come, come, Antipholus, we dine too
late.