

**THE COMEDY OF ERRORS:
A ROMANTIC COMEDY**

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Abstract

The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare is mostly performed as a knockabout farce. Despite undeniable farcical moments the play possesses a strong romantic strain, and the director's challenge is to reconcile these two aspects. For my thesis production of *The Comedy of Errors* in High Park this summer I will approach this play as a romantic comedy, which I believe will allow for a smoother coexistence of its madcap elements and deeper notes. This paper begins with my research into the history of the play and an examination of the genres of farce, comedy and romance. This paper also contains my directorial premise and production concept, as well as an outline of my rehearsal preparation.

Dedication

To my mother, Jo Mrozewski, for her love and support, wise advice, and tips on essay writing.

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Introduction

The Comedy of Errors is often dismissed by critics and scholars as a slight work in the Shakespearean canon, when it is not ignored altogether. It has had much more success on the stage, where it is regularly treated as a vehicle for non-stop slapstick action; the story of mistaken identity, involving two sets of identical twins separated at birth, allows directors and actors to unleash their most riotous instincts.

Along with the slapstick however, *The Comedy of Errors* possesses a strong romantic strain; there is great pain and a hunger for fulfillment at the heart of this play. Despite the comic frenzy, a sense of rupture and dread hangs over the action.

In his introduction to the Oxford edition of the play, Charles Whitworth describes the directorial challenge of reconciling *The Comedy of Errors*' "peculiar blend of the seemingly incompatible extremes of farce and romance [...] It is scarcely surprising then that producers of the play in the theatre have gone for the farce and have, for the most part, let the romance go" (79). I am keen to take on the challenge of marrying these two aspects of this "Elizabethan hybrid" (Shaw 26), by treating the elements commonly considered farcical as comical instead. As will be discussed in this paper, comedy invites compassion and empathy, and can reveal this play's human truth more than farce or romance would allow. By treating the characters and their stories with compassion, I wish to celebrate the humanity of this play. I believe it is by grounding the play in the

world of comedy – as opposed to simple farce – that one can bridge the distance between the extremes of the two genres.

In *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, Harold Bloom points to this “fierce little play” as one of the starting points of this invention of the idea of humanity (24). He locates in *The Comedy of Errors*, and particularly in the wandering twin Antipholus of Syracuse, the beginnings of an “arena of inwardness” and a sketch of “the abysses of the self” to come in Shakespeare’s later work (24).

Not just an excursion into the fantastic and the improbable, *The Comedy of Errors* describes a journey towards integration – communal, familial and personal. The play is also about the discovery of a fuller sense of identity and self-awareness. These ends are the resolution a comedy works towards.

By attending carefully to the text and the psychology of the characters, I look forward to staging a thoughtful and sensitive reading of the play in High Park this summer, that balances the exuberance of the comic world with the heartfelt and the pathetic. In the following pages I will discuss the play’s origins and production history, and will consider its genre and symbolism. I will then describe my directorial premise and provide an outline of my production concept and creative process.

The Play: Origins

Summary

The story of *The Comedy of Errors* is composed of two plots: a romantic frame narrative that surrounds a comic and farcical core.

The first narrative opens the play on a “plangent” note (Bloom 22) and is epic in tone. This frame plot revolves around the trials of a poor merchant from Syracuse, whose family was separated years ago in a shipwreck. The merchant, Egeon, had undertaken a quest to search for his surviving twin son, Antipholus, who had two years earlier set off with his bondsman Dromio (who is himself a twin), to search for their respective missing brothers. Egeon is unsuccessful in his search, and on his return home, he trespasses into Ephesus, a city-state in conflict with Syracuse. Unable to pay the necessary ransom, Egeon is condemned to death by the laws of Ephesus.

The comic main plot concerns the central action of the play, which revolves around the wandering twin, Antipholus of Syracuse, who arrives in Ephesus with Dromio, unaware that his father has just landed, and that his long-lost twin lives in the city as well. The local twin, Antipholus of Ephesus, also has a bondsman named Dromio (the Syracusans had adopted their lost brothers’ names). A roller coaster of errors begins as the visiting Antipholus is thrust into the local twin’s domestic life, which involves an alienated wife, Adriana, and an enchanting sister-in-law, Luciana. Sharing name and appearance, the

four twins - and eventually the members of their community - are all tied up in an absurd knot of confusion that builds to a frenzied climax.

Both plots are resolved simultaneously when Solinus, the Duke of Ephesus, is asked to intervene in the chaos of the comic plot just as he is leading Egeon to his execution. The abbess, whose protection Antipholus of Syracuse has sought, is revealed to be his long lost mother and Egeon's wife. Reconciliation and celebration are the notes the play ends on as the family is reunited after more than two decades of separation, and Egeon's debt is forgiven by the Duke.

Primary Sources

Shakespeare's principal source for the main comic plot of *The Comedy* is Plautus' *Maenechmi*. Although only translated into English in 1595, it is possible Shakespeare would have encountered the play in grammar school (Greenblatt 27). The works of Plautus and Terence, studied in Latin, were mined for lessons in grammar and rhetoric. Robert S. Miola points out that these plays were also used for ethical instruction: they were treated as cautionary tales full of unsavoury characters and immoral activity. Among those works, *Maenechmi* was considered a relatively safe study, described on the translation's title page as "the least harmful, the most delightful" (qtd. in Miola, "Roman" 19).

Shakespeare's principal innovation to the Plautine original was to take a single set of twins and double it, thus exponentially increasing the possibility for chaos, and arguably demonstrating his virtuosity at manipulating a famous source. Among other changes, he moved the action from Epidaurus to Ephesus, a place that the Elizabethan audience would associate with wildness and sorcery (Bloom 23). Shakespeare chose to put the focus on the visiting rather than resident twin and added a love plot for this visitor. Shakespeare gave a name to the local twin's wife, expanded her role, and gave her a sister and confidante. The role of the Courtesan was considerably diminished, her name eliminated in the process. The narrative function of the prologue in Plautus is dramatized in the character of Egeon (Miola, "Critics" 8).

The other major source Shakespeare borrows from - for the framing shipwreck plot - is the medieval romance of *Appollonius of Tyre*. Later, Shakespeare was also to draw on this version by John Gower (in his *Confessio Amantis*) when he came to write his later romance, *Pericles* (Barton 80). In combining this Romantic epic with Roman classical comedy, Alexander Leggatt sees Shakespeare adding mystery and fantasy to logical, explainable, mercantile Plautus (137).

Additionally, *The Comedy* contains numerous biblical references, especially from St. Paul's *Epistle to the Ephesians*, familiar to Shakespeare's audience from the Geneva Bible of 1560. Shakespeare alludes most specifically to Paul's instructions on wifely submission (Whitworth 39), and to the idea that in marriage husband and wife become

one flesh (Whitworth 41). The biblical Ephesus also has specific associations with witchcraft and sorcery, which are important themes in the play (Barton 80).

Creative Context

From the start of his career, Shakespeare was an “an experimenter and innovator in dramatic artifice” (Salingar 6) with a remarkable gift for combining elements from the world of Middle Ages Romance and classical Roman comedy with the festive spirit of the Renaissance (Salingar 26).

According to Bevington, most London drama of the late sixteenth century was not “polarized into elite or popular traditions” and Shakespeare’s accomplished mixing of genres is a result of meeting “the theatrical expectations he encountered when he came to London” (336). The Elizabethan model was to mix modes and sources, and this mixing was “what the Tudor imagination was best at” (Kinney 159).

H.B. Charlton points out that romance “is in the blood and spirit of his time” (72) and that the challenge for the dramatist was to create work to suit the “curiously Elizabethan aesthetic demand for a drama which would gratify both the romantic and the comic instincts of his audience” (45). In 1582, Stephen Gosson complained, “the bawdy comedies in Latin, French, Italian and Spanish have been thoroughly ransacked to furnish the playhouses in London” (qtd. in Clubb 32). Material from any number of sources was mined if thought suitable for a compelling performance.

Miola also describes this era as a “period of creative experimentation” and that Shakespeare was responding “creatively to various aspects of his immediate theatrical environment”(“Critics” 15). This environment grew out of English writers absorbing a number of historical and cultural influences, from home and abroad, and in a variety of genres. K.M. Lea describes a “shared European vocabulary of scene, character and action” (199).

This mixing of genres was also characteristic of *commedia dell’arte* (Miola, “Critics” 13). It is the inheritance of Terence and his practice of *contaminatio* or “commingling plots” (Clubb 34). Plautus and Terence, who are the progenitors of great European dramatic comedy bequeathed to “posterity the essential genetic make-up of their genre” (Miola, “Classical” 2) They were rediscovered along with their immediate Greek ancestors during the Italian Renaissance, and their influence was soon felt across Europe and in England (Miola, “Classical” 16). Impatient with tradition, these Roman playwrights were always experimenting, showing comedy as a range of dramatic possibilities. Plautus is inventive and exuberant, full of verbal jokes, while Terence adapts conventions to explore human relations (Miola, “Roman”18).

Italian stories were a key part of Elizabethan dramaturgy, having excited English readers and writers in their Renaissance versions. When Shakespeare began his career Italian comedy was in full bloom, with a wide array of dramatic styles, plots and “theatregrams” (structural units of character, action, situations, themes) at the Italian theatre artists’ disposal (Clubb 35). These elements could be endlessly recombined with new

theatregrams lifted from literary plays by newly formed performance troupes (eventually known as *commedia dell'arte*) for their own improvised performances. As these companies toured, they would spread these theatregrams throughout Italy and Europe. Shakespeare would have been able to read some of these plays or accounts of them, and perhaps even see performances by the *commedia* groups in London. Inspired by the Italians, Shakespeare developed the ability to take theatregrams from various stories and plays to suit them to the purposes of his own work (32-38).

Shakespeare, therefore, was very much a writer of his time, and *Comedy* is a typical work, in that “classical elements... combine with non-classical ones – the Bible, medieval literature, the Italian novella, contemporary fiction and drama – not in static coexistence but dynamic interaction” (Miola, “Classical” 18).

Date of Composition

The Comedy was first printed in the 1623 Folio, the fifth play in the first section (The Comedies). There is no consensus about when Shakespeare wrote this play. The proposed dates range from 1589 to 1594. Whitworth discusses why some see this as Shakespeare’s first play (5). Others, like Kiernan Ryan, see it as his first comedy (124). Gary Taylor points out that critics now tend to see it written towards the end of the first quarter of his career (395).

Critics who vote for an early composition date, point to its brevity, lack of subplots and the fact that it relies so heavily on a known source, as evidence of junior talent. Advocates for a later date see in the play's moving poetry and tightly constructed plot the hand of a more experienced writer (Tosh 7). For Harold Bloom this "remarkably sophisticated elaboration of (and improvement) on Plautus" "far outshines the Henry VI plays" and "does not read or play like apprentice work" (21).

Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the first recorded performance took place at Gray's Inn on December 28th 1594 (Holy Innocents Day) as part of the Christmas celebrations at London's Inns of Court. The *Gesta Grayorum* is an account of the night's festivities, which were "marred by some disorders" (Foakes "Arden" 115) and thereafter known as the "Night of Errors."

It has been suggested that the play was written specifically for this occasion. The play's length makes it suited to a night of revelry, and this "writer's showcase" (Whitworth 7) of legal language and classical allusions would be immediately grasped and appreciated by the "alert, young minds" (Daniell 106) of the sophisticated audience of lawyers and nobility. Catherine Shaw argues that Shakespeare had a learned audience very much in mind when he wrote this play, and that he was "showing off not a little" (17). Others see the symbolism of rebirth and baptism at the play's end fitting for the holiday of Holy Innocents Day, which commemorates the infanticide under Herod (Kinney 158).

The Play: On Stage

Production History

Ten years to the day of its first performance, *The Comedy* was again performed at Gray's Inn, under the reign of James I. The three-hundredth anniversary of the play's first performance was also celebrated there, in a production directed by William Poel.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's 2011 edition of the play offers a comprehensive survey of its production history (P Freedman and Sewell 84-108). Over the course of the centuries, *The Comedy* was most often a vehicle for song, dance and musical interludes. In the nineteenth century, the era of the actor-manager, the ensemble nature of the play ensured its unpopularity unless there happened to be twin actors who could bring the play's conceit to life, such as in a production at the 1864 Princess Theatre in London 1864 with the twins Charles and Harry Webb (86).

Theodore Komijarevsky's production in 1938 for the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford-Upon-Avon was the most successful and influential *The Comedy* in the first half of the twentieth century (88). It was a colourful, anarchic and zany performance that was described by Clive Mc Mann in the *Daily Mail* as "a Christmas pantomime as it might be staged in Moscow" (qtd. in Whitworth, 68).

Clifford Williams' 1962 production for the Royal Shakespeare Company was a "milestone" because the director went deeper and darker, keeping all of the fun but

exploring the play's more disquieting and weird notes (Billington 488). It was thought worthy of a revival a decade later.

Occasionally, as in Ian Judge's 1990 Royal Shakespeare Company production, directors have opted for the doubling of each twin set to one actor, so that *The Comedy* becomes a display of comic virtuosity for the actors playing both Antipholuses and Dromios. When Kathryn Hunter took this route in her 1999 Globe production, Robert Smallwood felt that the production was "doomed to failure before it started by [this] alluring but always fatal decision" ("Survey" 261). The power of the ending is severely weakened in productions cast this way by the use of a doppelganger for the second twin in Act Five, when the full cast is assembled onstage, as Peter Holland points out in *English Shakespeares* (62).

Richard Monette took this approach to doubling in his popular 1987 production at the Stratford Festival in Canada, with Geordie Johnston as the two Antipholuses and Keith Dinicoll as the Dromios. Other Stratford productions include Robin Phillip's 1975 Wild-West production and Richard Rose's Kafkaesque version in 1994. Peter Hinton's 2010 *The Comedy*, co-produced by The National Arts Centre and Montreal's Centaur Theatre was set in present day Montreal.

Twenty years earlier, Hinton had directed the play in Toronto's High Park, and the park was again the site for *The Comedy* when Kelly Thornton directed a "one hella frantic and funky" production there in 2006 (Pedersen par. 1).

Two Approaches

Actor Ian Hughes points out that *The Comedy* “has a history of directorial man-handling which an audience seeing the play almost seems to expect” (30). In surveying reviews of various productions of this play, it is clear that most directors favour the more-is-more approach, adding much in the way of irrelevant stage business, buffoonery and gags. P. Freedman and Sewell suggest that this may be because the directors lack faith in the play itself (91). Miola points out that “distrust of the script leads to the neglect of language and overall design; the play dwindles into a show, featuring all manner of noise and spectacle” (“The Play”31).

A noteworthy example is Richard Monette’s production at the Stratford Festival in 2007, one of his last as outgoing artistic director. While it is clear that he took this opportunity to have fun thumbing his nose at critics dismissive of his directorial style and indulged in deliberate excess, the description of the stage business has much in common with other productions of the play: “Although most of Shakespeare's lines remain, the production has been laced with so much silly stage business that the play is essentially eviscerated” (Posner par.6). Charles Whitworth describes a similar production by Lynne Parker at the RSC in 2000: “The laughs were frequent, loud and long. Shakespeare’s text was not permitted to generate any of them” (Whitworth 75).

Nonetheless, there have been exceptional productions that, taking their cue from Clifford Williams’ seminal 1962 staging, offered a more nuanced reading of the play.

Of the notable productions, it is Tim Supple's 1996 staging at The Other Place (for the Royal Shakespeare Company) that most intrigues me. While the play still offered moments of hilarity, his version was not padded "with extraneous material nor overplayed its farcical elements" (Smallwood, "Theatre" 320). Supple's reading of the play was "attentive to the language" (321) and paid close attention to the text's darkness, violence and melancholy, with a "strong sense of the deeper issues being explored in the play." (322)

The ending of this production took advantage of what Harold Bloom calls Shakespeare's evolving "art of ellipsis" (26) and offered the audience an ending full of ambiguity and uncertainty as much as reunion. "Much was still to be understood, much to be forgiven." (Smallwood, "Theatre" 323)

In treating the play with respect and "thoughtful, affectionate delight in the story it had to tell"(323) Supple's human interpretation of *The Comedy* informs the direction I am pursuing with my own production. David Daniell's words serve to describe my approach: "The play has now arrived, but usually with wild trappings not always in control, and in American productions stage mayhem seems the norm at the moment. This is a pity. Played cool and clear, it can enchant, and reveal unexpected sophistication of imagery as well as vigour" (107).

I am inspired by the invitation to enchant an audience, rather than win them over exclusively with cheap gags.

The Play: Its Kind

Genre

Referring to its double nature, Samuel Taylor Coleridge described *The Comedy* as a “poetical farce”, but I believe it is more helpful to term this play a romantic comedy. The heart of this play lies in comedy. The play possesses pronounced farcical elements, but as Anne Barton points out, one can’t contain this play within the bounds of farce (79). Comedy serves as a fulcrum between the extremes of farce and romance.

Farce is a comedic form that plays on hostility and violence (Bentley 255). “The key to farce is [...] that we laugh at violence; the unacceptable becomes acceptable” (B. Freedman “Errors” 235).

Aggression is key, as is a manic pace and the blending of the familiar and the absurd (Bentley 240-241). The collision of the meaningful and the ridiculous is also important: meaning and madness battle for priority (B. Freedman “Staging” 103).

In farce, coincidence is accepted, and seen as a form of fate (Bentley 245). Farce does not “tumble into absurdity by accident, but revel[s] in it on purpose. To question the absurd in it is to challenge, not the conclusion, but the premise” (Bentley, 203).

Farce can take on a variety of forms. They include the “talisman” farce, where the plot mechanics revolve around a central object (Millner 124), or the “snowball” farce, which

begins with the temporary aberration by a central character, the consequences of which eventually sweep up the entire cast into a ball of frenzy until it finally explodes and falls apart (Millner 129).

The Comedy takes from farce the enjoyment generated by aggression and violence (the beatings and the lockout scene in Act Three) as well as the existence of an improbable situation within an everyday reality (two sets of identical twins, dressed alike, in the same city, on the same day). There are traces of the talisman farce in the action surrounding the chain Antipholus of Ephesus has ordered from Angelo, and elements of the snowball farce in that all of the people in the play are eventually swept up in a mad furor of misunderstanding.

However the play departs from classic farce in that some of the characters, like Antipholus of Syracuse, possess a greater degree of inwardness than farce allows. At times, characters speak too much in comic situations for the tone to remain solely humorous, such as Adriana's long speech to the twin she mistakes for her husband in Act Two. Complex emotions are expressed in sections of *The Comedy*, and to skim over them, as happens in farce, would rob the play of depth and humanity. *The Comedy of Errors* allows us to go deeper, into a dramatic world with more psychological depth and self-awareness. It moves from the chaos of farce to "grandeur and to greatness" (Bentley 300) and like tragedy, is a way for us to cope with despair and suffering (Bentley 301).

Jessica Millner Davis tells us that for many critics, comedy is farce redeemed by empathy (143) and Eric Bentley states that in comedy “feeling is not only present but also abundant” (298). It is an “adult genre”(298) that acknowledges the sadness and cynicism of the human predicament (306). The comic world acknowledges pain and suffering, yet transcends them (308).

In *The Seven Basic Plots*, Christopher Booker states that the essence of comedy is “that some redeeming truth has to be brought out of the shadows into light.” (123) He states that the real focus of comedy is consciousness, in contrast to confusion. Confusion is brought about by limited awareness of the truth about oneself and others, and characters remain shut off from one another. Eventually, what “dispels the confusion is that their awareness has finally opened out so that they can see everything and everyone, including themselves, straight and whole” (151).

According to Northrop Frye, the “action of a comedy often leads to a kind of self-knowledge which releases a character from the bondage of his humour” and offers “a sense of proportion and of social reality” (“Natural” 79). In *The Argument for Comedy* he states that comedy is “designed not to condemn evil, but to ridicule lack of self-knowledge” (452).

Comedy also promises renewal, often ending in some form of celebration or ceremony, like marriage. At the end of a comedy the social order is restored, but in contrast to farce it is attended by a fuller sense of the human experience. Comedy wants to include as

many people as possible in the final restoration – the freer the society, the wider of range of individuals present (Frye “Argument” 452-3).

Often, *The Comedy* strikes the painful notes we find in comedy (as in Dromio of Ephesus’ speech in Act Four after yet another beating from his master) as well as tenderness (the wooing scene between Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana). We can identify and empathize with many of the characters; their needs are profound and human, as opposed to merely libidinal. The self-awareness the characters come to is indicative of the comic world, as is the reestablishment of community at the end of the play.

Romance also addresses integration. The ending of romance offers us “long loss restored, sorrow turned to joy, [and] providential rebirth” (Miola, “Critics” 20). In romance, the vagaries of sometimes hostile and capricious Fortune are fore-grounded, often in stories of sea voyages and shipwreck, which begin with tragic separation and end with a sense of reunion (Salingar 30).

Romance is a medieval genre that concerns itself with chivalry, heroic action, and fantastic narratives (Bergeron 111). In Shakespeare’s age, the tales of romance opened up “imaginative vistas” for the majority of the population that had no opportunity for extensive and foreign travel (Foakes, “Romance” 50).

There is also an element of morality in romance stories as trials of virtue are involved, and patience and suffering are rewarded (Salingar 148). David M. Bergeron: “Experience

at sea and its consequences help delineate Shakespeare's romantic world, a world that he inherited in which problems [...] are solved, come hell or high water" (112).

As with farce, romance provides this play with an element of the far-fetched, but for a transcendent rather than amusing purpose. Barber and Wright state that the ending of *The Comedy* is not about marital reconciliation and the promise of other nuptials, but the reintegration of the family and its reconciliation with society at large. In their opinion, it is the conclusion of a comedy framed by romance (283). The sense of wonder and rebirth that attends the play's culmination (provided by the gossip's feast in Act Five) also demonstrates that despite the main comic action, the ending of *The Comedy* returns us to the world of romance that opens the play (O'Connell 220).

The Happy Ending

Ann Barton tells us that "Shakespeare, even at the beginning of his career, seems to have been wedded to the idea that happy endings, must, to carry conviction, be won from a serious confrontation with mortality, violence, and time" (81). I believe that the entire action of the play should serve as a set of blocks building toward a transcendent ending.

In contemplating the comic and romantic close of *The Comedy*, I relish the notion of the happy ending. A happy ending is life affirming even when it leans towards the trite. At the redemptive close of this play - described by Robert Smallwood as one of the most

exquisite exit sequences in Shakespeare (“Survey 53” 262) - we are offered a glimpse of possible real-world hope.

We are educating “our imagination in utopian norms and expectations.” (Ryan, 102) H.B. Charlton argues that Shakespearean comedy “speculates imaginatively on modes, not of preserving a good already reached, but of enlarging and extending the possibilities of this and other kinds of good.” There is a pursuit of a world where man’s “life may be fuller, his sensations more exquisite and his joys more widespread, more lasting, and so more humane” (277-8). It is this sense of humanness and joy that I am so keen to evoke for the High Park audience.

Despite the undeniable warmth and joy at the close of *The Comedy*, it is remarkable how much is left unsaid. Most of the lines are given to Emilia, the matriarch of the reunited family. Interestingly, there are no words for the reunited twins to share, nor any for the reconciliation of Antipholus of Ephesus and his wife, Adriana. I look forward to exploring just what those silences contain; how much anxiety and tentativeness can be introduced without skewing this picture of togetherness and redemption.

Themes and Imagery

The play’s duality of nature is also reflected in the compass of theme, imagery and symbolism it employs, ranging from the world of the concrete to the metaphysical.

The Comedy has firm roots in the bustling middle-class world of Plautine domestic comedy and so much of the play's imagery revolves around time and money. Dromio of Syracuse will riff on them fantastically with his verbal wizardry. In this play, which is also Shakespeare's shortest, the word *money* occurs more often than in any other of his plays, and there is a very high incidence of mercantile terms (Whitworth 49). The action involves financial obligations and legal transactions, and physical props include various forms of payment as well as purchased luxury goods, like Adriana's gold chain and the Courtesan's ring.

These items also represent love and partnership, but in the same way that the rope Dromio of Ephesus buys in Act Four, can mean binding and restriction. This ambiguous duality is present throughout the play, in the oppositions of Ephesus and Syracuse, harbour and city, justice and mercy, "dark" and "light" women, Christianity and witchcraft. Within each twin set, there are polarities of temperament and spirit.

Twins fascinate us by the disturbing fact that two distinct people share one appearance – it challenges our idea of individuality. In *The Comedy*, the poetic image for the individual self is the drop of water. Water is also a metaphor for the unconscious (Ackroyd 28), and a symbol of the vicissitude of human life (Nevo 163). Charles Whitworth states that water washes over and through the fabric of this play (52), through tears, waves, the storm at sea, and the water imagery in the speeches of Antipholus of Syracuse and Adriana.

Sea and shipwreck, loss at sea: these are metaphors for incompleteness and loss of one's identity (Whitworth 51) in a play where the individual's sense of self is fragile. Jonathan Bate points out that in Elizabethan times, the loss of self or the soul was a very real fear (xvi). This play asks, what is it that constitutes the idea of "me": Is it what I know and feel about myself? Is it the perception that others have of me? Is it found in the accouterments of my life? It is the Antipholuses who must face these questions. As their sense of identity is tested, the Ephesian will go to any violent length to assert himself, as he knows himself to be, while the Syracusian surrenders, unsure if it is he who is in error.

As the notion of the self is challenged for the twin protagonists, madness and sorcery are invoked. The language of insanity and witchcraft abounds, as a means of explaining incomprehensible behavior in oneself or in others.

As the sense of stable identity dissolves, images of transformation and metamorphosis multiply as the play progresses. For example, the image of each Dromio being transformed into an ass is mentioned a number of times. For Northrop Frye, this means we enter into the "night world Apuleius" ("Natural" 77). Metamorphosis is reflected in the play's structure: "The main action takes place in a world of illusion and assumed madness; the imagery of the final recognition scene suggests a passing through death into a new world" ("Natural" 106).

The journey in *The Comedy* is one of self-discovery (Noble 260). W. Thomas MacCary suggests that the whole content of the play is located in Antipholus of Syracuse's

“content” (I.ii.33): his twin brother, his external self, who exists as an “ideal ego”, an image of himself he can work to assimilate (“Friends” 84-85). MacCary sees *The Comedy* as a narcissistic comedy, in the sense that instead of marriage, the focus is on this Antipholus’ search for, and expression of himself (“Friends” 82). This quest is almost thwarted when he meets and attempts to woo Luciana, but ultimately he is determined to continue on his journey. Romantic love is not the destination, yet.

For Antipholus of Syracuse, Luciana represents love’s transformative power while Adriana shows it to be demanding and suffocating. According to MacCary, in appropriating his image of the drop of water in Act Two, Adriana “becomes the mother threatening to engulf him”, the woman who knows him and claims him (“Comedy” 34). In MacCary’s view of this “egocentric comedy,” she is the dark, oceanic mother who threatens to reabsorb Antipholus, while Luciana is the positive version of the nurturing mother figure who can reveal to him who he really is. It is also fitting that his wise mother, Emilia, is given most of the words to speak in the final scene’s denouement. *The Comedy* is pre-oedipal then, in that its focus is on desire for an integrated self, with an ambivalent attitude towards women - and the emotions they represent - who are seen as both nurturing and overwhelming (“Comedy” 31).

Barbara Freedman proposes that the Antipholus twins could be seen as two facets of Egeon’s personality as a “second self in time” (“Staging” 90) that must be reconciled before the family can be reunited and the strained bonds of marriage repaired. In an effort to link both plots of the play, Freedman, Barber and Wright suggest that marital

debt is at issue, since the marriage of Antipholus of Ephesus and Adriana also figures prominently in the main comic plot (Barber and Wright 78).

Redemption then, becomes a unifying theme, since it also takes into account the many financial obligations in the play. Barbara Freedman suggests that *The Comedy* “can therefore be read as a play with and upon redemption: it demonstrates how one redeems (recovers) oneself by redeeming (making payment for) one’s debts as one redeems (goes in exchange for) one’s alter ego, and how one is thereby redeemed (released) from bondage only to share in the fruits of redemption (rebirth)” (“Staging” 100).

My Production

Premise

As well as culminating in a sense of social reconciliation and celebration, the path of a comedy describes a journey from ignorance towards self-awareness, and a clearer sense of who one is. In *The Comedy* the movement towards this conclusion is decisively helped along by Fortune. Providence causes the shipwreck and the separation of family in the frame plot and brings together all of the protagonists on the eventful day. Most importantly, the tangle of plot complications is resolved through chance – it is only by running into the abbey that Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse meet the abbess, whose sudden appearance in the play is often compared to that of a *deus ex machina* (Greer 117). Her arrival begins the untying of the plot's knots.

Yet it is a lack of proper perception by the main characters – both inward and outward – that is a main cause of the snowballing chaos in the play. While the presence of two sets of identical twins in proximity is bound to cause confusion, it is also true that the people in the play have trouble “seeing” properly due to self-absorption (Garber 121), myopia (Leggatt 137) and a sense of persecution (Brooks 89).

Once this neurotic rhapsody, which is fed by the characters' passions, explodes (Barber 70), the crisis is resolved and the community is endowed with more self-awareness and clarity about the world around them. I am intrigued by Barbara Freedman's observation that “Shakespeare's comedies play upon the relationship between the knowable and the

unknown as a changing constant that alone makes identity and proportion possible.” *The Comedy of Errors* mocks the idea of right perspective. In fact a single point of view limits rather than guarantees perfect sight: community is necessary for interpretation (“Staging” 24).

Thus, as a premise, I have devised: Self-absorbed blindness precipitates chaos and confusion. In that blindness we can’t see others properly and lose a sense of ourselves. When things fall apart, the universe forces us to acknowledge our ignorance. We are then able to rebuild our lives with greater awareness of ourselves, and of our relationship to the world around us.

Setting

My production of *The Comedy* will be set in late nineteenth century Venice. Despite the fact that its status as economic empire was already starting to crumble, the city’s golden era for celebration and masquerade was in the eighteenth century. However, situating the action in a more melancholy and decayed city highlights the romantic aspect of the play. In this arguably quieter and more refined period, there is less focus on manners and style, so the characters can more easily emerge as human beings rather than as types from another era. The contrast of content and form can also highlight the disorder as the play progresses.

I am indebted to Peter Ackroyd's book, *Venice: Pure City* for his evocative history and description of the city, which affirmed my choice of this setting. So many passages from this book spoke directly to the thematic concerns of the play.

Venice, like Ephesus for the Elizabethans, evokes mystery and the exotic. The city was reputed for sensuality, decadence and corruption, famous for luxury goods as well as courtesans. In sixteenth-century London there was a brothel called simply, Venice (279). Marked by a strong Byzantine influence due to its early monopoly on trade with Asia Minor, superstitions of the East and the West were also part of the religious culture of the city (306). On the boundary between East and West, half land and half sea, empire and city, Venice is dual-natured, a liminal place (350).

As with Antipholus of Syracuse, Venice's sense of identity is vulnerable: its origin is fluid, written in water (4) and insecurely placed in the world (13). It is a city that has drawn wanderers and exiles, a haven for those uncertain of their origins or true identity (44). Ackroyd describes how in serious literature, Venice became "a place of self-discovery, too, where the usual boundaries between outward and inward, private and public, become blurred. It is a setting where unconscious or repressed desires come forward. It is a place of strange meetings and unexpected encounters" (238).

As Egeon discovers to his peril, for a newcomer to the city there was heavy surveillance at the docks. "The abiding rule, for foreigners and other interested parties, was to stay silent" (89). Henry James described Venice as a city of "endless strange secrets" (qtd. in

Ackroyd 85). A city of mystery - Ackroyd describes an almost “oriental secrecy, with secret meetings, secret payments, secret decisions and secret deaths” (83) – Venice’s unofficial emblem is the mask (246).

As Balthasar counsels Antipholus of Ephesus in Act Three, display and presentation is everything. The art of keeping up appearances, or the *bella figura*, was immensely important (30). Ackroyd repeatedly stresses the focus placed on façade and the surface in “this city of masks”(86).

Venice is famously the city of Carnival, which is a celebration of concealed identity, license and confusion. “In a city where roles of patricians and citizens were well defined, the loss of identity was often very welcome... The Carnival allowed the release of the social and personal tensions that must inevitably have spread” (247). However, even in the “carnival air of the eighteenth century the underlying mood was declared to be one of melancholy. Why else would you want to make such a show of gaiety”(332)?

The city is often described as melancholy, and marked by a “deep and endemic anxiety” (341) due to, among other things, a constant fear of flooding. It is a “floating world” (19) built on water, and as a result is changed by tides, always shifting and unstable (4).

“The moon rules Venice” (19) and this brings to the mind references to lunacy and madness in the play. “Is it surprising, therefore, that many people go mad in Venice? [...]

Madness afflicts islanders more insidiously than others” (340). Venice exerts some strange power over the human imagination (78).

Some of the travelers inspired by the potent atmosphere of the city were the countless artists – writers, painters, poets – who made Venice home, or a site of regular pilgrimage. Ackroyd notes the number of nineteenth and early twentieth century writers who commented on the dream of Venice: ”They are part of a culture in which the interior life first came to prominence as an object of study” (77).

Among them is the American expatriate Henry James, who devoted much of his work to exploring the situation of Americans in Europe, and vice versa. In my production, I see the Syracusans as Americans arriving in Venice. There is comic gold to be mined with these innocent and straight-laced visitors coming from the New World, landing in the middle of topsy-turvy Carnival in decadent, old-world Venice. The “acme of Venetian tourism was reached in the nineteenth century. The Grand Tour had given way to upper middle-class travel with Venice as the most desirable destination of all” (236). In *The Comedy*, Shakespeare sets up an opposition in the differing personalities of the states of Ephesus and Syracuse, and in my production the former is represented by the American innocent abroad, while the latter is the figure of the louche Venetian.

James was also a sensitive portrayer of women and the ways in which they negotiated their positions in society. In this period we are entering the twilight of the corseted woman, a time when certain women were starting to think about breaking free and

liberating themselves from the tyranny of this fashion and their constrained social roles. I clearly see Adriana rattling the bars of her domestic cage in this context, and Luciana presuming to stand apart from the institution of marriage.

In the theatre of the late nineteenth century, Henrik Ibsen was also exploring the position of women in marriage and society as well as charting new psychological terrain on stage. At the same time, this was the great era of farce from Feydeau and Labiche in France, and the comedies of Pinero and Wilde in England.

In a play where perception plays a major part, the end of the nineteenth century was a time of great change in terms of how one's view of the world was transformed by art, technology and science. Sigmund Freud, "the first specialist in bourgeois *Angst*" (Morton 75) was beginning to develop his ideas on the subconscious and formulate the basis of his approach to psychoanalysis (Morton 284). Some of the most interesting essays I've come across regarding the play are based on the psychoanalytical approach, whose roots are in Freud and his explorations of the human psyche.

By evoking a sense of inwardness and restraint from which the distress, disorder and anxiety in the play can emerge more markedly, this proposed setting provides an unexpected and delicate lens through which to examine *The Comedy*. It also allows me to bring an element of glamour and beauty to High Park, which forms part of my directorial signature.

Design

Venice is an unabashedly theatrical city, both in appearance and in its appreciation of opera and theatre. The first European theatre devoted to theatrical plays was opened in Venice in 1565 and the world's first public opera house opened there in 1637 (Ackroyd 130-131). Richard Wagner found that in Venice everything looked like a “marvelous piece of stage scenery” (qtd. in Ackroyd 122). Like the city, my team of designers and I aim to create an elegant, theatrical world.

Set designer Teresa Przybylski and I spoke about bringing the opera house to the Park and this became one of our points of departure. However, the constraints of the High Park amphitheatre mean we must keep our vision simple. Our evolving design aims to marry a sense of “old-fashioned” stage scenery with a modern sharpness, most likely in the use of printed photography, as opposed to traditional scenic painting. It is also important to me that the set design allows for moments of delight and surprise.

The Comedy will run in repertory with MFA candidate Estelle Shook's production of *Julius Caesar*, also designed by Przybylski. We have decided not to use Canadian Stage's traditional multi-level High Park unit set for aesthetic and practical reasons. In order to break up the massive bare deck and to create a feeling of intimacy with the audience, the architecture of my set will push the action to the front half of the playing space. A narrower visual frame will help focus attention on the inter-personal relationships on stage.

The setting will be fairly monochromatic, highlighting the richness of costuming, which will reflect the elegance of the fin-de-siecle, and when appropriate, the excess of Carnival. Costume designer Sean Mulcahy and I have been inspired by the paintings of Boldini and his contemporary John Singer Sargent, who was born to American parents in Italy. He was an intimate of Henry James, who spent much time in Venice. Sargent's unconventional and energetic work is described in Trevor Fairbrother's book on the painter as mixing "the stylishly modern and the grandly retro" (16), a flair I hope we will achieve.

Sound design will be key for this production, especially at the beginning of the performance, which begins in fading daylight. The first scene of the play is essentially Egeon's extended narrative speech, so I will need the sound design to grab the audience's focus from the outset, so that they will be keen to follow the words. I have asked sound designer Lyon Smith to work with the music of Vivaldi, whose agitated and exciting sound represents the acme of Venetian music (Ackroyd 374). By highlighting and manipulating small passages of Vivaldi's various concerti, it is possible to create a sound that is at once beautiful and muscular, evocative of classical music but with a very definite contemporary edge.

Preparation

My work on this play began with collecting all of the information I could from the text, following a process outlined by Canadian Stage mentor Peter Hinton. Each scene is broken down under the following headings: “Where” (all we can glean about the play’s physical world); “When” (all the information available relating to time); “Who” (gathering all details of the characters and their histories); and “What” (describing the content and action of each scene). After completing this inventory, one is able to address the “How”: conceptualizing and staging the play using the data to support and inform creative ideas. Shared with creative collaborators, this information greatly assists the design process. The list is meant to evolve over the course of the pre-production period.

I am also using a method of scene analysis taught by my primary Canadian Stage MFA mentor Chris Abraham, which is based on an aspect of the directorial process outlined in Katie Mitchell’s book, *The Director’s Craft*. This work involves “events” and “intentions”. An intention describes a desired outcome: how each character wants the scene to end. An event is the point at which that desired outcome is no longer playable. At an event, the intentions of all people on stage must change. Ideally there is conflict between the various intentions at play. This is a fantastic tool for digging into the meat of a scene and understanding the moment-to-moment trajectory of all of the characters on stage, no matter the size of the role. In this process one must also account for all of the obstacles a character encounters, both internal and external. A director is able to

constellate the intentions of a scene's participants, and understand the major shifts in the action.

Of the many excellent resources available for dealing with the Bard, I have chosen to limit myself to Adrian Noble's inspiring book *How to do Shakespeare*. It is an immensely practical and comprehensive guide to dealing with Shakespearian text, imagery and structure. Noble also references *The Comedy* on a number of occasions; it is a play that he famously directed in 1983.

One last valuable resource I will mention is Declan Donnellan's *The Actor and the Target*. I am still absorbing new skills as a director and I am keen to harness some of the language in this book, which I hope to bring into the rehearsal room in May.

Casting

Estelle Shook and I decided that we would split our shared cast of twelve actors equally along gender lines. As a result some roles will be cross-gendered, which will serve the upside-down spirit of the play. The Dromio twins will be men played by women, approaching their roles as drag kings: I will be challenging the actors to impersonate men as convincingly as possible. The role of the Courtesan will also be cross-gendered but in this production she will be the "night" persona of Balthasar (ie. a man in the play doing drag). The Courtesan is the only person in the play who lies deliberately, so it is fitting that s/he has a little secret. This cross gendering will provide great comic opportunity.

The limit of cast size for this High Park production provides some challenges especially for the final scene, which requires a minimum of thirteen people on stage. Throughout the play, I've tried to make sure that there is a dramaturgical sense to the tracking of any doubling that happens, not just resorting to convenience. For example, though he only appears in the first and last scene of the play, I've decided to keep the actor playing Egeon from doubling another role in order to maintain his outsider status in the play. The actor portraying the abbess, Emilia, will not appear until the final act, keeping her (and her character) a surprise for the audience.

Due to cast-size I have had to make compromises for the final two acts, cutting the role of the Second Merchant and whenever possible, assigning his lines to Angelo. I will also be enlisting the assistant stage-manager to appear on stage as the figure of the Executioner in the final scene, to escort Egeon to his imminent death.

Rehearsals

Historically, directors have had no difficulty handling the farce aspect of the play, but with limited exceptions, the romance frame-plot has been problematic (Freedman "Staging" 79). Whitworth notes that the problem of romance is that it is inherently an un-dramatic form; it is literary, narrative and aural form, which requires that the audience listens and imagines much more than watch (44).

This challenge is particularly evident in the first scene of the play, which is essentially a long, narrative speech made by Egeon describing his family's separation. I will devote considerable secondary rehearsal time to working with Allan Louis (the actor playing Egeon) so that the story in his speech comes alive through his use of the text. I will use a variety of improvisations, alone and in groups, to get Louis as agile and as comfortable as possible in his function as storyteller within the play.

For all scenes, a rigorous approach to the text is key. When the actors fully commit to the language with total energy and understanding of its imagery, the results are comic, moving and engaging. In *How To Do Shakespeare*, Adrian Noble describes the power of language as the means by which Shakespeare's original audience would have been thrilled by his plays (2), and it is my hope to have the High Park audience enjoy listening to this play as much as watching it.

I will begin my process with attentive text work, discussing the ways I see major punctuation as being useful. I have decided to work from The Oxford edition of the play – the punctuation is more modern, and the emendations thoughtful and sensible. This exploration of punctuation will help determine clarity of thought structure. It will also provide important clues about breath work and rhythm.

The next pass of the text will focus on imagery and themes that I would like highlighted. In *A Natural Perspective* Northrop Frye talks about the operatic quality of Shakespeare, and how motifs are repeated though the play like musical themes. There is something

oracular about them. The audience can't be aware of them each and every one, but there is a sense of design that emerges as the play progresses and the images multiply (25). I would like the cast to pay attention to the important image chains in the play: references to madness, sorcery and transformation needs to be anxiously felt and conveyed as do the constant mentions of time and money. These musical threads need to be acknowledged, and accentuated throughout.

Attention to pace and tone is also important. Because I am using the full text virtually uncut, a certain speed of delivery is necessary to keep within the desired running time of ninety minutes. I also intend to keep the action moving fairly seamlessly between scenes and acts in order allow the errors to pile up, and the frenzy to build. However, I need to be wary of falling into the trap that Kate Pedersen describes in the previous staging of *The Comedy* in High Park by Thornton: "The action starts at a fever pitch. The dialogue borders on shrill from the very first scene, and the slapstick physicality is electric yet ceaseless, like the Three Stooges on speed. After starting so intensely, the entire cast has nowhere to go. It's exhilarating, but quickly becomes exhausting" (par.5-6).

All scenes need to be played with life-or-death stakes and with no sense at all from the actors of silliness or irony. The first and last scenes, which concern the story of Egeon and his separated family have to be treated with sincerity and heart, regardless of the fantastic content.

Despite the expectation of acting in a play that announces its genre in the title, from the first day it is my responsibility to convey to the actors that their job is to not concern themselves with being funny, but to find the human truth in the scenes, to fulfill their characters' real needs and negotiate the obstacles in their path. The play takes care of so much in terms of building up the frenzy and confusion from which the humour springs, so as a team we don't need to work hard to manufacture laughter at every moment.

The ability to play with the comic elements of *The Comedy* is only possible once the given circumstances, the language and the desired outcomes of the scenes are totally absorbed. This process cannot be rushed.

A key element in comedy is surprise, especially when it sits closely to danger. It will be so important to explore the anger, pain and violence in the scenes, as well as in the fights. I will be mindful of how far we can push in this direction before the tone swings back to the comic. I need to be aware, too, of when the antic and silly business of confusion and beatings needs to be grounded in more human truth. Director Tim Supple cautions against the urge to play up the farce too much: "Laughter is a wonderful occurrence but it can be cheaply won and it can drown out other treasures" (qtd. in Bate 116). My sense is that those treasures are moments that will allow the audience to experience a shared humanity with the characters on stage.

It will be my job to act as conductor to make sure all of the appropriate notes of this tightly structured play are struck, and sensitively. A group of energetic, articulate actors

who are clear and confident in their text and intentions will have the audience hanging onto their words and the story they are telling, whether the scene be intimate and romantic or boisterous and comic.

By inviting the cast to get inspired about my investigation, I will build a team that is as eager as I am to stage a multi-dimensional production of this play.

Conclusion

I began this essay with Charles Whitworth's description of the challenge of reconciling the farcical and romantic elements of *The Comedy of Errors*. By locating the play in the comic and paying close attention to the play's psychology, language and imagery, I believe it is possible to create a production that is both touching and funny. Instead of a focus on generating laughter from the outset (it will come from Shakespeare as the action progresses), I intend, as Adrian Noble advises, to invite the audience into our world (223).

In describing classical comedy's influence on Shakespeare, Robert S. Miola writes: "Plautine comedy begins and ends as a comedy of doors - doors opening and closing, diving, concealing, doors locking in and locking out. Shakespearean comedy [...] is a comedy of thresholds, of entranceways into new understandings and acceptances" (38 "Classical"). I sincerely hope that my production of *The Comedy of Errors* is a threshold to a new understanding of this play as a romantic comedy, rather than a one-dimensional farce, and a threshold to a new understanding of the human journey Shakespeare described.

Like Whitworth, I believe that if we "continue to give the play a fair chance, it will without doubt emerge more clearly as a comedy on a par with, if different from – as each of his works is different from all the others – Shakespeare's best in that kind" (79).

Epilogue

The rehearsal process leading up to the opening night of my production of *The Comedy of Errors* in High Park was grueling and challenged me on an emotional level which I did not anticipate. When it was all over I felt like I'd been through a battle. Having said that, I believe I successfully met many of the goals I'd set for this production, and in large part realized on stage the vision I had of this play.

The creative team and I collaborated smoothly to make this piece of theatre despite the challenges of time, budget and weather. The cast was committed and enthusiastic, but because of the constellation of different actor personalities, I occasionally felt challenged in confidently steering the work. Ultimately, though, I take heart that the group was behind my concept.

My overriding objective was to give voice to both the romantic and comic strains in the play. I am proud of the way in which I accomplished this. In the intimacy of the rehearsal studio I was particularly satisfied with the marriage of both elements; there was an easy flow between pain and hilarity that did not seem incongruous. In the openness of the Park setting, in front of an audience eager to laugh, some of the subtler emotional nuances were lost.

Another concern was to carefully attend to the psychology of the characters, so that they could be seen as people to be cared about, not figures to be laughed at. For example, the

cast and I successfully handled the differences in psychology between Ephesus and Syracuse, in particular the distinction between the two Antipholuses. I also spent a lot of time with the actors playing Egeon and Solinus, so that the former's torment and the latter's conflicted sympathy allowed the first scene to become more than just a glorified exposition scene.

The cast and I discussed at length the imagery of sorcery and madness. While the result was ultimately more comic than dark, the references to these themes related to real fears and concerns, rather than just being figures of speech. I worked hard with the cast to be clear about the difference between verse and prose. I tried to eliminate indulgent gaps in the pentameter, and have the actors think on the lines, not in the spaces between them. By opening night, there were still moments where I felt the energy of the lines was too broken up, but over the course of preview performances I had to let go of my obsession with pace as I allowed the cast to own their work.

The plot and language in my production were clear, and I was happy to hear many in the audience laughing at the actors' word play as well as their characterizations. I believe the public was listening as much as it was watching. I was able to achieve my goals while paying full respect to and trusting the power of Shakespeare's words.

In addition to trusting the actors, despite occasional doubts, I kept my faith in this play's ability to entertain and enchant. I came to appreciate that *The Comedy* is a slow burn. The play's first scene is not written for laughs, and the next few scenes dole them out

sparingly. Occasionally I would feel a panic rising and want to pad the scenes with more funny business not in Shakespeare's text, but once it was shown before a public, I was satisfied with how the incidence of audience laughter increased as the confusions snowballed onstage.

While I'm still not sure the final scene between the two Dromios went deep enough in terms of feeling, I was very happy with the sense of wonder and recognition that was conveyed after the revelations of Act Five with the full cast on stage. In my initial proposal I was interested in exploring what complex emotions might be contained in the silences of the reconciliations at the play's end. In practice though, I found myself wanting to give full value to the happy ending and the repair of relationships and community. While it may be a bit idealistic, I believe the ending of this production is sincere, and not overly sentimental.

I was less successful in bringing out some of the darker elements in the play, especially the violence. As the fights were being developed, when the violence was too cartoonish, I missed the absence of stakes and consequence. I also hated the silliness of it. But when the fights were more real, I was too disturbed. What resulted was violence that was neither funny nor alarming. I believe this had to do in large part with the fact that the recipients of the beatings were women (albeit playing men). As I reflect back, I wonder how necessary harsh beatings really are for the play (or at least this staging of it), but I am aware that my vision for them became confused and unclear. That said they did

become complex pieces of choreography, which, while a lesser accomplishment maybe, was still engaging, albeit in a different way.

I am also disappointed in how I surrendered on my vision for Adriana, a character who I feel could have revealed more complexity and pain. In early rehearsals, I asked the actor to approach the scenes à-la-Chekov and found the interpretation touching, but as the weeks passed the character's vulnerability started disappearing. Because of my challenges in dealing with the actor playing that role I chose to limit my direction of her, so consequently Adriana became a more comic stock character and so lost dimensionality, and in my mind, interest. I must honestly say that I question whether my vision for this character is right for the play, but as well as being shrewish and desperate I think Adriana can also be sympathetic. With more directing experience, I will be able to manage better the divergence of vision between myself and a strong-minded actor.

While I still like my idea of Venice as a setting for this play, I wonder if it was the right choice for this venue and its restrictions. The four doors onstage were visually satisfying and economical, but did little to suggest the labyrinthine city which demands a more Escher-esque environment of stairs, arches and passageways. To evoke the idea of Carnival I chose the more sinister *bauta* mask, cloak and tricorne hat uniform and this allowed for a theatrical and tongue-in-cheek overture and relatively anonymous scene changes. Because of the size of the acting company, resource constraints, and the fact that I didn't want to disrupt the play for extra business, I really wasn't able to keep that spirit alive.

The Jamesian notion of this meeting of two cultures still appeals to me, but I spent very little time in rehearsal exploring the tourist aspect of the Syracusians. I would do so, if I were to tackle this concept again. I would also have devoted more exploration to shared physical characteristics for the four twins, and paid more explicit attention to the play of similarities and differences between them. I would also offer space to investigate what it means for women to play men. The cross-gendered Dromios were delightful, but I didn't allow much time for the actors to investigate what playing another sex entails.

Overall I am very satisfied with the design of the production, which I thought was visually rich. However my instinct to use Vivaldi as the basis for the sound design was perhaps misjudged, especially with a sound designer I'd not collaborated with before. Vivaldi's music is too busy to talk over, and efforts to create subtle underscoring tracks based on phrases of his composition were for the most part unsuccessful. Relatively late in the process I decided to search for contemporary tracks that might help underscore within the scenes and leave the Vivaldi for transitions. I still believe cutting up Vivaldi to create a subtle continuo of underscoring is possible, but more time, and maybe a different sound designer, would be needed.

This was my professional directorial debut, and through the ups and downs of the process I was well served by the methods of preparation taught to me by both of my mentors. Because of the rigorous analysis I subjected the play to with the '*Who Where When What*' process, I very rarely had to check the text or my notes for details. I had absorbed

so much of the content of the play. As I reviewed my analysis of ‘*Events and Desired Outcomes*’ in retrospect, I recognize that many of my instincts were correct and informed the actors’ trajectories. I was also able to successfully incorporate Declan Donnellan and Adrian Noble’s language in the room, and found myself returning to those texts over the course of rehearsals.

In my introduction to this epilogue I acknowledged that this process had been a difficult one. I let my insecurities get the better of me. Although my lack of self-confidence didn’t prevent me from doing the job I had, I wasted much mental and emotional energy staying in the game. My two decades in dance and two years working with York students hadn’t prepared me for the kind of discussion, resistance and defensiveness that I encountered with some actors in the cast. I took so much of it on personally and allowed myself to crumble mid-process, surrendering the knowledge and conviction I did possess. I have a lot to think about in terms of boundaries, detachment and confidence building.

As I move forward I think I will care less about being liked by the cast and give tougher notes more confidently. I believe an open and collaborative room is important, but over the course of this process I may have tended too much toward the democratic, and then got bitter and insecure when I felt like I wasn’t able to hold the reins tight enough. With more work in the theatre, I can see that I will learn to trust my instincts more.

Despite these challenges, I remain proud of what I accomplished. Through my training at York and the guidance of my mentors, I was able to fulfill my vision for *The Comedy of*

Errors within the parameters of the Shakespeare in High Park schedule and budget. I got the cast on board and excited by my vision for the simple, sincere and economical telling of this story. And together with my creative team, we delivered on that vision.

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Appendix A: Who, Where, When, What Preparation

ACT 1, SCENE 1

WHO

Egeon

-sounds like “Aegean” sea (an embayment of the Mediterranean);
- also “Aegeus”, the father of Theseus who jumped into the sea and drowned himself because he thought his son had been slain.

-50-60 years old, once a successful and wealthy merchant in a happy marriage. Now a lonely wanderer – during his life he has placed wealth and trade over his family, and as a result loses every member of it.

HISTORY: Early into his wife’s pregnancy, 25 years ago, he travels because of his factor’s (agent) death to collect his unattended merchandise abroad; and his wife follows six months into her pregnancy. In Epidamnus, the birth of their sons, who looked so much alike, they could only be told apart by name. They adopt twin boys from a poor woman, to be servants to their own boys.

-Egeon enjoys a brief moment of familial unity – his “bliss”. His wife is eager to return home, and they set out despite Egeon’s misgivings. There is a storm at sea, the crew abandons the ship and they are wrecked. -Egeon recounts that he would have ‘embraced’ immediate death, but for the weeping of his wife and children... he tried to save them. Is this “early” Egeon – self-centered, think more of himself than his loved ones?)

-He loses his wife and one son in the shipwreck. He and the elder *son are rescued by fishermen from Epidaurus. (*end of story he makes a mistake and calls him my youngest boy.)

Egeon has spent the last 5 years traveling in search of his son, who had set out 2 years before that to find his lost brother. He lands in Ephesus on his way homeward, with nothing left to lose (this is a dangerous place for him to visit, as a Syracusan). After 5 years of fruitless search, he is bereft, filled with regret and longs to die.

- He has always been late. His pregnant wife had to come find him on a trade voyage, and on the return home they are separated. Egeon appears to have made no effort during the subsequent years to search for his wife and lost son. It his is other son that sets out to do that, and only 2 years later, does Egeon finally set out to find him.

- In his advancing years, he realizes that he is alone, and the money he made is no substitute. He’s been wrong and distracted.

- The narrator of Romance drama has been dramatized and personalized – Egeon is the storyteller.

Solinus

- “Sol” – sun: light, order, clarity; law.

- The Duke of Ephesus is a warrior and he places the laws of Ephesus higher than his own crown, oath, dignity.

- He is sympathetic towards Egeon but adamant that he will not contravene the laws of Ephesus and commute his sentence. In this he is not radical – he will not alter the law despite the unfairness of the sentence he hands down.

Father

- the action of Solinus
- ensures that Egeon is contained and held, his custodian
- also a figure of mercy, as opposed to law of Ephesus... and a benevolent religious figure, as opposed to Pinch

WHERE

The Duke's Private Chamber

Private and enclosed

Threatening, somber, sinister

Intimate scene – between the Law (Solinus) and a man (Egeon)

WHEN

8pm

WHAT

- A group is gathered in the Dukes' private salon before heading out for Carnival. A handful of masked revelers– anonymous, mysterious and foreboding
- Priest with Egeon. Tension: pagan vs Christian – figure of mercy
- Egeon has tried to cheat death for this last chance to find his son. Upon arrival in Ephesus he is apprehended and brought to Solinus for trespassing in this territory. (A man vs. the Law)
- Troubling beginning for Solinus – Egeon isn't acting the way a prisoner should (ie. prisoner pleading for his life. He needs to know more.)

- A grieving father realizes too late he's had the wrong priorities in life shares his tragic life story with a Duke, who, though sympathetic, will not alter the laws of the State to show mercy.
- Solinus encourages Egeon to tell his full story and to unburden himself.
- Egeon has 3 couplets where he expresses a desire to die but at the same time, despite professed reluctance, he relates in full detail the story of the history of his family and the shipwreck... has a need to unburden himself, have it on record that it was love and the search of his son that caused him to be in Ephesus.
- Egeon tells a moving and compelling story and now Solinus is torn between upholding rule of law and showing mercy to the pathetic man. (Mercy vs. Justice)
- Initially Solinus says that he will not contravene the laws of the state, though by the end of Egeon's story, he says he would if he could. But apparently the laws of Ephesus and his duty to the state are that important.
- A deadline is set for Egeon execution, though Solinus gives him a meager lifeline –a 1000 ducat bail and he has until sunrise to collect it before sunrise. (Deadline)
- The interrogation scene sets up the backstory for the other main characters in a dramatic and concise way.

- Equality in first scene between Duke and Egeon – two men of same age in different positions

The stress: adversity vs compassion; law vs. human

Idea of trade, commerce, trade and money introduced. Themes: commerce, loss and separation, weirdness (double twins born in same place, same time), the sea. Fortune, justice (mercy) vs law, money as the source of mishap

PROPS

Rope/cuffs/chain for Egeon? (motif of binding)

Rug – focuses our attention on Egeon

Chair for Solinus?

ACT 1, SCENE 2

WHO

Antipholus of Syracuse

- “anti” and “philia” – love: (opposing love) and in Folio: Antipholus Erotos (possible corruption of Erraticus: wanderer, or Erotis: lover)

- 25 years old, traveller for the past 7 years on an unsuccessful quest to find his brother and mother – there is a real need to find them, even though the task is immense (seeking another drop in the ocean). He even goes so far as to change his name to his twin brother’s.

- He is affectionate/respectful with his servant but when his patience is severely tested, he will resort to beating Dromio – there is still that distinction of class between them.

- Ant/Syr – separation from Dromio makes him neurotic. Dromio gives him identity, stabilizes himself

- Though he has wandered for 7 years, impression of relative innocence and wide-eyedness. And uptight too: “as I am a Christian” (in opposition to the sorcery and wildness of Ephesus). He is prone to contemplation (“I will lose myself”, dull with “care and melancholy”)

-He is suspicious that the rumours about Ephesus are true (mysterious and magical, full of cheating and deceit) and subsequent events will prove those fears correct.

Dromio of Syracuse:

-from the Greek – “to run” – to carry out orders

-servus currens – running servant from Roman Comedy

-25 years old and has also taken on his lost twin’s name, though he does not mention him at all.

- He is trustworthy (Ant/Syr asks his to take the money back to Inn and keep it safe) but also cheeky (his banter, and Ant/Syr’s explanation of their relationship to Merchant.)

Dromio of Ephesus:

- He is 25 years old, harried and in a rush. He is hard done by, and always mentioning it

- He is determined to do his job right and get his master home. He is eager to be a good messenger for Adriana (doesn’t need more beatings).

- He will do all he can to help his master
- He's a bit of a punching bag, and he seems to expect the beatings though he will stick up for himself ("if I should pay your worship...")
- He is impatient to eat, a man of appetite and there is humour in his language: puns, appositions, and metaphors.
- More earthy, of the body than his twin. Less fanciful too

Balthasar

(First Merchant in original)

- "Balthasar" was one of the three wise men
- a merchant, a man of society, gracious, concerned about the appearance of things, reputation
- Relatively important status and position in society
- He is a witness. (Egeon's story, Ant/Syr arrival, to Ant/Eph's shame ...)
- He thinks highly of Adriana and has some insight to Adriana/Ant/Eph's marriage
- Possibly the same person as the Courtesan

Masked figures exiting scene 1 (top and tail action). Adds note of mysterious and concealed identity, fantasy and disguise)

WHERE

- Coming from Harbour (departures, arrivals) to the Mart (bustle, trade, business, money, gossip)
- Transitioning from the Romance world (sea) to the urban, modern life (city).
- Feeling of opening up, fresh air, and possibility – a bridge from one world to another.
- people in transit, bustle and mystery of a new place
- Open, public place – but where Ant/Syr can feel comfortable beating his servant (some measure of privacy)

WHEN

11:30 pm

WHAT

- innocent tourists abroad have arrived in Ephesus, whose reputation precedes it
- they get the lay of the land from someone in the know
- establishment of easy rapport between A/D of Syr
- Ant/Syr in a personal moment reveals his great need – his life objective
- 1st error! AS and DE mistake the other for their twin
- Ant/Syr put on guard – crazy things can and do happen in this city
- Adriana/Luciana introduced before we meet them
- AS introduces the idea of the individual lost in the ocean of humanity (drop of water)
- the amount Ant is travelling with is the exact amount of Egeon's ransom
- context for first beating: travel, fatigue, think you've lost your money – short step to a fight
- Ant/Syr needs to be in a state to rise to beatings his servant (fatigue, anxiety, concern with money)

Themes introduced or reinforced: commerce and trade; danger, sorcery, deceit, weirdness; Ephesus as a wild place, be on your guard; master/servant relationship; money at the source of a complication; “losing” oneself; sense of incompleteness; Christian terminology ; a drop of water

PROPS

Money (Envelope)

Luggage for Ant/Dro of Syr

Walking stick

Map(s) and phrase book

Appendix B: Events and Intentions Sample

Act 2, Scene 1

Adriana: To get Luciana to acknowledge that she, Adriana, has grounds for being upset about her marital situation, and about the double-standard women face, in general.

Luciana: To get Adriana to face up to, and make the best of, the position of wife that she signed up for.

EVENT: Dromio of Ephesus enters.

Adriana: To get Dromio to tell her when her husband will be coming home.

Luciana: To get Dromio to give a clear account of what happened with Antipholus.

Dro/Eph: To get Adriana to understand just how crazily Antipholus acted when he, Dromio, tried to get him to come home.

EVENT: Dromio of Ephesus tells Adriana that Antipholus has denied his house and wife.

Adriana: To get Dromio to go out again, and bring back her husband.

Luciana: To get Adriana to forget about getting her husband home.

Dromio of Ephesus: To get Adriana to reconsider the errand she is sending him on.

EVENT: Dromio of Ephesus exits.

Adriana: To get Luciana to confirm her fears that Antipholus is unfaithful, and that she is not longer attractive to him.

Luciana: To get Adriana to stop making herself more miserable by overreacting.

Appendix C: Research Images from the Design Process



Clockwise from top-left: *Image 1: Adriana, Image 2: Antipholus Of Syracuse, Image 3: Luciana, Image 4: Angelo*



Clockwise from top-left:

*Image 5: Solinus,
Image 7: Courtesan,*

*Image 6: Dromio of Syracuse,
Image 8: Abbess*

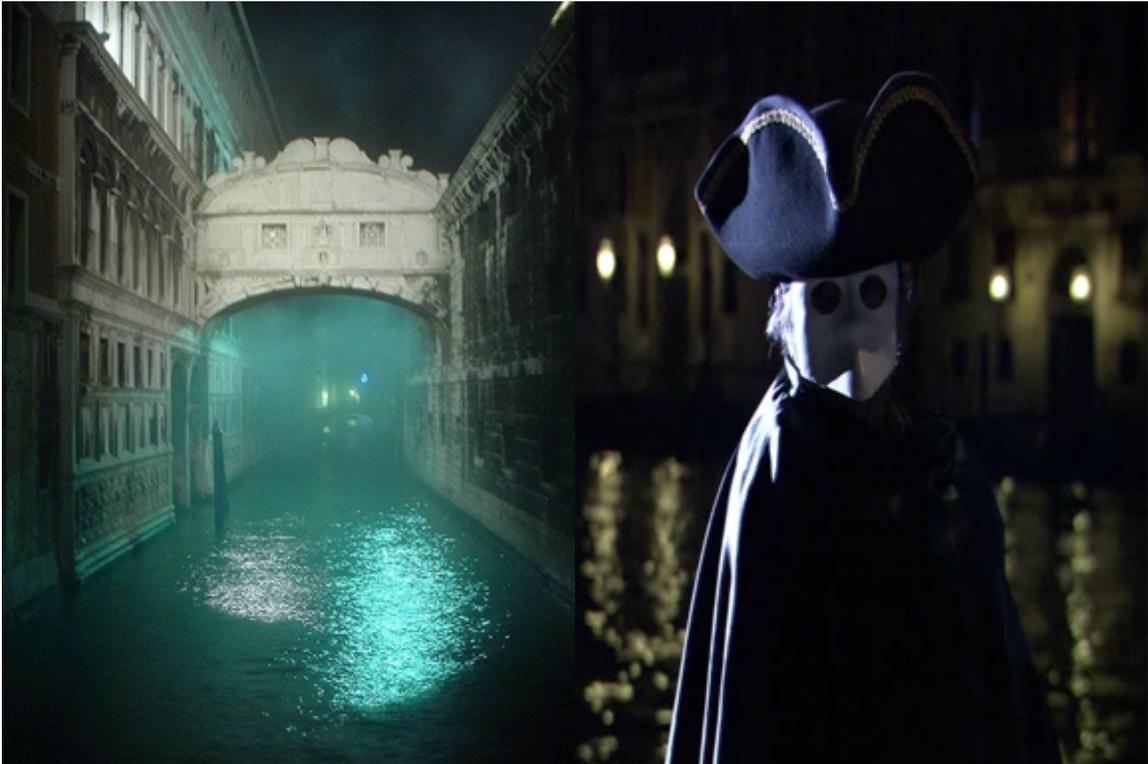


Images 9 – 11: The Canals in Venice, by day and night



Image 12: An alley in Venice

Image 13: Ponte Cappello, Venice



Clockwise from top-left: *Image 14:* Bridge of Sighs by Night,
Image 15: Bauta mask and three-cornered hat
Image 16: Masked revelers in Pizza San Marco

List of Images

1. Sargent, John Singer. *Madame Paul Poirson*. 1885.
2. Boldini, Giovanni. *Count Robert de Montesquiou*. 1897.
3. Sargent, John Singer. *Lady Agnew of Lochnaw*. 1892.
4. Boldini, Giovanni. *John Singer Sargent*. c. 1890.
5. Sargent, John Singer. *Sir Frank Swettenham I*. 1904
6. Thompson, John. *Italian Street Musicians* (detail). c. 1867
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7. *Victorian Wool Mourning Dress*.
<<http://www.merino.com/fashion/darnell-collection/wool-fashion-in-victorian-society/>>
8. Woman dressed in eighteenth century costume at Carnival in Venice.
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9. Schellenberg, Justin. *Gondolas on the Grand Canal in Venice*.
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10. Giordani, Cosimo. *Venice B&W*. 2007.
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11. V., Steph. *Gondola at Night*. 2010.
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12. *Streets of Venice*.
<<http://www.wallpics.biz/46577-streets-of-venice-wallpapers-pictures-photos-images>>

13. *Le pont Cappello, sur le rio de la Tetta.*

<<http://www.e-venise.com/ph14/0124-pont-cappello-rio-tetta-venise.html>>

14. *Foggy Night, Bridge of Sighs, Venice, Italy.*

<<https://besttravelphotos.wordpress.com/2012/10/14/foggy-night-bridge-of-sighs-venice-italy/>>

15. Richardson, Jim. *Piazza San Marco at Night.*

<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/city-guides/venice-photos-1/#/venice-piazza-sanmarco_2691_600x450.jpg>

16. *People/Carnival/Night/Venice /Italy – Stock Video # 475-831 539.*

<<http://footage.framepool.com/en/shot/475831539-tricorne-cape-clothing-costume-carnival-individuality>>

Appendix D: Excerpts from Daily Rehearsal Journal

May 19, 2015: For my first day, I was only involved in the morning – a private welcome to the acting company and collaborators with Estelle, and then an introduction of my play to the cast followed by a design presentation. I won't be beginning my own rehearsals till Friday, once Estelle has had two days to focus on Julius Caesar.

Overall I was very satisfied with the way I handled the day and my presentation. A week ago I was still very worried that I was going to be in full panic mode – I was concerned that anxiety and lack of confidence was going to undermine my invitation to the cast to join me on this journey and my attempt to lure them into the world of the play. Over the last two years I've had to face that when I feel eyes on me and I need to speak with authority and conviction, I tend to shrink and doubt myself; internal voices telling me that what I have to say is uninteresting, unintelligent, etc.

Meeting the cast one-on-one before rehearsals began certainly helped me rehearse my sale's pitch and feel more comfortable with it. In the process I came to own it more, too. Knowing how it complements and contrasts with Estelle's also helps. From walking into the room I made sure to make everyone feel at home, to feel excited to be there, and for myself to appear relaxed. Remembering to breathe was important and trying to not to speak too quickly. Also, seeing that Estelle too was nervous allowed me to feel like I wasn't alone in that, and in a sense I could respond to that (I always spoke after her) by being outwardly calmer. I tried to inject humour where I could as well, which I think eases nerves in the room.

I started my introduction to the play with the video of twins in the bath that Peter had sent me – and that went a long way to drawing people in to something very personal,

touching and beautiful about the play and the idea of these two angelic babies on the screen being separated.

I articulated my thoughts on genre and comedy, depth of feeling I'm hoping for, as well as my ideas about the time and place I'm setting my play in. I felt it landed. A small voice wishes my concept were more edgy, modern or "cool" but I also think I'm aiming to direct the play and do it justice and that providing some fantasy, glamour and beauty for the Park is a good thing, and also a personal thing.

May 22, 2015: This was my first official day of rehearsal. It started with a successful second design presentation to the Canadian Stage staff, and then the first read-through of the play.

In my introduction I wanted to thank Matthew for the wonderful opportunity, acknowledge the great cast and creative team as well as Canadian Stage staff. The only icky moment was in the design presentation when Sean "threw away" the Luce design – I needed to make Soo feel included and important as everyone else in the team. So, think it wasn't too dramatic.

The read through was good but it seemed interminable. I was surprised it ran at 1h34. So many gaps and pauses! For the most part it was a promising beginning – people brought lots to the table. The two people that made me the most nervous were *Actor B* and *Actor A* – both playing the comedy already. I have to think about how to get them to drop the shtick and focus on the reality of the scene. Not sure yet how blunt I can be. We'll see how tomorrow goes. I would like *Actor A* to find more confidence and dignity

in Adriana, and *Actor B* to let go of trying to be a comic character –that he’s a real person. Not the end of the world, but don’t want this to descend into buffoonery.

The rest of the day was productive, talking about actors’ reactions to reading the play out loud, what jumped out at them etc. Also talking about comedy, the pressures of acting/directing it. We then spent after lunch creating the backstory, and heading into the first Act. For the most part it was smooth work - a few disagreements and questions, but nothing huge.

I am trying to balance the line of being generous and open but also seeming like I have a point of view and can control the discussion. For the first few days I don’t want to crack the whip harshly, and anyway it won’t be necessary. But as we start working I can assert my point of view a little more firmly.

Anyway it’s day one. Not everything has to be solved right now. I don’t want people to get in a groove either, but I will have to be judicious about how I offer direction. Positively and with actions, not with “don’t do this” or “too much that”.

I think the video clips I’ve interspersed are helpful to stimulate the actors in other ways and create a similar image bank for the city and other things. Overall the team feels really unified (day 4 – so far, so good!) and there’s a great energy in the room. I have to remember to stay calm and confident – not to give into feelings that I need to rush and keep things entertaining. And if I get through the whole play tomorrow, that’s not a bad thing. I can make Sunday productive in another way.

May 24, 2015: Today was a much better day. Not that yesterday was bad. But today was good, drama free. The only half day in studio helped, and the Park was something to look forward to, and enjoy.

Worry that I may have been too much “myself” with the cast at drinks – sharing a little too much of myself and my crazy. At the same time, why not – building a relationship and trust.

After working through the rest of Act 5 we did a run for punctuation. Predictably, not everyone could get on board, or rather, do the exercise even though they agreed to. For those that did though, think there were some great discoveries for rhythm and humour.

Actor B seems to have dropped most of his shtick – hopefully it can stay that way. He is open and has a lovely heart and cares so much. So think there’s the trust there for me to direct him. *Actor A*, I’m a little more worried about. I want to be able to give her the right direction that will work for her, rather than use a lot of the wrong words, and create false starts.

But she is judging her character already – dismissing her and playing her as comic. Girly, weepy, needy. Don’t see the real pain and person there. Or the woman. Can I be that direct with her or do I need to phrase it more carefully? Need to run it by Peter.

Overall, it’s been a good 2.5 days at the table. Overall, went by fairly quickly and think we sorted out some stuff. A lot of it is not useable, but at least we set backstory, and connected as a group. I need to flex my directorial muscles with more conviction now – rein people in, when necessary, have an opinion. I need to find the confidence, and self-authorize to use it.

Also, the issue of the executioner: Victoria? Dylan? Do we need one?

May 29, 2015: Second day on our feet was good. A more exhausting day. Comedy is hard. Managing everyone's energy and offers – trying to get everyone on the same page energy-wise. But we have done well. Over a third of the play in 2 days. Not bad, I think. And mostly the stuff is in good shape. There is nothing that really needs a major overhaul. The shape is there, just need to go deeper, get more precise, and smooth edges. Feel proud. But man, there is a lot to do.

Very aware of my language in the process – when I get glib and self-deprecating or I start blabbing. I don't think it's a huge problem, and it is my personality, but it will be great to not always have to default to that? Or am I being overly critical of myself. I think I'm being pretty self-aware in terms of when I'm giving notes that are outside in or in the realm of line-reading/imposing. For the most part I think I am able to talk “actor language” – or at least fake it fairly plausibly.

Part of this is also just discovering my process, I think. Why can't I mix both languages? I feel like I'm treating actors in the room with respect and for the most part trying to incorporate their offers.

It's a bit exhausting trying to think of music at the same time, tech elements, figuring out all of the tech/design aspects. Mentally my stamina seems a bit off. Will need to use time tomorrow, Sunday and over day off to regroup and tackle these things. Am not convinced yet that my musical idea is going to work, but I'm going to trust Lyon-who has done this a lot – that he will make it work.

May 31, 2015: Good, relaxed and easy day of secondaries. Nice to work on text, give it a bit more shape. My ear is getting better to pick up on where the text can get more specific in terms of delivery. The Adrian Noble tips are a big help, especially for apposition. It just makes this play more interesting. Gives it some dimension. I hope I'm not being prescriptive with the actors, just giving them clues and awareness about how they can be more clear with the words, make them more muscular. Paying attention to verbs is a big key, too. I like that my ear is getting stronger.

June 6, 2015: Two brief secondaries yesterday. Disappointed with Stage Management for not putting more calls in – I could have used the time. I will need to be more vigilant. Mind you, there will be so little time to play in secondaries before we leave the studio.

Major primary day, today. Exhausting. Productive. But a lot of work. Comedy is hard and tiring, especially with that amount of ego and voice in the room. The rehearsal on the Pinch stuff went well, for the most part, but I wish I could have felt more in control of the rehearsal. If I was a better actor I might have convinced them but I can't dissemble well so I barely try. Still, I think I managed to contain my frustration and impatience fairly well. So challenging to balance the need of each actor with my vision as director and the limits of the schedule.

But man, *Actor A* is a bit much. I know she is trying to help and maybe she thinks I'm helpless, but I'm not, and I can't let her be seen to be directing the performance. Her ideas would work, but it's quite arrogant of her to imagine that everyone wants to get on board with her ideas and do what she wants. I did shut her down in rehearsal –mildly – but I needed to show that I value the other actors' needs as much as hers. I'm not sure I

need to follow up with a talk privately. I'm sure she means well, but she has to learn to be more patient and not assume she can just give the same performance as in Richard's play, or what she knows from Peter's.

Otherwise we got there, with many cooks in the kitchen. Fight calls are hard. I'm sure Simon hates that I am that picky but I think he goes off script with his ideas. I also don't think his idea of funny is mine. Anyway we got there, but... argh.

Actor A2 and *Actor M* were very successful I thought. I think they have a great connection in the scene and I like that there is some emotional texture in there. I feel proud of that work. And it does not drag. (Does it go by too quickly?)

It is great to see that the actors are maintaining work from rehearsal to rehearsal. Makes me trust being in this still messy place.

I worry still about music. I have no idea what to expect from Lyon. Maybe we won't need much by way of underscoring but I need to start hearing SOMETHING of the work. It may be incumbent on me to find those tracks, and use the days off in Park to find stuff...

June 12, 2015: A big, productive day. Less draining than I feared but there were some moments of hard work in there. First hour was smooth sailing, as I had predicted, based on way things seem to work out after an icky first pass of a scene. There are still a few kinks but I think the skeleton is there and I am quite happy with the results. Matthew watched and amazingly I didn't really notice or mind that he was there. Was happy with the way the last part of that scene got massaged together. It's a weird alchemy – seems to

be going to nowhere fast and then boom, it kind of happens. Stuff to work out, for sure, but done for now.

Overture and 1.1, 1.2. good for the most part. That scene with *Actor J* and *Actor D* is tricky. Sometimes it works great and other times it just seems so one note. *Actor J* can just get into loud voice yelling. But I think they are slowly discovering some good things in there. It's a pain that Simon wasn't there. *Actor M* and *Actor A2* were great – good connection and the scene is not boring. The overture is running smoothly before that. I worry that the sleeveless cloaks are going to be a problem but I guess we need to see it before I ask them to fix it.

Scene with *Actor A* and *Actor D* and *Actor J* was good – had a better energy to start with transition into it, and *Actor A's* new intention on first line.

A bit more dramatic heading into the café scene. I empathize with the frustration *Actor D* feels that things are not set and that it feels like I am attacking them. I just can't stand it when the fight gets silly. I think we lost the sense that the hits from the folded map are part of the beating and that they hurt – they have become normalized. They want to make the fight longer but I think that is a big mistake. Really unfortunate that Simon could not be there yesterday to have finally solved that. I need him to be on my side. Keep danger alive and not descend into goofiness. We got to an impasse though, and I need to figure out how to bridge the distance so that they're on board and into it and I get what I want.

Afternoon was productive but I dreaded heading into it, but actually happy to have been able to be distracted by the boat and furniture. That entrance will work with the boat, just needs more finessing on stage. But it's charming, and good for that point in

the play. 3.1 started working – taking shape. Again, awkward moment with *Actor N* – ultimately we passed through it, I think.... But again, not sure. There are moments where I really hate the play... just things to make work that I'd rather just cut. But, I think we got there...

Break through in 3.2 I thought – *Actor D2* and *Actor D* is coming along beautifully, though the blocking tends to slow-mo and boring... hopefully we've just unlocked it. But *Actor N* as Dromio for Nell – that was pretty great, and funny. And quiet.

Actor B – I really don't know what his problem is. Oddly I feel less worried dealing with him, now that I know he can be so difficult and aggressive either way. It's one thing to be clueless, but he's self-important and overly aggressive and demands energy and attention that is disproportionate to his role, and also the ensemble feel of the room. Even though it might alienate him more I'm glad I made the verse comment. I'm not sure in what way that is going to bite me in the ass on Sunday. Maybe he will deliver his notes robot-style. Who knows. What a mind-f*ck.

Sunday is going to be an intense day, and not sure what the best way to proceed will be. Work through the remaining scenes with transitions through to the end? Will I have time for all of that? Do I need to end the day with a run? Feels like it would be a great, and necessary too... yes? No? If I didn't, I could get through everything a little more calmly, but I think that would be an anti-climactic end to the four weeks in studio.

June 23, 2015: A good sound session with Lyon, more or less. Still uncertain about so many of the cues, and so difficult to set levels in the crazy winds of the park. I was feeling very vulnerable and nervous – a condition I seem to be permanently in.

Talking to Peter right before rehearsal started showed me how shaky I am. I have never been so close to tears all of the time as I am right now. I feel quite raw and weak. I also feel like I am in some kind of prison or serving some sentence until this project is over.

The plan for rehearsal was to work with tech, mostly sound, for the day. We also worked the overture with masks and capes. Altogether, not horrible but kinks to work out. Amazing how Allegra needs to sort herself out even if there are many other problems to solve. I get it – this way she can do a show that is not stressful and she knows what the path is – but sometimes it really does come at the wrong moment, especially as so many others are looking to make it work as things fluctuate.

Sound cues sounded way too loud due to when we set levels and I started freaking out, esp. with Peter watching. I was taking time to make sure things worked, more or less, but as we worked our way through 1.1 I could just feel the panic starting to rise – like I was just holding it together, and out of my depth.

I needed to get moments more or less right, but as Peter pointed out to me, I was starting to be less and less clear about what I was running the rehearsal for, and being neither in close communication with Sandy and Lyon, nor doing strict scene work. As the rehearsal went on, I tended to focus more and more on actors, especially after Peter pointed out that I needed to watch my time management and not keep actors waiting.

A good reminder, but then all the more stressful when he asked me what I was doing with the rehearsal, and when I was planning to actually finesse and set the cues. And in the middle of rehearsal. It was not a pleasant moment for me. And with Matthew watching. As much as these are good wake up calls and I am learning so much, I think I've hit my limit with being supervised and critiqued. My skin is so thin and basically I just want to keep it together till opening.

Having said all of that, as I picked up scene work to get on with the play, the actors seemed happy and into playing. The mood was good – and that is important – I don't think I could have dealt with more tension and adversity. Okay vibe with Peter and Matthew as they left. Had a chance to touch base with Sandy, Brad and Lyon about a plan of attack for next day, which was helpful.

Grateful for Peter's reminder about setting a focus and being clear on it for rehearsal but in the moment I just got that crumbling feeling as he talked me through this. It will be a great day when I can receive feedback and notes without feeling like it is a sentencing. So exhausting.

June 27, 2015: On some level a disappointing day as we did not get onstage due to rain, but on another it was a positive work day in the studio. I hadn't slept well for two days so I was quite nauseous and anxious to get cooking, but eventually got over it. Happy to let Neil do an Italian with the cast – it's nice to delegate!

Work in the studio was a bit awkward: navigating work on group scenes around *Actor A*. But overall we made progress, though I didn't quite solve the binding challenge that Peter set me to in 4.4. But I think we addressed it enough. I cannot bear to re-block

the scene. The form is strong enough as it is. Tense moments between *Actor A* and *Actor D2*, and *Actor A* and *Actor S* – but just tried to bulldoze through, not get too caught up in them. Exhausting, though. Happy to get out of the room for a while to let the fight call happen.

The run through was fantastic. Very happy with the work and the step forward the play has taken. It's getting much tighter and more precise, and actors are deepening the work and playing. That is inspiring to see. And we cut those 10 minutes from the running time that was an added bonus. The cast seem encouraged and positive after the run – they can feel the shape of the play and that it has life and interest.

I was nervous (as usual!) to tackle notes – a cowardice based on telling actors things that might be a bit harsh (?! not really, but that's what it feels like I will do) and also on saying so to actors that have more experience than me. But once I got started that fear started to fall away and I felt a little more inspired to work for the show I want to see. I still cherry-picked a bit and avoided some notes, but overall I got them all out and got no pushback. Was very happy to have Sandy and Laura tell me that my notes are good and helpful and that actors appreciate notes like that. A nice boost and vote of confidence.

The day had its challenges but was ultimately a very positive one. I can only hope that the weather starts cooperating soon so that we can get in the park to tech. I fear another day in studio won't be quite as inspiring, though perhaps necessary to keep the work alive.

July 03, 2015: What a surreal day. Emotionally one of the most challenging I have experienced in a long time, art or no art. After the gong show of the dress rehearsal on Wednesday and the conversation with Peter yesterday, I was in full panic mode. The world is ending, the sky is falling. I honestly felt like I was sentenced to some horrible death by humiliation. It did not help that Peter intimated that Matthew had spoken to him harshly.

Meeting beforehand was okay with Peter, though I was predictably tense and emotional. The idea was to break the day into 30-minute chunks and tackle specific scenes and moments. We more or less stuck to that plan, though it felt a bit free-form.

The rehearsal day started with Peter talking to the company. The talk that I should have given them –but I guess as master of Canadian theatre and our mentor, not bad coming from him. He did speak about me in positive terms but did definitely place me as the student and this rehearsal process about my learning. And boy, was he going to be teacher. It was a tough act to follow to give notes afterwards, but I managed. Tense as all get out, though.

Rehearsal of Overture was delayed because of Lyon trying to work out music and Sandy needing new cues. It was beyond frustrating to be caught between Peter and the tech team. Neither was forgiving. Peter's drive was good, but put everyone on edge, and against each other, because no one can really stand up to him, or talk to him except me, and I was trying to keep him on side. But man, that was an intensely tense and frustrating start to the rehearsal.

Right from 1.1 Peter started jumping in to give notes, make changes. They were helpful and in a sense I'm glad he did it, but I could feel the rehearsal and authority

slipping from my grasp from that moment. And so it went for the rest of the day. For a lot of it we tagged team which felt productive and easy enough, but I'm not sure how the actors felt about it. Certainly for some it was a lot to take.

I was able to reflect on some of my weaknesses as a choreographer: having an idea or a concept, but not giving it full value and seeing it through so that there are moments or ideas that remain as such but don't really have the impact that they might. So it was good to be reminded of that.

At other times it made me wonder, from the get-go, how much of this production was mine, and how much was Peter's. There were some staging bits or ideas that I implemented that definitely came from him. There were also certain things I did or avoided doing because I thought he'd disapprove.

It got me thinking what will happen the first time I have to direct something without a mentor. Will I get anywhere close to this result, or as far as I did with *Ecstatic Bible*.

Anyway the rehearsal portion of the day was beyond exhausting, negotiating Peter in the mix and feeling like I could just have sat down and watched the rehearsal, and him working. For the most part I like what he did, but did notice that some of his direction was more in the range of line readings or moments – not that that's a bad thing, but couldn't tell if the actors were really digging it. And some of it was so broad and too cartoony. I feel the character of Adriana slipping away from me, but at the same time, in the show, it held together. I just thought we missed a bit of pain and heart from *Actor A*.

Thank god Neil was around to hold me together on the dinner break. He really has been a pillar. Supportive and encouraging. Not sure how much is bullshit, but I don't

really care – it’s support I need. Estelle seems to be holding it together more, and is getting less pressure from Peter. She is more experienced, I guess. Or maybe she’s just sharing less of her drama with me.

I was amazed at how packed the first preview was, and how young the audience was. It was a great energy. And thankfully, despite a few hiccups and glitches with mics and the Overture, it was a great first kick at the can. It was lovely that the actors didn’t push hard, read the audience and played truthfully to what we’d rehearsed. Some great stuff coming out of the less experienced actors, and they are coming out of their shells, and showmanship too – Jessica especially. I thought the group was uniformly strong. *Actor C* looks and sounds young, but was not terrible. Thank god he is striking looking in and out of drag. *Actor K* was a bit shy, I thought. Hopefully that was nerves, and he’ll be coming out of his shell as the shows progress.

The note session afterwards was particularly brutal. I don’t enjoy doing group notes after a run or show like this. At least with this cast. Having Peter stand there and challenge or contradict me was too much for me. I don’t know, maybe I’m so off-base or wrong that he needs to keep me in line (would Chris have done the same?) but it did seem a bit overboard. And then those moments where actors were bringing up notes from Peter that I was contradicting. What the f*ck. Of course the person who has directed the play three times is going to know better. But in those moments I think, what am I doing here... Peter just take over already.

Am not looking forward to rehearsal on Wednesday where we are going to try and implement a few more ideas of Peter’s. I honestly would prefer he just do it and I watch and learn.

Having said all of this, there is a lot I can take away from the day in terms of how he enriched moments. BUT – some I missed, because I was working at the same time. And he and I didn't discuss all of what he did.

But I am relieved that the evening's show was successful. I honestly don't think I could have faced a bomb and its aftermath.

July 08, 2015: A slightly better day in the Park. I've had a few really bad days, personally, heading into today, so made the decision to let Peter run the rehearsal to avoid the awkwardness and tension of being caught in the middle of everyone.

Was good to be on the outside for a bit, and it's clear that from that vantage point it's so much easier to see problems and how to fix them. It was also good to see Peter negotiate with the cast, and experience first hand the tension, passive aggressiveness and resistance. As a result, the stuff he worked on did not change substantively. I wonder if that's how I set up the scenes (ie. Pinch). There was only so much to be done with how the action got to the point of his desired change. But at least I saw that he couldn't work miracles.

I actually thought 4.1 got a little more weird with his work on it – *Actor B* especially just seemed to fall into old, bad habits of screaming and indulging in lines. Other changes were more successful, minor as they were. No radical change to the show but little massages here and there.

Despite being exhausted by the end of the day it was nice not to spend quite so much energy during the rehearsal hours. Some lighting issues at the top of show with the

control box for LED's was scary. I wish this tech set up and team were more confidence-inspiring. Luckily no major problems, though the hold at the top of show was unbearable.

The show itself was alright, though I'm getting so bored of it and want everyone to talk faster. The running time stays the same though, which is pretty wild. To the minute... Still think there is about 5 – 7 minutes that we could still lose with gaps and it kind of shocks me that Peter, after all his talk about verse vs. prose delivery, doesn't think it's an issue.

At this point though I feel like it's barely my play, or that it's everyone's. Maybe that is an okay and natural thing. But I don't trust my taste and instincts much now. More inclined to keep my mouth shut. Anyway the actors are tired and you can tell have only limited interest in more notes, so I will try to keep it that way.

Once I've rested all of this off I can see that I have lots to reflect on in terms of noting, when I get distracted by delivery, and surface layers rather than action and intention. I can't get my brain to work much more than anticipating that future work, but at least there is some benefit to come of it.

July 17, 2015: Opening night. A nail biter of a day and an evening: Would the show go on? It was an exhausting wait to find out. Part of me wanted the show cancelled in the afternoon; the thought of having a small house after the festivity and sense of occasion after *Julius Caesar's* night was a depressing one. Also, more audience would mean more laughter.

When I got to the hill just under an hour before the start, there was almost NO ONE there, which was a sad sight. I tried to keep my spirit up but I did feel disappointed.

Ultimately we had a house of about 115: not huge, but not terrible. They were a warm and responsive bunch, and very keen to be there, so the energy between the house and the stage was great. It turned out to be a satisfying evening and a low-key, but positive and inspiring opening. I did feel like the performance was genuinely appreciated.

I was disappointed that few Canadian Stage and York people were there and that all of the thunder was given to *Caesar*. Ultimately it doesn't matter, it's a long run and everyone will see it, but still – a bit of an anti-climax. Matthew seemed pleased. Su said nothing. Sherrie said Congratulations and that was it. Not particularly inspiring or encouraging.

I can see that if I'm going to survive doing this I have to really work on cultivating detachment. Or as Mom says, a stronger sense of boundaries. I mean, I wasn't particularly emotional, but it's easy in casting back to notice and give weight to the negative, the absences and the silences. This is my issue to work on.

After eight weeks of so much personal drama, it is so wild how quickly and unremarkable the opening and start of the run is. Even at the party – I don't know, maybe it's me, or my relationship with cast, or maybe actors – it seemed so uneventful. In the grand scheme of things it's just one puny show. Like, no big deal. But in the process, it was THE ONLY deal. How does one manage that?

Overall I am happy with the production and this performance, though Act 1 and the beginning of Act 2 are painful at times, because I want there to be more laughter and the whole thing to be more entertaining. Is the potential there? Is it me? Is it the performers? Act 1 Scene 2 feels like one of the weakest scenes. Maybe there should have been more stuff and people on stage. But in the context of design and cast-size, at the

moment no obvious solution presents itself to me. Something to talk about with Peter, I guess. If it was really awful and I was so off the mark, he would have worked on it, so perhaps it's just the nature of this beast.

Working on this play that I think I was only ever half in love with, I wonder about the value of taking on projects that don't fully engage the heart and soul. How realistic is that expectation? So far in my career I've taken on projects for the challenge, the sake of working, the opportunity, the learning... I really felt that when things got really challenging with this process, the love or interest in the play wasn't there to buoy me. Everything just seemed hard and awful, and what was the point anyway? I have grown to like it a bit more now that we're done, or at least can appreciate more of the way the action builds and draws you in.

I was also so influenced by Peter and his talking about the play, that I don't know how many thoughts and feelings I had about it were really "mine". I guess that is something that will build over time, as I do more plays. But I did eventually realize in the process that I didn't know how much of 'me' was in this, or rather, that I had any great convictions about the play other than what Peter or any writer had said about it. I do imagine that by the process of selecting an approach as well as what to highlight and how, I did put my imprint on the show. But still, some major impostor syndrome going on.

But I did it. By hook or by crook and with the help of many people, it happened. And I am still alive. And can somewhat contemplate doing something similar again. That's a good sign. Do I feel that I'm good at this, and that I might conceivably get asked

to direct again? Not the right time to answer, and the doubts are still there. I need to rest this off so I can reflect more objectively on the matter.