

The residency at the _____
_____ of ACTORS FROM THE LONDON
STAGE (five British Shakespearean artists from such
companies as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal
National Theatre of Great Britain, and Shakespeare's
Globe Theatre, among others) is an educational program
developed by Homer Swander at the University of Califor-
nia, Santa Barbara. The theatre company is now based
in London, England, and at the University of Notre Dame.
The artists are devoting a large part of their time to
lectures, workshops, seminars and informal meetings with
students. Their stay provides students and faculty with a
unique opportunity both to observe extraordinary perfor-
mances and to discuss the literature and the art of theatre
in depth with some of the most talented artists from some
of the most important theatre companies in the world.



Christopher Staines Louise Yates Gregory Cox Isabel Pollen Tim Hardy

Actors From The London Stage

The Merchant of Venice

by William Shakespeare



For most of his working life, William Shakespeare was a sharer in the King's Men, London's leading theatre company. He knew the actors he was writing for and collaborated with them on seeing the plays into performance.

All theatre is a collaboration, of course, and, while actors can no longer collaborate directly with Shakespeare, the Actors From The London Stage (AFTLS) company always aims to work with him, respectfully and creatively, throughout the rehearsal process. Our company's aim is to make his words exert their magic and their power in performance, but we do this in a vital, and perhaps unconventional, way. We have no massive sets to tower over the performers and no directorial concept to tower over the text of Shakespeare's play. In fact, AFTLS does not have a director at all; instead, the play has been rehearsed by the actors, working together to create theatre, cooperating with each other in their imaginative engagement with the play's words.

Now the actors ask you, the audience, to perform that same kind of imaginative engagement that Shakespeare was thinking about when, in the Prologue to *Henry V*, he instructed his spectators: "Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them,/Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth/For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings." Now the actors seek a new collaboration, working with you, the audience, in the way that only live theatre can. It is not a hard job for people to do, even though we are now used to having everything shown us on screen, and even though we usually no longer rely on the powers of the imagination and collaboration to bring a play's world into being. If you share the fun of collaborating with us, then the excitement of the performance will be richly rewarding for you and for the actors, for this special act of working together, actors and audience combined, marks the latest stage of that long journey *The Merchant of Venice* has made from Shakespeare's writing the play with and for the actors he knew so well. So, tonight, watch and listen and "let us.../On your imaginary forces work."

Peter Holland, *AFTLS, University of Notre Dame*

THE STORY

In Venice Bassanio needs a loan of 3,000 ducats so that he can properly woo Portia, a wealthy heiress who lives at Belmont. To get the necessary funds, Bassanio entreats his friend Antonio, a merchant. Antonio's money, unfortunately, is invested in merchant ships that are presently at sea; however, to help Bassanio, Antonio arranges for a short-term loan of the money from Shylock, a Jewish money-lender. Shylock has a deep-seated hatred for Antonio because of the insulting treatment that Antonio has shown him in the past. When pressed, Shylock strikes a bargain: the 3,000 ducats must be repaid in three months, or Shylock will exact a pound of flesh from Antonio. The merchant agrees to this, confident in the return of his ships before the appointed date of repayment.

At Belmont, Portia is beset by suitors. Due to her father's will, all suitors must choose from among three caskets made of gold, silver and lead—one of which contains a portrait of her. If a man chooses the right one, he may marry Portia; however, if he chooses wrong, he must vow never to marry or even court another woman. Princes of Morocco and Arragon fail this test and are turned away. As Bassanio prepares to travel to Belmont for the test,

his friend Lorenzo elopes with Jessica, Shylock's daughter (who takes some of Shylock's money and jewels with her). Bassanio chooses the lead casket, which is the correct one, and looks forward to marrying Portia at once.

In contrast to this happiness, Antonio finds himself in trouble. Two of his ships have been wrecked, and Antonio's creditors—including the vengeance-minded Shylock—are grumbling about repayment. Word comes to Bassanio about Antonio's predicament, and he hastens back to Venice, leaving Portia behind. Portia, however, travels after him with her maid, Nerissa; they disguise themselves as a lawyer and clerk. When Bassanio arrives, the loan is in default and Shylock is demanding his pound of flesh. Even when Bassanio (backed now by Portia's inheritance) offers many times the amount in repayment, Shylock is intent on revenge. The duke, who sits in judgment, cannot intervene. Portia enters in her guise as a lawyer to defend Antonio. Through a technicality, Portia declares that Shylock may have his pound of flesh so long as he draws no blood (since there was no mention of this in the original agreement). And, since it is obvious that to cut a pound of flesh would take Antonio's life, Shylock, an alien in the city, has conspired to murder a Venetian citizen; he has forfeited his wealth as well as his loan. Half is to go to the city, and half is to go to Antonio. Antonio gives back his half of the penalty on the condition that Shylock bequeath it to his disinherited daughter, Jessica, and converts to Christianity. Back at Belmont, news arrives that Antonio's remaining ships are returned to port and his wealth is restored.

THE CAST

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| Gregory Cox | Antonio, Gratiano, Tubal, Lancelot Gobbo |
| Tim Hardy | Shylock, Old Gobbo, Lorenzo |
| Isabel Pollen | Portia, Solanio, Balthasar, Jailer, Leonardo |
| Christopher Staines | Bassanio, Morocco, Arragon, Duke |
| Louise Yates | Nerissa, Jessica, Salerio, Stephano |

Music by **Nick Tigg**

THE PRODUCTION STAFF

*The use of cameras and recording devices in this theatre is strictly prohibited.
Please make sure your pagers and cell phones are turned off.*

ABOUT THE PLAYERS



GREGORY COX trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School after graduating from Manchester University. He began his career at the Everyman Theatre, Cheltenham, appearing in ten productions including T.S. Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk* and *The Merchant of Venice* as the Prince of Aragon. He then joined the cast of *Oliver!* in the West End to play Mr. Sowerberry. He was Harris in *Little Lies* with John Mills (Wyndhams Theatre and Toronto). He has toured the Far East with Derek Nimmo's company playing Dr. Gibbs in *Only When I Laugh* and the UK with the National Theatre as Captain Brice in Stoppard's *Arcadia*.

His other theatre work includes *Don Juan* (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith), Dr. Alan Campbell in *The Picture Of Dorian Gray* (Windsor and UK tour, directed by Elijah Moshinsky), Charley in *Death Of A Salesman* (Frankfurt English Theatre), *The Dybbuk* (BAC), Dr. Grubshaw in *Commanding Voices* (New End), Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* (Wimbledon), Defarge in *Tale Of Two Cities* (Sheffield Crucible), Mark in *Taking Steps* (Vienna), Brassett in *Charley's Aunt* (Cannizaro Park), Sir Lucius in *The Rivals* (Holland Park), Claudius in *Hamlet* (Rose Theatre), Hotspur in *Henry IV Part One* (St. Georges, London), Edmund in *King Lear* (Colchester), Canutus in *Edmund Ironside* (Bridge Lane), and Stepan Verhovensky in Dostoyevsky's *The Devils* (Union Theatre, London).

His television and film work includes Marty in *Doctors* (BBC), *Trial And Retribution* (ITV), Greg in *Killer Net* (Channel Four), Dr. Garrett in *Picking Up The Pieces* (ITV), Jimmy in *In Suspicious Circumstances*, *Maigret* with Michael Gambon (Granada), *Get Up Stand Up* (Channel Four), *Grace And Favour* (BBC), *Keeping Up Appearances* (BBC), Dutton in *Brookside* (Channel Four), Mr. Wiggis in *Bad Boyes* (BBC), *Robin of Sherwood* (HTV), *Grange Hill* (BBC), and DI Rawlings in *Making A Killing* (Shining Light Films).

He has appeared at the Cheltenham Literary Festival in *The Poetry of War* with Dame Judi Dench and Harriet Walter, and his play, *Table For Two*, was a joint prizewinner in the London Actors and Writers Playwriting Competition.

This is Cox's first tour with Actors From The London Stage.



TIM HARDY trained at RADA. His theatre work in London includes *Henry V* and *Marat/Sade* (RSC, also Broadway and film), *Henry IV* and *Henry V* (Prospect Theatre Co. at the Roundhouse), *Mary Barnes* (Royal Court), *Melon* (Theatre Royal, Haymarket), *Lysistrata* (Sir Peter Hall Co. at The Old Vic), *Mephisto* (Roundhouse), *Peer Gynt* (BAC), *Moliere* (Gate Theatre), *Cavafy* (King's Head), and *The Shrew* (Open Space). His work in musicals includes

Fiddler on the Roof (Her Majesty's), *Judy* (Strand Theatre), and *Parade* (Edinburgh Festival).

Hardy has also performed title roles in *Macbeth* and *The Norman Conquests* (Oxford Playhouse), *The Merchant of Venice* and *Catch 22* (Leeds Playhouse), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (Newcastle Festival), and *Rosmersholm* and *Tartuffe* (Bristol Old Vic).

In opera, he has played bass leading roles in *The Magic Flute*, *Figaro*, *Cenerentola*, *Don Giovanni*, *La Traviata*, all for Music Theatre London, in London, Hamburg, Vienna, and Amsterdam.

Hardy's television experience includes David Manners in *Eastenders*, Arthur Taylor in *Oscar Wilde*, Ross in *Macbeth*, Jesus in *The Folksinger*, The Doctor in *The Wife of Bath*, and the title role in *Galileo*, to be shown on BBC 2 this September. On film, he has appeared in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, *The Duellists*, and *Nothing But The Best*.

His directing credentials include *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* and *Rebecca* (Vienna English Theatre) and *The Merchant of Venice* and *Royal Hunt of the Sun*, both in America. A faculty member of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, Hardy's work there includes being a member of the admissions panel, directing students from NYU studying Shakespeare, directing and lecturing on the 8-week summer course, directing the third-year students in their final showcase presentation, and serving as principal director of an annual course he created — RADA at The Old Vic — where the students perform more modern texts such as *The Crucible* and *12 Angry Men*. Hardy lectures to students from Syracuse University, and recently directed them in *Betrayal* by Harold Pinter.

Previously, Hardy toured with Actors From The London Stage in *A Winter's Tale* (Fall 1989) and *Romeo and Juliet* (Spring 1997).



ISABEL POLLEN trained at RADA. Her theatre experience includes *All's Well That Ends Well* (Regents Park Open Air Theatre); *An Enemy of the People* (Royal National Theatre); *Measure for Measure* and *Arcadia* (Manchester Library Theatre); *Action* (the Young Vic Theatre); *Merchant of Venice* (Royal Shakespeare Company, on national and international tours to North Carolina, China, Kuala Lumpur, and Japan); *Rosencrantz*

and *Guildestern Are Dead* (Arcola Theatre); *Bright* (Soho Theatre); *Pericles* (Cardboard Citizens); *Warcrime* (London, Thessaloniki, and on national tour); *Claw* (the Vanburgh Theatre), and, most recently, she represented RADA onboard the Queen Mary 2, performing shows and teaching workshops.

Her television work includes *North and South* (BBC 1), *Touching Evil* (ITV), *Soundproof* (Blast Films for BBC2), and others. She has done numerous radio recordings for the BBC and other stations. Pollen also wrote and directed a play based on Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* in London.



CHRISTOPHER STAINES studied at Oxford University and then trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. His theatre work includes, at the National Theatre, Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer*, *Hamlet* (also on tour in the US), and David Hare's *Amy's View* (also at the Aldwych in the West End); Jack Worthing in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Adam in *Paradise Lost*, and Antipholus of Syracuse in *The Comedy of Errors* (Bristol Old Vic

Theatre); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Richard III* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Longitude* (Greenwich Theatre); *Three Sisters* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Gross Indecency — The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (West End); and Sam Mendes' production of *Cabaret* (Donmar Warehouse).

His television and film appearances include *Mrs. Dalloway*, *Casualty*, *Rosemary and Thyme*, *Highlander*, *Foyle's War*, *The Student Prince*, *This Life*, *The Queen's Nose*, *The Ruby Ring*, *Pride and Prejudice*. On radio, he has performed in *The Rose and the Ring*, *The Decameron*, *Antigone*, and *Dossier Ronald Akkerman*. This is the second time Staines has worked with AFTLS. In 2004, he toured with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, playing Oberon, Lysander, Flute, and Cobweb.



LOUISE YATES' theatre credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Exeter); *Hobson's Choice*, *Peter Pan*, *Nervous Women*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, *My Mother Said I Never Should* (Birmingham Repertory); *The Red Balloon* (Manchester & Bristol); *An Experiment With An Air Pump* (Manchester & Hampstead); *A Little Like Drowning* (Chester); *Grimm Tales* (Leicester); *One Under* (Kilburn Tricycle); *A Christmas Carol* and *Oliver*

Twist (Lyric Hammersmith); *Bread and Butter* (Southwark Playhouse); *Mansfield Park* and *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* (Sheffield Crucible); *The Secret Rapture* and *Playing for Time* (Salisbury Playhouse); *A Kind of Alaska* and *The Road to Ruin* (Orange Tree Theatre Richmond).

She has also appeared on television and in films, including *I'm Alan Partridge*; *Rik Mayall Presents*; *Reeves and Mortimer's Weekenders*; *Where There's Smoke*; *Wine in the Blood*; *Family Affairs*; *Brookside*; *Coronation Street*; *The Bill*; *London Bridge*; *Wing and a Prayer*; *Doctors*; *A Touch of Frost*, and *Patrick's Planet*