



Plays and Pinot: The Comedy of Errors

Synopsis

Set in the Greek city of Ephesus, *The Comedy of Errors* tells the story of two sets of identical twins who were accidentally separated at birth. Antipholus of Syracuse and his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, arrive in Ephesus, which turns out to be the home of their twin brothers, Antipholus of Ephesus and his servant, Dromio of Ephesus. When the Syracusans encounter the friends and families of their twins, a series of wild mishaps based on mistaken identities lead to wrongful beatings, a near-seduction, the arrest of Antipholus of Ephesus, and false accusations of infidelity, theft, madness, and demonic possession.

About the Playwright

William Shakespeare (also spelled Shakspeare) was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon and died April 23 1616. He was an English poet, dramatist, and actor often called the English national poet and considered by many to be the greatest dramatist of all time. Shakespeare occupies a position unique in world literature. Other poets, such as Homer and Dante, and novelists, such as Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens, have transcended national barriers, but no writer's living reputation can compare to that of Shakespeare, whose plays, written in the late 16th and early 17th centuries for a small repertory theatre, are now performed and read more often and in more countries than ever before. The prophecy of his great contemporary, the poet and dramatist Ben Jonson, that Shakespeare "was not of an age, but for all time," has been fulfilled. It may be audacious even to attempt a definition of his greatness, but it is not so difficult to describe the gifts that enabled him to create imaginative visions of pathos and mirth that, whether read or witnessed in the theatre, fill the mind and linger there. He is a writer of great intellectual rapidity, perceptiveness, and poetic power. Other writers have had these qualities, but with Shakespeare the keenness of mind was applied not to abstruse or remote subjects but to human beings and their complete range of emotions and conflicts. Other writers have applied their keenness of mind in this way, but Shakespeare is astonishingly clever with words and images, so that his mental energy, when applied to intelligible human situations, finds full and memorable expression, convincing and imaginatively stimulating. As if this were not enough, the art form into which his creative energies went was not remote and bookish but involved the vivid stage impersonation of human beings, commanding sympathy and inviting vicarious participation. Thus, Shakespeare's merits can survive translation into other languages and into cultures remote from that of Elizabethan England.

Characters

Solinus, Duke of Ephesus

Duke (Solinus) of Ephesus rules his town with great respect for law, insisting that he cannot go against the set rules even if he wishes to, though he is willing to bend them a little on occasion.

Egeon

Egeon is an old man of Syracuse who sneaks into the city to seek for his lost twin son Antipholus.

**Antipholus of Ephesus**

Antipholus of Ephesus was brought up in Corinth, never knowing his father, and brought to Ephesus by Duke Menaphon of Corinth.

Antipholus of Syracuse

Antipholus of Syracuse is Egeon's son. Separated from his twin at birth, at the age of eighteen he decided to travel the world to find him, and has been searching for him these last seven years.

Dromio of Ephesus

Dromio of Ephesus is Antipholus of Ephesus's slave.

Dromio of Syracuse

Dromio of Syracuse is Antipholus of Syracuse's slave.

Balthazar

Balthazar is a merchant of Ephesus and a friend of the local Antipholus.

Angelo

Angelo is a goldsmith in Syracuse, the maker of a fine gold chain commissioned by Antipholus of Ephesus.

First Merchant

The First Merchant warns Antipholus of Syracuse to hide his identity, given the penalty for a Syracusian to be caught in Ephesus. He leaves his traveling companion to take care of some business, though promising to join him again in the evening.

Second Merchant

The Second Merchant is on the verge of a journey to Persia, and therefore needs every penny he can get.

Doctor Pinch

Pinch is a conjurer and exorcist hired by Adriana to cure Antipholus of Ephesus of his madness.

Aemilia

Abbess Aemilia is an abbess in Ephesus, highly respected by all.

Adriana

Adriana is Antipholus of Ephesus's wife, and a proto-feminist distraught that her husband is paying attention to another woman and irritated that men are not as bound as women are, nor women as free as men.

Luciana

Luciana is Adriana's sister, and dwells with her and Antipholus of Ephesus.

Luce

Luce, also known as Nell, is a maid at Antipholus of Ephesus's. She has little patience with loud ruffians at the gate, whom she consigns to the stocks.

**Courtezan**

A Courtezan counts Antipholus of Ephesus among her favored clients, and entertains him often enough to make his wife jealous.

Jailer

The Jailer has custody of Egeon, and accompanies him in his search for someone to pay his ransom.

Messenger

The Messenger rushes in to warn Adriana to flee from her husband, who has broken loose from his bonds. He is clearly terrified.

Officer

The Officer is a debt recovery officer, who can be hired to arrest defaulters.

Headsmen

The Headsmen [mute role] is in charge of executing Egeon, and leads him to his death.

References: *Britannica.com*