THE CASTLE PLAYERS

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS 2020

July 7th – 11th

# Welcome!

##### Welcome to the Castle Players and to this year’s summer production of Shakespeare’s riotous farce, The Comedy of Errors.

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The play is one of Shakespeare’s earliest comedies and his shortest play! The first recorded performance is thought to have taken place on December 28th in 1594 on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, at Gray’s Inn, London.

Drawing inspiration from the Roman playwright Plautus’s comedy *The Menaechmi,* Shakespeare takes Plautus’s theme of mistaken identity one step further by creating a slapstick filled plot involving two sets of identical twins!

The action of the play is set in Ephesus and takes place throughout one day – from early morning, to early evening. A large and diverse cast is needed as every scene will involve lots of characters (speaking and non-speaking), who go about their daily lives as a series of chaotic incidents unfold around them. The production will also require a large support team in backstage, technical, front of house and marketing roles.

 Anyone interested in getting involved, either ‘behind the scenes’ or ‘on the stage’ is asked to complete the **Production Recruitment Form,** with their contact details, particular areas of interest and any skills they may be able to bring to the production.

# STORY & CONCEPT

Our production will be set in New York in 1919 as the world recovers from the loss and turmoil of the

First World War. The ‘twin cities’ of Syracuse and Ephusus, in our production, become rival New York

neighbourhoods, populated by immigrant communities from the four corners of the globe, all

desperately seeking out their fortune in the Big Apple!

Our front of house *experience* will immerse audiences into the sights and sounds of immigrants’

arrival on Ellis Island, one of over 40 islands just off America’s eastern seaboard, and the gateway

to New York. They will be welcomed by a host of city officials: papers will be checked; names

taken; passports stamped; health checks given; mental agility tasks set; baggage collected;

photographs taken; songs sung; tears shed; and families reunited!

Once through ‘Customs’, the audience will enter the bustling, exotic and vibrant world of ‘The

Comedy of Errors’, where the city of Ephusus is now New York’s *Irish Quarter*.

As the play starts, we see waves of new immigrants arriving, all hoping to be reunited with

distant family. Among them are our play’s protagonists: Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant

Dromio. Antipholus has come to Ephesus hoping to find his long lost twin, who, unbeknownst to

him, now lives in the city. It’s not long before our new arrivals get caught up in a series of chaotic

and hilarious episodes involving mistaken identity, robbery, witchcraft and adultery!

Casting will be generally ‘gender fluid’ ensuring an equality of opportunity for all. Please refer to

the table below for a list of the named speaking roles:

# CHARACTERS

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **CHARACTER** | **AGE** | **GENDER** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| **Solinus,**  | 50+ | M or F | Duke of Ephesus  |
| **Egeon** | 50+ | M | A merchant from Syracuse and the father of the Antipholus twins, he is condemned to die if he cannot provide one thousand marks as bond money. He is luckily re-united with his family in the end and thereby escapes punishment. |
| **Antipholus of Ephesus** | 20+ | M or F | One of the Antipholus twins, he is married to Adriana. He initially has the golden necklace made for his wife, and is later locked out of his house when his twin brother arrives. |
| **Antipholus of Syracuse** | 20+ | M or F | One of the Antipholus twins, his arrival in Ephesus causes the townspeople to confuse him with his twin brother. He dines with his brother's wife Adriana and later is reunited with Egeon. |
| **Dromio of Ephesus** -  | 20+  | M or F | The servant to Antipholus of Ephesus, and a twin to Dromio of Syracuse. |
| **Dromio of Syracuse** -  | 20+  | M or F | The servant to Antipholus of Syracuse, and a twin to Dromio of Ephesus. |
| **Adriana** | 20+ | F | The wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, she mistakenly brings Antipholus of Syracuse into her house and locks out her real husband. |
| **Luciana**  | 20+ | F | The sister to Adriana, with whom Antipholus of Syracuse falls in love |
| **Balthazar**  | 20+ | M or F | A merchant whom Antipholus of Ephesus invites to his house. Nell and Adriana refuse to allow him to enter, thereby embarrassing Antipholus. |
| **Luce aka ‘Nell’** | 20+ | M or F | The kitchen-maid to Adriana |
| **Angelo** | 30+  | M or F | A goldsmith who makes a necklace for Adriana at Antipholus of Ephesus' request. |
| **First Merchant** | 30+  | M or F | A friend of Antipholus of Syracuse, he warns him that Ephesus puts anyone from Syracuse to death. |
| **Second Merchant** | 30+  | M or F | Angelo's creditor |
| **Pinch** | 30+  | M or F | A schoolmaster and exorcist, he is asked to drive the demons out of Antipholus of Ephesus whom Adriana thinks is mad. |
| **Abbess** | 50+ | M or F | Known as Emilia, an abbess in Ephesus and the wife of Egeon.  |
| **Courtesan** | 30+ | M or F | A courtesan to whom Antipholus of Syracuse inappropriately promises the gold necklace. |
| **Jailer** | 20+  | M or F | Has custody of Egeon, and accompanies him in his search for someone to pay his ransom. |
| **Officer** | 20+  | M or F | A debt recovery officer, who is hired to arrest defaulters. |
| **Executioner** | 30+  | M or F | A non-speaking role, charged with executing Egeon. |

# REHEARSALS

Rehearsals will be held at Startforth Community Centre (formerly Startforth Primary School) and

begin on Sunday 8th March. Initial rehearsals will be on Sundays from 14:00 until 17:00 and

Monday evenings, from 19:00 – 22:00. However, from May onwards, some rehearsals may also

take place on Friday evenings from 19:00 – 22:00.

When the weather allows rehearsals will take place outside at Startforth and nearer the

production date at the Bowes Museum.

Not everyone will be required for every rehearsal. The initial focus during March will be on those with speaking roles and at the beginning of April there will be a full read-through to which everyone will be invited – performers *and* those working behind-the-scenes and in support of the production.

Rehearsals that include a larger number of people (i.e. those with non-speaking roles) will begin in early April and will primarily take place on Sunday afternoons.

Everyone should be expected to be needed more frequently from mid-May onwards.

## REHEARSAL SCHEDULES

Detailed rehearsal schedules will be issued in advance of each month (each will cover one month’s

rehearsals). To ensure that unavoidable absences can be accommodated into each schedule, a form

for *unavailability dates* will be sent out in advance. These will need to be returned promptly (a

deadline will always be stated) so that the schedule can be compiled and distributed as quickly as

possible.

The first **Unavailability Form** must be completed and returned by Sunday 1st March.

Prompt attendance at all rehearsals is essential to ensure the time available is maximised, and everyone is asked to phone, text or email if they are experiencing any unforeseen delays.

All company members are welcome to watch rehearsals they are not directly involved in as a way of keeping in touch with the production. Following weekday rehearsals many in the company will retire to the Old Well – everyone is more than welcome.

# PRE-PRODUCTION & GET-IN WEEK (Bowes Museum)

The pre-production week begins on Monday 29th June. During this week the seating units arrive,

marquees are erected, a considerable amount of set and equipment has to be collected from

various storage points and erected and installed, security fencing erected and covered, lighting

and sound equipment rigged, the company marquee organised and set out, and the front of

house area set up along with many other tasks.

The installation takes a full week and AS MANY VOLUNTEERS AS POSSIBLE are needed to help,

both daytime and evening. It is expected that EVERYONE taking part in the production will

contribute time during the week.

Likewise over the weekend of 4th and 5th July EVERYONE MUST BE AVAILABLE both daytime and

evening.

A more detailed schedule will be prepared nearer the time but the week will run along the

following lines:

Monday 29th June to Friday 3rd July Get-in – working throughout the day and evening

Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th July Installation completed, technical rehearsals and the first Dress Rehearsal on Sunday evening

Monday 6th July 7.30pm Second Dress Rehearsal

Tuesday 7th July – Saturday 11th July Evening performances at 7.30pm

For the Monday dress rehearsal and on performance nights everyone is asked to arrive for 6pm.

## DE-RIG AND CLEARING OF THE SITE

**Sun 12th July** All Day from 9am until complete (a detailed schedule and allocation of duties will be

issued nearer the time)

This is a very hectic day and help from EVERYONE IS COMPULSORY.

Everything has to be cleared and returned to storage. This includes dismantling all the technical

equipment as well as the technical huts.

# AUDITION WORKSHOP – SUNDAY 23RD

Auditions for all those wishing to be considered for a role (speaking and non-speaking) will be held at Startforth on Sunday 23rd February from 14:00 – 17:00. The audition will take the form of a participatory performance workshop where we will collectively explore various Shakespeare texts and specific sections of the play through games, exercises and micro-performances.

For those who would like to be considered for a named speaking role, a further audition session will be held at Startforth on Monday February 24th from 19:00 – 21:00. For this session please prepare (here’s no need to learn) a short speech or section of dialogue from the play. Everyone is welcome to audition with someone else if they wish.

Everyone attending an audition will be asked to complete a form listing the characters they would like to be considered for, or indicating whether they are happy to play-as-cast. These forms will be available on the day and should be either returned by e-mail by Wednesday February 26th or handed to me at the audition.

Final casting will be confirmed by **Monday March 2nd**.

NB: *All performers with speaking roles should be off script by the beginning of May.*

# SET BUILDING/PAINTING & PROP MAKING

Our set consists of six large 2-dimensional building ‘flats’, each covered with bleached cotton canvas. At various times throughout the performance they will be lit from behind in different colours to reflect the ‘mood’ of the scene. In the second half, as we begin to lose natural daylight, video mapping effects will be projected onto the houses to reflect the lead characters’ belief that the city is ‘full of witches and witchcraft.

Regular set building sessions will begin when the weather gets warmer. These will take place on Saturdays at our Westwood Farm base. Volunteers are always welcome!

# SUBS

To help cover part of the cost of rehearsal room hire everyone attending rehearsals is required to pay £3 per week (regardless of the number of rehearsals attended).

# SCRIPTS

We will be using the RSC Performance Text, edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen, which contains a wealth of detailed information on the play and a good deal of insightful commentary.

The text has been edited down into 35 separate scenes, in order to make rehearsals more effective and efficient and to work around any individual unavailability.

Everyone involved in the production must use this edition and copies are available to buy from the first meeting onwards, price £8.00

# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Castle Players has a Child Protection Policy that can be accessed on the website: [www.castleplayers.co.uk](http://www.castleplayers.co.uk)

Please note that as a part of that policy anyone under 16 involved in the production must be accompanied by a parent or licensed chaperone.

A consent form must also be completed and handed in prior to auditioning.

# AND FINALLY…

The production is a huge challenge and will, as ever, require a great deal of hard work and commitment from everyone involved. I hope it will also be a rewarding experience, and above all an enjoyable one.

Gordon Duffy-McGhie

 email: Gordon.duffymcghie@castleplayers.co.uk

Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter!

As a supporter of The Castle Players we’d like to invite you to stay connected with us even when you’re not at a performance.

Our website – [www.castleplayers.co.uk](http://www.castleplayers.co.uk) - is full of information. Whether you want to know about current productions or want to delve into the past and find out more about previous shows, you’ll find it there, including photographs, reviews and interviews.

Castle Players data protection policy can also be viewed on the website.