



THE MERCHANT IN VENICE
Campo del Ghetto Nuovo
July 26-August 1, 2016



In 2016 the stars have aligned. It is the year of an extraordinary intersection, the 500th anniversary of the formation of the Jewish Ghetto in Venice and the 400th anniversary of William Shakespeare's death.

To commemorate these historic anniversaries, Compagnia de' Colombari and Ca' Foscari University of Venice join forces to provide a major event of world theater: an imaginative, ambitious production of *The Merchant of Venice* to be performed for the first time in the still-extant (and newly revitalized) Jewish Ghetto from 26 July to 1 August 2016. Directed by Karin Coonrod, and performing in multiple languages, an international cast brings the *Merchant* to life in a way almost impossible anywhere else, investigating its poignant and painful exploration of love and hate, justice, and, above all, what it means to be human.

The event is part of the official program of the Ghetto Quincentennial.

Tuesday July 26, 2016 at 8.30pm

Wednesday July 27, 2016 at 8.30pm



Thursday July 28, 2016 at 8.30pm

Friday July 29, 2016 at 5.00pm

Sunday July 31, 2016 at 8.30pm

Monday August 1, 2016 at 8.30pm

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Just like the city that hosts it, Ca' Foscari University of Venice is a crossroads of cultures, research fields, ideas and creativity. Today Ca' Foscari teaches approximately 20,000 students and covers four large scientific and cultural areas - Economics, Foreign Languages and Cultures, Humanities and Sciences – with a wide range of disciplinary and multidisciplinary courses. Ca' Foscari offers English-taught programmes and joint degrees, which along with numerous cooperation agreements with international institutions, enrich the international focus that has always been a distinctive feature of the university, increasing the mobility of students, researchers and professors. Our efforts in teaching, research and innovation are integrated in a wide cultural programme that draws on to a busy calendar of conventions, exhibitions, film, theatre and radio dates, aimed both at Ca' Foscari community and the entire world.

Honoring its mission and remembering the contribution of the Jewish professors who, inspired by the social and intellectual energy derived from the now desegregated Ghetto, were influential members of the university in the XIX and XX centuries (Luigi Luzzatti, Enrico Castelnuovo, Gino Luzzatto), Ca' Foscari has immediately recognized the extraordinary importance of the Ghetto Quincentennial with a rich program of scientific activities and events.

As part of the anniversary celebration, earlier this year we organized two international conferences, "The Ghetto reconsidered: Minority and Ethnic Quarters in Texts and Images" and "The Ghetto as Global Metaphor" (in collaboration with Princeton University) and held a special session on contemporary writing on the Ghetto at our international literary festival *Incroci di civiltà*. We are now particularly proud to have inspired and promoted the most ambitious artistic event of the year, one based on the

virtuous dialogue and exchange between scholars and theatre artists, and we feel privileged to have found in Compagnia de' Colombari the best possible artistic partner for this exceptional event.

The Merchant of Venice in the Ghetto could not have been realized without a thorough critical investigation of the play, and our literature and theatre professors were both leaders in this effort and capable of convening in Venice the best Shakespeare scholars in the world for the preparatory summer school held at Fondazione Giorgio Cini.

In addition to its scientific and artistic import and significance, the play will also offer an occasion to raise critical awareness, thanks to the extraordinary complement to the play itself, the Mock Appeal that will have Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg as its leading protagonist and that Ca' Foscari has organized with the support of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco and Wake Forest University. To them, to the sponsors, and to all the prestigious academic partners (Yale, Harvard, MIT, Warwick, Venice International University) we express our gratitude, looking forward to further collaborations.

Michele Bugliesi

Rector, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Every corner of Venice tells a story. But there are some in which, more than others, even the stones seem to speak and the story turns into History.

One of these places is the Ghetto of Venice, five hundred years old this year. In the maze of its alleyways, thousands of people experienced the tragedy of segregation and isolation, compelled to live in forced cohabitation in tight, wretched housing conditions. The obligation to remain confined in a small area, the impossibility to choose an occupation that was not the one imposed on them, the prejudice that marked the relations with non-Jews influenced the lives of the ghetto dwellers for centuries. Yet, the story told by the Venetian ghetto is also the story of a community that defied heavy constraints and obstacles, and was able to contribute significantly to the life of the city, reinforcing religious and cultural ties, while at same time opening up to the vocation of a city like Venice, which has always been able to turn its peculiarity into an asset to be shared with the entire world. The history of the Venetian Jewish community is an extraordinary example of integration, deliberately sought after and finally achieved.

The five hundred years of the Ghetto have been for the City an opportunity to reflect on the value of freedom and the respect of individuals and peoples, an eternal reminder not to repeat the same tragic mistakes of the past, and the inspiration to spur us into action so that the marginalization and persecution experienced by the Jewish people may not occur again.

As part of this exceptional anniversary we have been very happy to support the project of Ca' Foscari University and Compagnia de' Colombari to bring *The Merchant of Venice* to the Ghetto for the first time in history. It is also through artistic statements like this one that the precious ethical messages of this place can travel to the world, confirming that Venice is an international center of art and culture.

Luigi Brugnaro, Mayor of Venice

The date 29 March 1516 marks an anniversary that is not a joyous one, either from a Jewish or civil point of view, yet it can not be let go unnoticed because it offers an extraordinary opportunity to look both back to the past and forward to the future. We are not happy to remember the condition of separation and discrimination in which the Jews as a minority were forced to suffer in the Ghetto, and even less do we intend to celebrate the fact that the word has gradually taken on the universal meaning of place segregation and discrimination that it has today, an image synonymous with exclusion and minority.

As Venetian Jews, by marking this anniversary we intend first of all to emphasize the capacity and steadfastness of a group that, in spite of adverse conditions, succeeded in making the Ghetto a place where Jewish tradition could grow and become a cultural crossroads where Jews of different backgrounds, learned to indomitably maintain their own independent identity over the centuries.

For this reason, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the establishment of the Ghetto does not mean highlighting a culmination from which one can only look backward, it means building a bridge to a future in which the Ghetto of Venice will continue to be a center of Jewish life and identity and a place of dialogue, diversity and richness of production and cultural exchange. We are confident that the first performance in the Ghetto of *The Merchant of Venice*, a play that has not been immune to antisemitism, may be an opportunity to show how this place is still capable of generating new exciting art, but also an occasion for many people to discover the Jewish heritage of Venice, its unique Renaissance synagogues, its history and contribute to its future as a vibrant community.

Paolo Gnignati

President of the Jewish Community of Venice
President of the Committee for the 500 years of the Ghetto of Venice

Great Renaissance intellectuals such as Leon Modena, Sara Copio Sullam, Simone Luzzatto; influential political and economic figures such as Gracia Nasi and Daniel Rodriga; ordinary people with picturesque nicknames such as Achille Silva 'Gambeta' or Sarina Parombolo; Lina Levi, 7 years old, and Bruno Perlmutter, 9 years old, among the youngest deportees from Venice. No list would ever do justice to the multiplicity of Jewish lives of the Ghetto, and it is a irony of history that the genius of Shakespeare has made Shylock the most famous Venetian Jew of all times.

The first performance of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto is our reckoning with an imaginary figure that has been haunting this place for centuries, overshadowing its real inhabitants while gaining enormous fame worldwide and becoming a proverbial name. To stage this controversial and inflammatory play in the year of the Ghetto quincenariy is a challenge that we could accept only upon special conditions: having an intellectual laboratory such as Ca' Foscari, where the project was conceived and where the various themes of the play could be analyzed and debated by a community of international scholars and students (culminating in an intensive 'Shylock Project' summer school at Fondazione Cini); inviting an exceptional theatre company such as Compagnia de'Colombari that would create the play on site, not importing a ready made production from elsewhere but bringing the artistic vision of Karin Coonrod and an international

and multiethnic cast of extraordinarily talented actors. The two partners, in close dialogue with the Jewish community and with the invaluable support of numerous individuals and institutions, have been committed to honoring the heritage of the Ghetto and the people who have called this place home.

By taking upon ourselves the artistic, organizational and ethical responsibility of this project, we agreed we did not want a philologically or politically correct version aiming at neutralizing the troubling issues of the play; we did not want to make Shylock a sympathetic character to redeem the potential antisemitism of the play. The result of this fortunate collaboration is here and now for you.

The Merchant of Venice still speaks to us. It is about the history and persistence of antisemitism; it is about the roles imposed on us by society and economic status; it is about the struggle for pluralism and acceptance of ethnic and religious difference; it is about the struggle between individual will and collective obligation; it is about love, friendship, and conflicts between women and men, young and old. It is, in this unique occasion, about the Ghetto of Venice, not as a poignant and evocative place of the past, but as meeting point of people and a vibrant hub of art, spirituality and culture now and for years to come.

Shaul Bassi

Ca' Foscari University of Venice
The Merchant in Venice, Project Director

Actors, musicians (even the audience) rush through the narrow streets of an Italian hill town all exuberantly participating together in the experience of a medieval mystery play. The wild fantasy of Gertrude Stein, Walt Whitman's barbaric yawp, or the poignant text of a Flannery O'Connor story, echo off the walls of a half restored factory, a Hudson River pier or from the shadowy depths of a cathedral. The glories of a Monteverdi opera or the ornate words of Elizabeth I are heard anew in the context of a Renaissance courtyard or an elegant version of the Globe Theater.

For Compagnia de' Colombari this all started in Orvieto and now it has all come full circle in the current production of *The Merchant in Venice*, set in the sublimely evocative ambience of the Venetian Ghetto. The intricate interplay of words and music, performers and audiences in physical sites that carry their own cultural messages and become a living text is at the center of Colombari's mission. Also central is the idea of crossing boundaries, entering new collaborations that bring disparate groups, languages, viewpoints and cultural traditions into vibrant theatrical interplay in this most ambitious project we have joined international forces with Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

Any adventurous collaboration is fraught with difficulties...logistic, financial, and artistic, but our journey has been a stimulating one filled with stamina, courage and deep commitment. We acknowledge

with gratitude the generosity of spirit (and pockets) from institutions, sponsors and individuals that have revealed an unshakeable belief in the human power of transformation and communication. This faith has never been more tested or needed than in these days of pain and despair, in a world that flies by with such reckless and cruel disengagement. Perhaps we can find in this belief a deeper understanding and appreciation of the challenges and glories that lie open before us.

Board of Directors

John Conklin and Michael Unthank
Co-Chairs
Compagnia de' Colombari

The gathering audience at twilight in the ghetto, the actors' feet on the stones, the wall of lights, the five windows of the scola tedesca and scola italiana looking down, the haunting trumpet. What is here and what is not here. What is present and what is absent. In the 500 years of the ghetto we imagine this place, once, a thriving whirlwind of activity and the heart of Jewish life. Walled, closed, an island apart for aliens – what is the path to our own time? Shylock enters. We are invited to see the outsider, to feel what burns, to open eyes to the light, to hear a cry and a call, to wonder at these stones and find a way of justice and mercy: a stand for judgment. Shylock: “Are you answered?”

Karin Coonrod
Director





Shylock slips out of his skin

We know that it is practically impossible to have an innocent and unbiased reading of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* today. Indeed this is what makes this work so versatile for contemporary adaptations. More than in easily identifiable cuts or added scenes, the challenge must be sought in the intentions of the lines uttered by every single character, the words spoken by the actor, the ideas expressed to the listening audiences. That is to say: the play as a whole, with its combination of words, music, lights and movement that Compagnia de Colombari has created for its audiences in the Ghetto of Venice.

Seeking to bring *The Merchant* the most relevance means making it immediately credible in the digital age: the era of genre crossovers, of the daily mortification of expressive speech. This means that the effervescence of Shakespeare's writing and the specificity of his sound must survive hostile surroundings today. Helping the play survive requires a great deal of patience, an overall dramatic pace that is both careful and meticulous, made of text and sub-text, quotes and linguistic micro-betrayals. There is little choice. It must find an acceptable mediation with today's universe of "seeing" rather than that of "listening". Today's visual civilization entails the globalization of millions of images produced hourly on the streets, multiplied by non-stop digital bombardment.

More than ever before, staging *The Merchant of Venice* today means starting from an extraordinarily well-written text meant for an audience of listeners and transposing it for today's audiences of spectators. This masterpiece was registered at London's Stationer's Register in July 1598 to prevent pirated copies from being published. Many other uncertainties, hopes and good intentions must be added to this initial obstacle and have dogged us as we tried to explain to ourselves and to others 'how' and

'why' this play, which was associated with the character of Shylock and its mythology right from the start, is still capable of fully catching our attention. That's why from the very beginning we insisted that it be radically changed. We felt an almost 'natural' duty to commit dramaturgical heresy, to transfer Shylock into the body of five actors, make him slip out of his single, unique skin to underscore how each one of us is indeed Shylock. This emblematically unhappy character, whose dignity was expropriated, who was persecuted and excluded, cuts across all genders and religious creeds. He's terribly complex and fascinating, a blessing and a curse for any spectator and dramaturg. He's unbearable in his initial lines, when turning directly to the audience he states: "I hate him for he is a Christian, but more for that in low simplicity he lends out money gratis and brings down the rate of usance here with us in Venice." But then his words are heart-wrenching, when he reminds his callous persecutors, "Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" Even today, beyond his painful, personal story, Shylock asks us and himself to be considered a victim. He's no longer the theatrical transposition of the offensive, anti-Semitic iconography that originated in the Middle Ages, but rather the universal, painful precipitate of existence in a society dominated only by commerce, money and its power. More than an episode of cruelty on the stage, it is the true act of intolerance and fraudulence against oneself and others. And in so doing, it hits the eye of our times with great precision.

Walter Valeri
Dramaturg

(English translation by Pina Piccolo)

A note on language

Welcome to Venice!

The city was, has been and continues to be a thriving, multicultural hub. It is uniquely placed centrally within Europe, on the water, to be open to all comers and both in Shakespeare's time and today, Venice is a centre of activity for those from all nations. Walking through St Mark's Square today, one loses count of the number of languages heard, and this has not changed over the generations.

For *The Merchant in Venice* we wanted to harness this sense of the teeming, bustling, polyglot city for the world inhabited by our characters. While Shakespeare's English dominates, you will hear Italian, Spanish, French and many other languages on the tongues of our actors. Perhaps it will remind you of your time in Venice outside the theatre, where multiple languages clash and clatter together.

And our Shylocks in particular use Yiddish, Judeo-Venetian, Ladino and other forms of Jewish languages. Not all of these would have been in parlance at the same time, or necessarily in the ghetto of Venice, but they all form part of Jewish history. With our five Shylocks, Karin Coonrod's production highlights the multiplicity of Jewish experience; it is sufferance ("the badge of all our tribe") that unites them—suffering, and the endurance of that suffering. Hearing these linguistic forms in the mouths of these talented actors helps bring to life a legacy of Jewish life of which Shylock forms only one part.

But if setting Shakespeare's *Merchant in Venice*'s actual ghetto does anything, it is that it carries Shylock through history and revisits the ghettoization of the Jews through time, an explication of Jewish suffering. Our Shylocks speak the languages of many ghettos. Travel through time with them.

Davina Moss

Assistant dramaturg



THE MERCHANT IN VENICE

with

Andrea Brugnara
Ned Eisenberg
Monica Garavello
Michele Athos Guidi
Adriano Iurissevich
Jenni Lea-Jones
Matthieu Pastore
Elena Pellone
Hunter Perske
Linda Powell
Stefano Scherini
Paul Spera
Francesca Sara Toich
Michelle Uranowitz
Sorab Wadia
Enrico Zagni

musicians

Marcello Benetti, *percussions*
Frank London, *trumpet*
Serena Mancuso, *cello*
Nikole Stoica, *violin*
Alexandra Stoica, *violin*
Paul Vasile, *keyboard, trumpet, trombone, toy piano, accordion*

black angels

Roberta Barbiero
Ziv Gidron
Emeline Mele
Alessandra Quattrini

project conceived by

Shaul Bassi

direction

Karin Coonrod

dramaturgy

Walter Valeri

music

Frank London

costumes

Stefano Nicolao

set and lighting designer

Peter Ksander

Arlecchino's mask

Donato Sartori

ring design

Giampaolo Babetto

perfumes

The Merchant of Venice ©

projections and sound

Andrea Santini

voice and text coach

Gigi Buffington

assistant dramaturg

Davina Moss

assistant director and stage manager

Nerina Cocchi

stage photographer

Andrea Messina

general manager and producing director

Jennifer Newman

production supervisors

Mascia Pavon

Marciano Rizzo



KARIN COONROD

DIRECTOR

Karin Coonrod is a theater artist whose work has been seen and heard across the U.S. and around the world. Hailed by *The New York Times* as “prodigiously inventive” and “galvanic” and by *The New York Observer* for “clear-eyed imaginative intelligence,” Coonrod’s most recent works include her own play, *texts&beheadings/ElizabethR*, at the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC and at BAM/Next Wave Festival (2015), Shakespeare’s *Tempest* at La MaMa Theatre in New York City (2014); Monteverdi’s *Orfeo* at Palazzo Simoncelli in Orvieto, Italy (2014); Gertrude Stein’s *The world is round is round is round* in upstate New York (2013); and Shakespeare’s *Love’s Labor’s Lost* at the Public Theater (2011). She is Founding Director of the acclaimed Arden Party Theater Company in downtown New York City 1987-1997 (during which time she won an Encore Award for her direction of the American premiere of Roger Vitrac’s *Victor or Children Take Over*). She is also Founding Director of Compagnia de’ Colombari and is currently on the faculty of the Yale School of Drama.



Cast



ANDREA BRUGNERA

AS GOBBO / SHYLOCK #4

Andrea Brugnera is an Italian actor, author, teacher and storyteller. He first approached theatre by attending the Scuola del Teatro a L’Avogaria directed by Giovanni Poli, in Venice. Afterwards, he collaborated with several theatre companies, directors and cultural associations, in Italy, Europe and overseas. Andrea, who lives in the charming town of Orvieto in Umbria, was artistic director of the Teatro Boni in the nearby town of Acquapendente for several years. With Natsuko Tomi he founded Associazione Culturale Kamina, researching and performing inter-cultural projects connected to the forms of the tradition (commedia dell’arte, sacra rappresentazione) and social memory (story-telling, historical documents of the twentieth century). As a professional actor, he works in a wide variety of styles, but his specialty is in those derived from the traditions of commedia dell’arte, which he studied with Giovanni Poli in Venice. He also been worked on multiple occasions in the USA for workshops and lectures.

NED EISENBERG
AS SHYLOCK # 5 / TUBAL

"I've waited 17 years to work with Karin again, 25 years to visit Venice again, and 11 years have passed since I first became interested in playing Shylock. Clearly, the time has come for all these desires and events to merge together and I am absolutely delighted with the confluence." A member of the Ensemble Studio Theater and of the Naked Angels Theatre Company (of which he is also co-founder), Ned Eisenberg has appeared in several Broadway productions, including *Rocky*, *Golden Boy*, *Awake and Sing* (Drama Desk and Tony Award winner) and *The Green Bird*. Off Broadway credits include *Finks* (Ensemble Studio Theater), *Othello* (Iago – Lortel Award nominee), *Oliver Twist* (Fagin), *King John* (title role, Theater for a New Audience), *Rocket to the Moon* (lead, Peccadillo Theater) and *Meshugah* (lead, Naked Angels). He has also appeared in *Guys and Dolls* (Nathan Detroit, Long Wharf Theater), *Middle of Nowhere* (Prince Music Center), *Street Scene*, *Six Degrees of Separation* (Williamstown), *Piece of my Heart* (New York Stage and Film) and Broadway Musicals: *Three Generations* (Kennedy Center). Film and television include *Experimenter*, *Won't Back Down*, *Limitless*, *Flags of our Fathers*, *World Trade Center*, *Million Dollar Baby*, *Criminal Justice*, *The Good Wife*, *Mysteries of Laura*, *Person of Interest*, *30 Rock*, *Blue Bloods*, *White Collar* and *Law & Order: Svu*.



MONICA GARAVELLO
AS BALZARINA

Monica Garavello was born in Este, a little village near Padua. After studying theatre at the University of Bologna, she moved to Venice to attend Drama School, at Teatro a L'Avogaria. Venice was exciting but she felt the need to open herself to new perspectives, so she started to travel to specialize and improve her theatre skills: to London, at LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art), attending an acting course on Shakespeare; to Berlin, working at Gorki Theater, to New York, studying in a summer course on film acting at Stella Adler School, and then to Rome. Finally, she has chosen to come back to Venice and be part of some local projects, both in theatre and in some movies.



MICHELE ATHOS GUIDI **AS BASSANIO**

Michele Athos Guidi (b. 25th March 1988) is an Italian actor from Arezzo, Tuscany. He first approached theatre while recovering from a football accident – his teammate invited him to see *Romeo and Juliet* and he was so struck by the play that he began to study, attend classes, and work in dubbing courses at the Libera Accademia del Teatro in Arezzo.

After one year studying archeology in Florence, he entered the Accademia Teatrale Veneta in Venice. He worked with teachers such as Paola Bigatto, Daniele Salvo, Toni Cafiero, Alessio Nardin, Vladimir Granov, Karina Arutyunyan, Renato Gatto, Ted Kaiser, Gigi Dall'Aglio, Nelly Quette, Adriano Iurissevich, Sandra Mangini and Michele Modesto Casarin. He graduated in 2013. After the academy, he took part in several film productions and in video art with the artist Franco Fedeli. He also worked for theatre companies such as Evoè Teatro in Rovereto, Gesti per Niente in Venezia, and Venezia in Scena, as well as performing theatre in English with Bamsamble Company of the Accademia dell'Arte in Arezzo, Woodstock Teatro in Mestre and Compagnia de' Colombari from New York City.



ADRIANO IURISSEVICH **AS SHYLOCK #2 / ARAGON**

Adriano Iurissevich is an Italian actor, director, musician and drama teacher, active in Italy, Spain, England and Israel. He worked with the Teatro Stabile of Veneto and of Genoa, the Gran Teatro di Carlo Cecchi, the Telemaco company (Madrid), the Gaslit Theatre Company (London) and the Habimah Theatre of Jerusalem. Adriano has been acting professionally since 1983, in theatre, cinema and television, under the direction of Benno Besson, (Carlo Gozzi's *The love of the three oranges*; Bertolt Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*), Peter Greenaway (*The Children of Uranium*), J.Sanchis Sinisterra (*El lector por horas*), Paolo Benvenuti (*Confortorio*), Carlo Boso, Bruno Cirino, Giancarlo Zanetti, Augusto Zucchi, Carlo Cecchi, Giancarlo Solari and Giuseppe Emiliani, among others. As a director, his most recent credits include *Menti* (from José Sanchis Sinisterra), with Accademia Teatrale Veneta Venezia, and Yuan Mayorga's *Hamelin*. Since 1989 he has been teaching and collaborating with theatre academies and universities all over Europe. He is also active as playwright, translator, singer and songwriter.



JENNI LEA-JONES
AS SHYLOCK # 3 / DUKE

Jenni Lea-Jones trained at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London. Her theatre credits include Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* and *Hedda Gabler* at the Riverside Studios London, national tours of Britain with shows such as Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado* with Illyria, *Jane Eyre* with Blue Orange Theatre and international tours with shows such as Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors* for Theatre Set-Up and Alan Ayckbourn's *Relatively Speaking* with White Horse. Radio credits include two series of *Araminta Spook* for BBC Radio 4. She is so excited to be part of this exciting project with Compagnia De' Colombari celebrating both Shakespeare and the Ghetto.

FRANK LONDON
MUSIC COMPOSER
TRUMPET

Frank London is a Grammy-award winning trumpeter and composer, founder of the Klezmatics and leader of bhangra/Yiddish group Sharabi (with Deep Singh), Shekhnah Big Band, and his Klezmer Brass Allstars. He's been called the "mystical high priest of New Wave Avant-Klez jazz" (All About Jazz). He has over 40 recordings of his own music; has performed and recorded with John Zorn, Karen O, Itzhak Perlman, Pink Floyd, LL Cool J, Mel Tormé, Lester Bowie, LaMonte Young, They Might Be Giants, David Byrne, Jane Siberry, Ben Folds 5, Mark Ribot, and is featured on over 400 CDs. No stranger to large-scale collaborative projects, his works include the folk-opera *A Night In The Old Marketplace* (based on Y.L. Peretz's 1907 play), the multi-media dance/poetry/video *SalomÉ*, *Woman of Valor* (with Adeena Karasick), *Davenen* for Pilobolus Dance Theater, Great Small Works' *The Memoirs of Gluckel of Hameln* and Min Tanaka's *Romance*. His first symphony, *1001 Voices: A Symphony for Queens* (text – Judith Sloan, video – Warren Lehrer) for orchestra, chorus, soloists, tabla, erhu, narrator, actors and film premiered in 2012. *Green Violin*, a collaboration with Elise Thoron based on Chagall's paintings for the Soviet Yiddish theater, won the Barrymore Prize for Best New Musical, and has been performed in Russia, Holland and the US.





MATTHIEU PASTORE **AS MOROCCO**

Matthieu Pastore was born in 1989 in Lyon, France. After studying dramaturgy and translation in his hometown, he decided to start an academic path at the Piccolo Teatro School of Milano, guided by Luca Ronconi. He graduated in acting in 2011. He worked with Elio De Capitani (*Death of a Salesman*), Damiano Michieletto (*The Threepenny Opera*), Pablo Solari (*Scusate se non siamo morti in mare*), Bruno Fornasari (*Kafka's Process, Il fu Mattia Pascal*), Laura Curino (*Macbeth*), Renato Sarti (*The Great Disaster, Gorla*), Andrea de Rosa (*Plato's Symposium*), Filippo Renda (*Shitz, George Dandin*). As a translator, he worked with Fadhel Jaïbi, the director of the Tunisian National Theater, and he translated in Italian Marie Henry's play *The 24 hours of Tina Pools seeking her happiness* for TeatroDue of Parma and *The Great Disaster* from Patrick Kermann, in which he also worked as an actor, directed by Renato Sarti. In 2012, he won the "Premio Hystrio", the most important award for young actors. People say his quiche lorraine is terrific.

ELENA PELLONE **AS NERISSA**

Elena Pellone has appeared in theatre, film and TV from a very early age. She inherited her love of acting from her parents, who were both in the theatre. She is currently completing her Masters in *Shakespeare and Creativity* at the Shakespeare Institute, in Stratford-upon-Avon, where she has been co-creating work, inspired by Shakespeare, in collaboration with the R.S.C. Elena is passionate about Shakespeare's text and wishes to travel the world sharing it and bringing it to life. Elena is the Artistic Director of the Venice Shakespeare Company.



HUNTER PERSKE
AS SALARINO

Hunter is a jobbing actor, devoted father and loving partner. He trained at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts. Playing Shakespeare is always the greatest of pleasures for any theatre actor and the challenge, like the discoveries, never cease. To be a wandering Australian and offered the chance to perform this most extraordinary play in this equally extraordinary city is a humbling gift. This play, this city, this continent, at this moment of history, with its themes of otherness and their consequences depending on what 'tribe' is your mob couldn't be better timed.



LINDA POWELL
AS PORTIA

Linda Powell appeared on Broadway in *Wilder, Wilder, Wilder*, *On Golden Pond*, and *The Trip to Bountiful*. Her other Shakespeare roles include Hermione in *The Winter's Tale*, Olivia in *Twelfth Night*, Titania and Hippolyta in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Thaisa in *Pericles*. A New York based actress, Linda works regularly in film and television and has had recurring roles on NBC's *Law & Order SVU* and *Chicago Fire*. Most recently, she originated the role of Elizabeth in Lucas Hnath's critically acclaimed play *The Christians* and is set to play Christine in Theater for a New Audience's *A Doll's House* before heading to Venice and beginning the Merchant journey.

PAUL SPERA
AS LORENZO

Paul Spera is a French-American actor based in Paris. He trained at Yale (BA program) and at the Conservatoire National Supérieur d'Art Dramatique. He has been appearing onstage and onscreen, in English- and in French-speaking roles, professionally since 2010. Current projects include *Family Ti-Jean* in Lebanon (Masrah Ensemble), a show whose cast includes teenaged amateurs from Beirut's Syrian refugee community as well as professional actors, and *Les Yeux Ouverts*, a play about French author Marguerite Yourcenar that will be revived in Paris next season.



STEFANO SCHERINI **AS ANTONIO**

Stefano Scherini has been working as professional actor since 1994. He studied theatre with Luca Ronconi, Marisa Fabbri, Nikolaj Karpov and Marnadou Dioume, as well as singing and puppeteering. Stage credits include collaborations with major Italian theatres and artists. He also took part in international tours in Europe and Brazil and in important theatre festivals. Film credits include Peter Greenaway's *Goltzius & the Pelican Company*, Gianni Pacinotti's *L'Ultimo Terrestre* and, most recently, Paolo Virzì's *La Pazza Gioia*. Stefano also works as a director – most notably, in 2015, he directed *Iliade – Mito di ieri, Guerra di Oggi*, produced by the Mitmacher Cultural Association of Verona he co-founded in 2012. The play has been touring extensively between 2015 and 2016, and was hosted by the Piccolo Teatro in Milan, which will also include the play in the 2016-2017 season.



FRANCESCA SARAH TOICH **AS LANCILLOTTO**

Francesca Sarah Toich is an artist, writer and performer based in Italy. She studied Commedia dell'Arte in Venice and holds an MA in Performance and multimedia production studies from Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She won the 'Lauro Dantesco' as best young interpreter of Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* in 2005 and 2008 and she is particularly well known for her vocal research. Francesca also published two fantasy novels and combines her literary activities with art installation projects and a range of performances presented internationally alone or as part of UBIK, a creative research group she founded in 2007.

MICHELLE URANOWITZ **AS JESSICA**

Michelle received her BFA in Acting from NYU Tisch School of the Arts, where she currently teaches movement and physical technique for actors at the Open Arts Studio. She is a Brooklyn-based actor, writer, and teaching artist for the The Stage Theatre School. She is honored and thrilled to be joining Compagnia de' Colombari in this monumental production. Recent theatre credits include: *The White Stag Quadrilogy* (Dixon Place), *Summer&Smoke* (Access Theatre), *Coromandel* (HEREArts), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Lake George Theatre).



SORAB WADIA
AS SHYLOCK #1/GRAZIANO

Born in Bombay, India, Sorab Wadia has performed internationally as an actor and singer in an eclectic mélange of projects ranging from *The Play of Daniel*, a medieval music-drama, to the notorious *Jihad! The Musical* on London's West End. He garnered rave reviews for his performance as Ali Hakim on the U.S. National Tour of Trevor Nunn's production of *Oklahoma!* Sorab tours internationally with *Kite Runner*, a one-man play directed by Wynn Handman. Off-Broadway shows include Karin Coonrod's production of *The Tempest*, *Buntz Berman Presents...* (The New Group) & *Nymph Errant*. TV credits include *Madame Secretary*, *Law & Order: SVU*, *30 Rock*, *Chappelle's Show*. Films include *The Spectacular Jihad of Taz Rahim*, *Suburban Girl*, & *Hiding Divya*. Among his many opera productions are *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Lakmé*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Israel), *Nozze di Figaro*, *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Italy), *La Traviata* & *Madama Butterfly* (USA). He is thrilled to be back working with Karin Coonrod on *The Merchant in Venice*.

ENRICO ZAGNI
AS SALANIO

Born in Modena, Enrico Zagni started to act in 1994 with the role of Horatio in *Hamlet* for Emilia Romagna Teatro in Modena. With the same company he had leading roles for *Kaleidoscope of Solitary* (Wilcock), *The Sea of the Lost Time* (Marquez), *Sanctuary* (Faulkner), *Doll's House* (Ibsen), *Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare), *The Taming of the Shrew* (Shakespeare), *A Streetcar Named Desire* (Williams), *The Chandler* (Bruno) and many others. He was directed by Luca Ronconi for *The Chandler*. He studied operatic voice with Luciano Pavarotti. His operatic credits include Verdi's *Trovatore* (Manrico), Verdi's *Traviata* (Alfredo), Verdi's *Otello* (Cassio), Bizet's *Carmen* (Don Jose), Puccini's *Bohème* (Rodolfo), Puccini's *Turandot* (Pong), Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* (des Grieux), Mozart's *Nozze di Figaro* (Basilio), Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* (Pinkerton), Verdi's *Rigoletto* (Duca), Donizetti's *Elisir d'Amore* (Nemorino), Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* (Pirelli) and Ullman's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (der Soldat). He also performed in several musicals including *Les Misérables* (Jean Valjean), *The Phantom of the Opera* (Phantom), *The Secret Garden* (Archiebald Craven), *Nine* (Guido Contini) and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jesus).



Production



GIGI BUFFINGTON VOICE AND TEXT COACH

With Director, Karin Coonrod: *texts and beheadings/Elizabeth R*, Next Wave Festival BAM & The Folger; *The Tempest* and *I Killed My Mother*, LaMama; *Love's Labour's Lost* (Consultant), Public Theater; *The World Is Round*; *Angels and Other Strangers*; *Ernie's Incredible Illucinations*, *A Small Family Business*, *Haunting Julia*, and *The Sea and the Mirror*, The Greene Space & WNYC Radio; Royal Shakespeare Company: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet* (with David Tennant and Patrick Stewart), *Love's Labour's Lost*, Greg Doran, Director; *The Merchant Of Venice*, (Newcastle tour) Tim Carroll, Director; Steppenwolf Theatre Company: *Mary Page Marlowe* (world premiere), by Tracy Letts, Anna Shapiro, Director; *East Of Eden*, Adapted by Frank Galati, Terry Kinney, Director; The Shakespeare Society: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Eric Tucker, Director; *Coriolanus* (with Chukwudi Iwuji), Michael Sexton, Director; American Players Theatre: *Othello*, *An Iliad*, *The Seagull*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Richard III*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Merry Wives Of Windsor*; Johnny Flynn and Company, Shunt Space, London; Rose Bruford College of Music & Drama, London; Professor: Tisch School of the Arts, NYU, where she has directed Caryl Churchill's, *Top Girls* and *Vinegar Tom*; Kevin Kerr's, *Unity*; Arthur Miller's, *The Crucible*, and Alexandra Cunningham's, *Number 11 (Blue & White)*; Director of Voice & Text: American Players Theatre.

NERINA COCCHI ASSISTANT DIRECTOR AND STAGE MANAGER

Inoutput's cofounder and co-artistic director, Nerina Cocchi is an international theatre artist and translator currently residing in Brussels, where she has co-directed events at the Royal Library of Belgium for the 2015 and 2016 Museum Night Fever, as well as various workshops. As a theatre director, she has staged *Ni una más*, *POST•M*, *Novecento*, *Manifesto for Another World* and *4.48 Psychosis*. As an English-French-Italian translator, she works for, among many others, Italian theatre company Motus, and has translated *Wider Than the Sky* by Jessica Litwak into French and *Lampedusa Beach* by Lina Prosa into English (in collaboration with Allison Grimaldi-Donahue). She has recently written a libretto for opera *Wardrobe* in collaboration with composer Davide Fensi. Upcoming projects include *A Map is not a Territory* with Centre Culturel de Jette (Brussels), *Code* at la Fabrique de Théâtre (Mons) and a workshop on telepresence at la Fabrique Autonome des Acteurs (Bataville).



PETER KSANDER
SET AND LIGHTS DESIGNER

Peter Ksander is a scenographer whose work has been presented at: The National Theater of Hungary, Maison des Arts de Creteil, The Borealis Festival, The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Public Theater, The Chocolate Factory, The Walker Art Center, Arts at St. Ann's, La Mama ETC, PS122, On the Boards, The Ontological-Hysteric Theater, The ICA (Boston), Theater for a New Audience, The TBA Festival, The Under the Radar Festival as well as regional theaters around North America. He has worked extensively with Compagina de' Colombari in the past including creating designs for *Orfeo*, *Laude in Urbis*, *Texts and Beheadings* and *Gulia/Juliet*. In 2005 Ksander was a recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program. In 2006 He joined the curatorial board of the Ontological-Hysteric Incubator. In 2008 he won an Obie award for *Untitled Mars (this title may change)* and in 2014 he won a Bessie award for *This was the End*. He is a member of the faculty of Reed College in Portland, Oregon.



DAVINA MOSS
ASSISTANT DRAMATURG

Davina Moss is a freelance dramaturg and third-year MFA candidate in Dramaturgy and Dramatic Criticism at the Yale School of Drama, where her credits include *Macbeth*, *The Oresteia*, *Tiny*, and *Clybourne Park*. Other credits include *Knives in Hens* and *Rose and the Rime* (Yale Cabaret), and *Alice in Wonderland* (Yale Summer Cabaret). In 2016/2017 she will serve as Artistic Director of the Yale Cabaret. She is an associate artist of the London-based Deus Ex Machina Productions, and holds a BA in English Literature from the University of Cambridge.

JENNIFER NEWMAN
GENERAL MANAGER
AND PRODUCING DIRECTOR

A New York-based dance and theatre artist, and producer, Jennifer has worked with Franco Dragone, Julie Taymor, Donald Byrd, David Rousseve, Ronald K. Brown, Michael Jackson, The Radio City Rockettes, and has performed on Broadway in *Saturday Night Fever* and Disney's *The Lion King*. As a director and choreographer her theatre work includes: *Three Women*, by Patterson, *Loring*, and *Zainabu*; *The Children*, by Phillip Howze; *Bullrusher*, by Eisa Davis; *Woman Bomb*, by Ivana Sajko; and *October in the Chair*, adapted from short stories by Neil Gaiman. She is currently touring her solo performance, *The Geneva Project*, an interdisciplinary and immersive dance work directed by Charlotte Brathwaite. Having studied at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and The American Dance Festival she holds a BA in Dance from UCLA and an MFA from the Yale School of Drama. Jennifer has been an artist in residence at Yale University, Central Connecticut State University, The Field, Mabou Mines, Baryshnikov Arts Center, 651 Arts, and Sisters Academy. She is currently on faculty at Central Connecticut State University, the producing director of both Heartbeat Opera, and Teatro Colombari.



MASCIA PAVON
PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR

Mascia Pavon was born in Venice and graduated in Business Administration from the University of Ca Foscari. She began her career as Controller of the Venice Biennale, delicately combining budget control with unpredictable artistic cultural activities, in dance, music, theater, film and visual arts. Her deepening passion for the world of the performing arts has developed over fifteen years of production experience, international trips and productions, becoming Technical and Logistics Manager for the Biennale dance, music and theater festival and then Production Manager of the Napoli Theatre Festival, the first international theater festival in Italy. Mascia Pavon is accredited both to the European Community as a cultural short term expert for cultural missions in Bosnia and Kosovo, and from UN-Habitat, as Organizational Manager of the Sixth World Urban Forum. Mascia teaches design and stage production and has spoken at the Singapore Arts Festival and the Seoul PAMS (Performing Arts Market in Seoul), as a representative of the Italian theater production.



MARCIANO RIZZO **PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR**

Marciano Rizzo was born and raised in Venice. He began his theatrical activities in the 1970s as technical director and lighting designer for various companies, including Loggia di Brescia, Public Theatres (Teatro Stabile del Veneto) and the Venice Biennale. After a break of five years during which manages a record store specializing in alternative music in Mestre-Venice, he returned to the world of live entertainment, particularly working within in the fashion industry in Milan and Florence, managing exhibition stands (Palzileri, Marzotto, Bassetti, Lotto, Diadora). From 2000 to 2012 he served as Technical Director for the Venice Biennale dance, music and theater festival, and for the Napoli Theatre Festival. Today Marciano also designs of theatrical and non-theatrical spaces. He founded the Circolo Caligola and Spazio Aereo, cultural associations for the dissemination of independent music.

ANDREA SANTINI **PROJECTION AND SOUND**

A keen supporter of multidisciplinary approaches, Andrea is a sound and multimedia artist, lecturer and researcher in the fields of electroacoustic music, live electronics, sound art, new media, theatre and audiovisual interaction. In 2012 he completed a DEL-funded PhD project on spatial audio and live electronics at the Sonic Arts Research Centre (Queen's University, Belfast) focusing on live-electronics and spatialisation in the work of Venetian composer Luigi Nono. Since 2011 he collaborates with SAE Institute (Creative Media College) as lecturer and academic consultant. Andrea is co-founder and technical director of creative research group UBIK(Venice). His audiovisual work has been presented at galleries and festivals internationally. Recent appearances include Kernel Festival and Salone del Mobile (Milan), Science Festival (Genoa), A+A Gallery (Venice), Music Tech Festival (Berlin), Tokyo Wonder Site (Tokyo), Victoria & Albert Museum and Kinetica Museum, (London), the Centre Pompidou/IRCAM (Paris), Ars Electronica (Linz).





WALTER VALERI

DRAMATURG

Walter Valeri is a published poet, playwright and scholar. His collection of poetry, *Canzone dell'amante infelice*, was awarded Italy's national literary prize, the Mondello. He has edited a standard sourcebook on Dario Fo, *Fabulazzo*, and is the author of various essays, including *Franca Rame, A Woman on Stage, An Actor's Theater, La via dei teatri* and *Donna de Paradiso*. An anthology of his poems, *Deliri fragili*, was published in 2006. Most recent poetry collection *Il mio nome/My name* (2015). Valeri has translated several dramatic, fiction, screen and poetry texts into Italian: *Which Side Are You On?* by Ken Loach, *Carlino* by Stuart Hood, *Les Aveugles* by Maurice Maeterlink, *Memory of War* by James Fenton, *Knepp and Krinski* by Jorge Goldenberg, *Adramelech* by Valère Novarina, *Nobody Dies on Friday* by Robert Brustein, *Eight Poems* by Sam Cornish and *The Dear Remote Nearness of You* in collaboration with Pina Piccolo by Danielle Legros Georges, and *Mistero Buffo* by Dario Fo as a new American translation in collaboration with Bob Scanlan in Boston 2016. Valeri is a regular contributor to European's leading theatrical and poetry journals, *Sipario*, *Teatri delle Diversità* and *La Macchina Sognante*. He continues to be active in Italy as artistic and program director of the International Poetry Festival *L'Orecchio di Dioniso* (Forlì, Italy, 2016).

Costumes



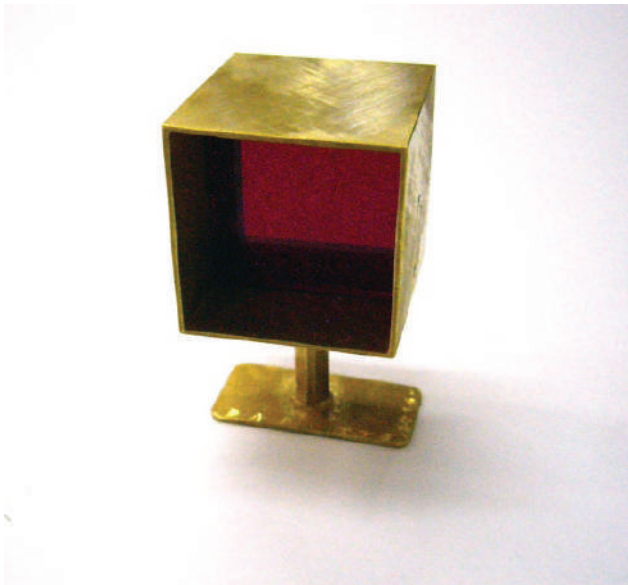
STEFANO NICOLAO COSTUME DESIGNER

Founded in 1983, the costume workshop of Atelier Nicolao is known for exacting standards of research into materials, steeped in history, and transformed in color and texture. Over more than thirty years in the business, he has worked on important occasions with other costume makers, including Oscar winners Maurizio Millenotti, Jenny Beavan, Sandy Powell and others, making costumes for movies including Michael Radford's *The Merchant of Venice* and *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Among his most recent projects include the Scottish production of *Outlander*, set in Glasgow, where he managed a costume workshop building period costumes. Furthermore, he created some of the costumes for the second

series of *The Borgias* with Sergio Ballo. For lyric and drama, he has built stage costumes with wide international recognition. Still today, he is strongly engaged in research into historical events such as the famous Venice Regatta. He has worked extensively in Italian national television and for the BBC. He also teaches costume design at the Accademia di Belle arti di Venezia. His costumes have been displayed at the Metropolitan Museum in New York since 1995; in the Museum of Fashion and Costumes in the Palazzo Mocenigo in Venice, there are two main installations of his costumes made entirely from paper, based on the Veronese 15th Century style, and that of Tiepolo 17th Century. In Binche, in Belgium, the International Museum of Carnival and Mask collects his costumes to reflect the Venetian tradition of Commedia dell'arte.

Props

GIAMPAOLO BABETTO RING DESIGNER



DONATO SARTORI MASTER MASK MAKER



The Trial

On the 27th of July an extraordinary event accompanies the performance of *The Merchant of Venice* in the Ghetto. The main characters of the play are summoned to a moot court for an appeal presided over by US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Renowned international lawyers represent Shylock, Antonio, and Portia. The legal implications of a famously controversial play unfold in this show-within-a-show, presented to supporters of *The Merchant in Venice* and to students of the Shakespeare summer courses in Venice.

Scuola Grande di San Rocco hosts the event in its magnificent XV-century building which is decorated by Tintoretto and other prominent Venetian Renaissance artists, and whose history is closely linked to the themes of Shakespeare's play. The members of the Jury are the Honorable Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, U.S. Ambassador to Italy John R. Phillips, Professor Richard Schneider (Wake Forest University), Professor Laura Picchio Forlati (University of Padua), and Avvocato Fabio Moretti .

The lawyers are three distinguished international professional attorneys Manfredi Burgio, representing Shylock, Mario Siragusa, representing Antonio and the Republic of Venice, and Jonathan Geballe, representing Portia.

After the welcoming remarks of San Rocco's Warden Franco Posocco and Ca'Foscari University Rector Michele Bugliesi, the programme continues with a talk on arbitration in early modern Venice by Ca'Foscari Professor Fabrizio Marrella, a reading by world-renowned actor F. Murray Abraham, and notes on the play by eminent Shakespearean scholars Stephen Greenblatt (Harvard) and James Shapiro (Columbia). After hearing from the three lawyers, the Jury will withdraw to deliberate and then announce their decision. Will they confirm the verdict from the play? Whatever the final decision, the many legal and ethical implications of this story will unfold, showing the enduring relevance of *The Merchant of Venice* for the world of today.

Perspectives

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE – THE PLAY

Shakespeare wrote *The Merchant of Venice* in 1596-97 and the play was published for the first time in 1600. His main source for the plot was the *novella* in Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (1558).

Antonio, a Venetian merchant, agrees to give financial help to his friend Bassanio, who needs to clear to present himself as a worthy suitor to the rich young heiress Portia. Antonio's fortune is all tied up in maritime trade so he undertakes to arrange a loan. At Belmont, meanwhile, Portia bewails her fate to her maid Nerissa: her recently deceased father directed that she should not be allowed to choose a husband. She will marry the man who correctly identifies which of three caskets, made respectively of gold, silver and lead, contains her portrait.

Bassanio and Antonio ask Shylock the Jew for a loan of 3000 ducats; he agrees, though he remembers how often Antonio has insulted him and his fellow Jews. Shylock "in a merry sport" proposes a contract whereby failure to repay the debt at the appointed time and place will give Shylock the right to cut a pound of flesh from any part of Antonio's body. Despite Bassanio's protests, Antonio signs the bond. Lancelot, Shylock's servant, decides to run away from his master and places himself at the service of Bassanio. Shylock's beautiful daughter Jessica also wants to escape from what she feels to be prison-like circumstances and entrusts Lancelot with a letter addressed to her Christian lover Lorenzo, who has promised to marry her. Taking advantage of Shylock's absence Jessica dresses up as a man and leaves home, taking with her her father's gold and jewels.

At Belmont the Prince of Morocco chooses the gold casket and on opening it finds a skull instead of a portrait of Portia. Shylock reacts to Jessica's flight with a mixture of desperation and rage. A second suitor, the Prince of Aragon, chooses the silver casket

and discovers that it contains the portrait of an idiot. Shylock learns that Antonio's ships have all foundered and that Jessica is squandering his fortune. Portia has fallen in love with Bassanio and tries to put off his attempt at the test but he is resolute and chooses the lead casket, where he finds the portrait of his beloved. Lorenzo and Jessica interrupt the joyful scene with the news that Antonio is ruined and that Shylock, furious at his daughter's flight, is determined to have his pound of flesh, which he intends to cut from near the heart. Bassanio returns to Venice to comfort his friend and shortly after, Portia and Nerissa decide to follow him disguised as men. At the hearing Shylock demands payment as per contract and rejects all forms of alternative compensation. A young lawyer, Balthasar, and his assistant enter the court room: no-one knows that they are really Portia and Nerissa in disguise. Shylock once again refuses to entertain any appeal for mercy and Balthasar finds in his favour. But as Shylock prepares his knife, the lawyer points out that his rights are confined to taking a pound of flesh; if a drop of blood is shed he will be guilty of murder. At this point Shylock decides that he is prepared to accept money to settle the debt but it is too late: he is sentenced to give Antonio half his wealth and possessions, to consent to his daughter's marriage and to convert to Christianity. Balthasar asks to be rewarded with the ring worn by Bassanio – a gift from Portia. Bassanio reluctantly agrees. Balthasar's assistant also persuades Gratiano to part with a ring Nerissa had given him. When the two friends reach Belmont, Portia and Nerissa ask for an explanation as to why they no longer have the rings. Antonio intercedes and asks Portia to forgive Bassanio; she does so and gives him another ring – which turns out to be the one he gave Balthasar. The stratagem is now disclosed and all the couples can happily prepare for their weddings.

VENICE, THE JEWS, AND EUROPE 1516-2016

The word “ghetto” now has a worldwide, everyday usage. Found regularly in newspapers and the media, in general it refers to cases of physical and social “isolation.” At times it has connotations of a high degree of urban degradation, or of people on the margins of society and evokes their interpersonal behavior. But in fact it is a blanket term for very different situations that may be remote both geographically and politically. Five hundred years on from the creation of the Venetian Ghetto, thinking about its long history as the first ghetto in the world means reconstructing its everyday life, the many contradictions, complexity, and even its “porosity,” in order to try to grasp the meaning of “segregation” that the term gradually assumed in the past, and even in more recent times. But it also means understanding the cosmopolitanism closely associated with its history.

The exhibition *Venice, the Jews, and Europe 1516-2016* at the Doge’s Palace illustrates the distribution of Jewish settlements in Europe after 1492 as the background to the creation of the first real ghetto in the world in Venice. It explores the debate about its location, growth, and urban and architectural form in the subsequent extensions (Ghetto Novo, Ghetto Vecchio, and Ghetto Novissimo), and its relations with the rest of the city (the Rialto stores, the cemetery, and the excavation of the canale degli Ebrei). There is a focus on the regulations, prohibitions, abuses, conflicts, and exchanges as well as the Ghetto society, made up of different communities (German, Italian, Levantine, and “Pontine,” or Spanish), who were different in terms of religious rites, language, and culinary habits. Lastly, their cultural achievements in music, art, and literature are also a major part of the exhibition. In the first two decades of the sixteenth

century Venice was going through a period of uncertainty with partially conflicting behaviors. Money-lending for pawns was one of the Jews’ main economic activities in Venice, as elsewhere in Europe. And arguably this occupation, especially in the stages of political and financial difficulty that the Republic was experiencing before and after the crisis of the League of Cambria, explains the welcoming and subsequent settlement of the Jews in the city.

This brings us to the Republic’s decision to set aside a circumscribed area of the city for the Jewish minority. It was to be closed by two gates, which, as the Senate ruled on March 29, 1516, would be opened at the sound of the marangona (the bell of St. Mark’s that dictated the rhythms of city life) and closed at midnight by four Christian watchmen, paid by the Jews.

The Ghetto was a place of division but also of mediation between Jews and Christians. In short, a stigmatized, circumscribed place that was, however, a transition stage from expulsion to acceptance and assimilation; a place characterized by real boundaries that could be permeable or at times even protean. The fifth-centenary exhibition *Venice, the Jews, and Europe 1516-2016* thus seeks to reconstruct the long story of an enclave that was an example of multiculturalism, which speaks of the past, but also of the present and the future

Donatella Calabi

IUAV University, Exhibition Curator

Exhibition:

Venice, the Jews, and Europe 1516-2016
June 19 -November 13, 2016
Palazzo Ducale, Doge’s Apartment

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE / THE MERCHANT IN VENICE

We live at a moment in which our dreams of a common humanity may well seem naïve and sentimental as we watch the repetitive intolerance of our present history. And yet we also live at a time in which, as those degrading repetitions testify, it has never seemed as urgent to keep those dreams alive.

This year is the 500th anniversary of the formation of the Venetian Ghetto and the 400th of Shakespeare's death. Compagnia de' Colombari's production of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, performed inside the walls of the Ghetto in the summer of 2016, brilliantly brings those anniversaries together. Their production finds in the play the voice of both the dream and the difficulty of achieving it. The play is arguably, though unnervingly, the perfect play for our time, speaking to the differences that we think divide us and to the shared hopes and anxieties that show us how little those differences should really mean. It is not a comforting play. It tells us truths about ourselves that we may not wish to hear: we are often alike in ways that are unflattering, and different in ways that we should not take pride in. It tells us that it is often easier to hate than to love, but also that love is always complicated and often compromised. But the play, both as it is written and as it is performed, is the sign of the conviction that art can be a place where truth and love can be salvaged from the vulgarity and brutality of our history—and perhaps a means by which that history can be salvaged from itself.

David Scott Kastan
Yale University

OF DAUGHTERS, DESIRE AND WILL(S)

When we address *The Merchant of Venice* today, it is quite tempting to focus on the men. Let us reverse the gaze. Let us take a long look at the women. Let us consider the play as a romantic comedy that pursues a double 'quest' to 'get the girl'. Is that the play's 'problem'? Is the 'quest' heroic or tawdry, the male questers Jasons – or pirates? Are the women trouble makers or trouble shooters? Is the elopement of Jessica the crisis that turns her father murderous? Is the 'mercy' the law clerk offers the appellant in court in place of vindication a saving grace that, denying him judicial killing, saving him from murder, preserves him from the irreparable mistake that (in Shakespeare) is always (pace Macbeth) a form of suicide? Does 'Tarry, Jew' have the women in man's clothing merely reinstantiating the patriarchal law-of-the-father (parodied in the lottery to determine which of Portia's suitors will be vindicated) that makes a mockery of 'mercy'? Or are all of these binaries – that shadow the binaries the play sets up, Jew/Christian, Venice/Belmont, law/mercy, profligacy/usury, the prodigal wastrel/the careful father – finally incommensurate with the complexities the play traffics in?

Carol Chillington Rutter
University of Warwick

“I AM CONTENT”

There is something very strange about experiencing *The Merchant of Venice* and knowing that you are somehow imaginatively implicated not only in the play’s romantic hero and heroine but also, and to an even greater degree, in its villain. You laugh when Shylock’s servant, the clown Gobbo, runs away from his penny-pinching master. You smile when Shylock’s daughter Jessica, having escaped from her father’s dark house into the arms of her beloved, declares, “I shall be saved by my husband. He hath made me a Christian.” You shudder when the implacable Shylock sharpens his knife on the sole of his boot. You applaud the resolution of the dilemma, when the clever Portia comes up with the legal technicality that undoes Shylock’s murderous plan. He who had insisted upon the letter of the law is undone by the letter of the law. But, all the same, you feel uneasy. What exactly is it that you are applauding and smiling at? How do you view the Jewish daughter who robs her father and bestows the money on her fortune-hunting Christian suitor? Do you join the raucous laughter of the Christians who mock and spit on the Jew? Where are you, at the end of the harrowing scene in the courtroom, when Portia asks the man she has ruined whether he agrees to the terms she has dictated, terms that include the provision that he immediately become a Christian: “Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?” And what do you think the Jew actually feels when he answers, “I am content.”

Stephen Greenblatt
Harvard University

VEXING QUESTIONS

Four centuries after it was written and first staged, *The Merchant of Venice* continues to cast a long shadow. It is a deeply enigmatic work of art, raising many more questions than it answers. Is the disguised Portia’s question upon entering the courtroom—“Which is the merchant here, and which the Jew?”—to be taken seriously or intended as a laugh-line? Do we follow the 1623 Folio text when Gobbo says of Jessica that “If a Christian do not play the knave and get thee, I am much deceived,” or the text of the 1632 Folio, where that “do” is altered to “did” (a reading preferred by many modern editors, one that suggests that Shylock has been cuckolded and Jessica’s real father was a Christian)? Is Portia a racist for saying of her unsuccessful wooer, a dark-skinned and Muslim Moroccan prince, “Let all of his complexion choose me so”? Is Antonio “so sad” because of his financial worries or because his unsanctioned love for Bassanio is unrequited? Is the play troubling because its portrayal of Shylock is nakedly anti-Semitic? Or, alternatively, is it so disturbing because it exposes what ugly myths lead those with insecure identities—Gentile or Jew—to think and do when threatened, and for intimating that hostility to difference of all kinds (racial, national, sexual, or religious) deforms those who are intolerant and coarsens any society that condones it? Each production or rereading of this haunting play challenge us to wrestle yet again with these and many other vexing questions.

James Shapiro
Columbia University

MERCY VERSUS LAW: CHRISTIAN OR JEWISH?

"Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?" asks Portia as she enters the courtroom, disguised, of course, as the male doctor of laws, Balthasar. Portia's gender disguise is accompanied by her confusion: can she not recognize the Jew on sight? In Shakespeare's wonderfully subtle, implicit way, he is also suggesting that Portia is in a religious disguise: does she speak in the name of Christianity when she speaks of mercy, or are her courtroom legal maneuverings drawn from rabbinic legal arguments (at least as understood by Christians), but disguised as Christian? Portia proclaims the universal nature of mercy:

"The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes"
(IV,1)

Examining the Shylock's agreement with Antonio, Portia seems on the verge of granting him his pound of flesh. Shylock greets her pronouncements with joy: "O noble judge! O excellent young man! O wise and upright judge! Most learned judge!" But then comes the climactic moment when Portia, in a voice no doubt dripping with sadistic pleasure, announces:

"Tarry a little; there is something else.
This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
The words expressly are 'a pound of flesh.'
Take then thy bond, take thou thy pound of flesh;

But, in the cutting it, if thou dost shed
One drop of Christian blood"

Portia's speech about mercy is lovely, but it is law, not mercy, that the court applies to Shylock. Shakespeare is not being theologically didactic, but uses irony to call the categories into question. Portia, the supposed advocate of mercy, becomes the

clever, legalistic Jew—transvestially, dressed as a man. She defeats Shylock by Jewish, not Christian, methods, using Talmudic pilpul, hairsplitting, a rabbinic strategy so often employed by the rabbis. Hairsplitting may be a favored way to win a legal case, but it has come to exemplify the Christian critique of Judaism as obsessed with the letter of the law, thus neglecting the spirit of religion. Jewish legalism is condemned in the Gospels and the Epistles of Paul; hypocrisy, Jesus calls it when the Pharisees – woe to them! – worry about the length of their garments' ritual fringes and the width of their phylacteries.

Shylock, the male Jew, represents the old law, Judaism, while Portia, the female Christian, ostensibly portrays the young dispensation. Yet the call for mercy that Portia initially invokes as a contrast to Shylock's vengeance against Antonio is lost as the Christian court exercises its vengeance against Shylock.

The tensions between vengeance and mercy, law and love: these are clichés that Shakespeare may be asking us to question. After all, Portia demonstrates that the Christianity she represents quickly transforms mercy into hairsplitting and revenge against the Jew. And is Judaism really a religion of legalism, impervious to mercy, desirous of vengeance? True, the biblical prophets scream with rage, but theirs is an outrage at the callousness and cruelty of human beings. The righteous indignation of the prophets is "a burning compassion for the oppressed" (Prophets 256).

At the heart of Jewish theology is a belief in divine pathos, that God needs us and is deeply affected by human deeds. Abraham Joshua Heschel writes, "To live as a Jew is to live in harmony between the good deeds of a human and the Infinite Holiness, between the compassion of a human being and the mercy of the Eternal." God is at stake in relations between human beings.

The struggle in the Venice courtroom arises because mercy is placed in opposition to justice, and neither can exist alone. In Judaism, Heschel writes, "God rules the world by justice and compassion, by love." (*The Prophets*, 280). Justice without mercy brings ethical austerity and can too easily justify indifference, and mercy without justice may bring kindness, but does not alleviate suffering. In Judaism, God is not merely a comfort, but a challenge, and the greatest sin for a Jew is callousness. Like the Gospels themselves, *The Merchant of Venice* can be read as anti-Jewish or as critical of Christianity's anti-Judaism. The play accomplishes an exploration of the extraordinary, complex resonances that result from the idiosyncratic theological configuration of Christian-Jewish entanglement, gently urging us not to view the religions as antagonists, but to bring their insights into harmony.

Susannah Heschel
Dartmouth College

A JEWISH VIEW ON MERCY

According to Jewish tradition, the life of a man must contain the application of the concepts of Tzedakah (equity) and Mishpat (law), along with those of Chesed - Rahamim (loving mercy) and Emet (truth). The application of pure law can generate monsters, so it must be tempered with Tzedakah, which is the application of justice taking into account the conditions under which a certain crime, or infraction, is performed. Merciful love must always accompany the application of the pure and simple truth. Application of the law, while important enough to be included in the seven universal precepts dictated to Noah, cannot be absolute. Indeed, for a sentence to be positive, there must be a dose of love and mercy in every judgment. The etymology of the word rahamim, mercy, is rehem, the mother's womb: the mother is ever so much more prone to love than the father (consider for example the letter to the father of Franz Kafka). The Rabbis say that when judging a person, one must judge the "entire" person, as if to say that there is almost no one who is completely evil.

According to Jewish tradition, man has difficulty in simultaneously applying the two principles, and often is swept back and forth from one to the other. In his prayers, the Jew asks the Lord every morning to go beyond pure law and to judge us kindly. So, to fully realize the idea that man was created in the divine image, man has the task of imitating the Lord.

Scialom Bahbout
Chief Rabbi of Venice

SHAKESPEARE IN VENICE SUMMER SCHOOL. THE SHYLOCK PROJECT

The Study Centre for Documentary Research into European Theatre and Opera of the Giorgio Cini Foundation, together with Ca' Foscari University of Venice, organizes the new edition of the Shakespeare in Venice Summer School. The Shylock Project. Internationally renowned professors, field experts, scholars, theatre professionals get together in the beautiful setting of the Foundation, in the Island of San Giorgio Maggiore, to study and explore *The Merchant of Venice*, paradigmatic play of his entire theatrical production and fundamental for its connection with the Venetian territory. In the year of the celebration of the four hundred years after the death of the English dramaturg and the five hundred years of the creation of the Venetian Ghetto, the Giorgio Cini Foundation created again that climate of exchange and confrontation which has been at the base of the project since last year. The Summer School had an educational and central role in view of the production of *The Merchant* in the Ghetto, being a place of meeting and exchange fundamental for the scenic and dramaturgical development of the production. During the first edition of the project, the artists of Compagnia de' Colombari, in residency at Fondazione Cini, participated in meetings, lectures and workshops dedicated to the text and contexts of the play, taking the necessary steps to elaborate the concept and structure of the theatre production.

Maria Ida Biggi

Study Centre for Documentary Research into European Theatre and Opera,
Giorgio Cini Foundation
Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

The Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari Venezia is the foundation through which Ca' Foscari University of Venice fosters its relationships and ties with its city, the surrounding region and beyond.

The foundation can contribute to the development of the area and community by establishing partnerships and providing useful, distinctive and customised services, such as new applications for Ca' Foscari University of Venice studies in the fields of business and industry, student residence and the placement of students in the world of employment.

The Fondazione Università Ca' Foscari Venezia acts in many ways to encourage and improve all activities connected with the university's mission for research, training, innovation and the "third mission", or its activities in industry and technology, both with a view to promoting new initiatives with events and community engagement and also through establishing national and international networks.

The foundation organizes its work in the following operational areas:

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- Internships & Placements: contractually and administratively supporting all the services offered by Ca' Foscari for careers guidance, internships and placement.
- Certifications: managing the administration of the Certification Board, certifying employment contracts and conciliation and arbitration services for the settling of disputes
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Initially created as a patronage project prior to becoming a commercial initiative, The Merchant of Venice grounds its inspiration in the world of culture. Indeed, culture underpins the very development of all its products and communication activities: the first Perfume Museum, housed in the Palazzo Mocenigo, is the crowning example of the brand's concept. It was opened in 2013 thanks to the collaboration between Mavive Spa and the Fondazione Musei Civici of Venice.

The Merchant of Venice's ethical approach has been consistently demonstrated through the subsidisation of various cultural and social projects. In a further confirmation of its cultural nature The Merchant of Venice is now the main sponsor of a theatre production that bears its name - one that will have its premier performance in Venice. The brand's contribution to this event also involves a special perfumed effect during the performance, which will enable the audience to experience the theatre atmosphere in olfactory terms, making it both a captivating and unique experience.



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Summer evenings in Venice are most often clear and pleasant. However, in the event of inclement weather, the performance will be moved indoors, to the Auditorium Santa Margherita Ca' Foscari (Dorsoduro 3659). If a performance is stopped, we will make every effort to resume in a reasonable amount of time. If due to unforeseen circumstances we are unable to continue, we will make every effort to re-assign customers to a future performance. If re-assignment is not possible, purchased tickets are non-refundable.

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