

William Shakespeare  
**The Merchant of Venice**

Performed by **Antony Sher, Roger Allam, Emma Fielding** and cast

CLASSIC  
DRAMA



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1	<b>Act 1 Scene 1:</b> In sooth, I know not why I am so sad:	9:55
2	<b>Act 1 Scene 2:</b> By my troth, Nerissa, my little body is aweary...	7:20
3	<b>Act 1 Scene 3:</b> Three thousand ducats; well.	6:08
4	Signior Antonio, many a time and oft...	4:06
5	<b>Act 2 Scene 1:</b> Mislike me not for my complexion...	2:26
6	<b>Act 2 Scene 2:</b> Certainly my conscience...	4:21
7	Nay, indeed, if you had your eyes, you might fail of...	4:19
8	Father, in. I cannot get a service, no;	2:49
9	<b>Act 2 Scene 3:</b> Launcelot I am sorry thou wilt leave my father so:	1:15
10	<b>Act 2 Scene 4:</b> Nay, we will slink away in supper-time,	1:50
11	<b>Act 2 Scene 5:</b> Well Launcelot, thou shalt see,	3:16
12	<b>Act 2 Scene 6:</b> This is the pent-house under which Lorenzo...	1:32
13	Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.	1:49
14	<b>Act 2 Scene 7:</b> Go draw aside the curtains and discover...	5:04
15	O hell! what have we here?	1:23
16	<b>Act 2 Scene 8:</b> Why, man, I saw Bassanio under sail:	2:27
17	<b>Act 2 Scene 9:</b> Quick, quick, I pray thee; draw the curtain straight:	6:48

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18	<b>Act 3 Scene 1:</b> Now, what news on the Rialto Salerino?	2:13
19	To bait fish withal:	5:17
20	<b>Act 3 Scene 2:</b> I pray you, tarry: pause a day or two...	4:39
21	Tell me where is fancy bred...	6:52
22	You see me, Lord Bassanio, where I stand...	9:56
23	<b>Act 3 Scene 3:</b> Gaoler, look to him: tell not of Mercy...	2:05
24	<b>Act 3 Scene 4:</b> Portia, although I speak it in your presence...	3:56
25	<b>Act 3 Scene 5:</b> Yes, truly; for, look you the sins of the father...	4:28
26	<b>Act 4 Scene 1:</b> What, is Antonio here?	4:42
27	What judgment shall I dread, doing.	4:58
28	The quality of mercy is not strain'd.	6:44
29	We trifle time: I pray thee, pursue sentence...	4:34
30	What mercy can you render him, Antonio?	4:36
31	<b>Act 4 Scene 2:</b> Inquire the Jew's house out, Nerissa...	1:02
32	<b>Act 5 Scene 1:</b> The moon shines bright: in such a night as this,	6:09
33	That is the voice, or I am much deceived, of Portia...	5:30
34	Let not that doctor e'er come near my house...	4:59

**Total time: 2:29:53**

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William Shakespeare  
**The Merchant of Venice**

**CAST**

Shylock	<b>Antony Sher</b>
Antonio	<b>Roger Allam</b>
Portia	<b>Emma Fielding</b>
Bassanio	<b>Ben Meyjes</b>
Gratiano	<b>Robert Portal</b>
Lorenzo	<b>Giles Fagan</b>
Launcelot	<b>Gerard Carey</b>
Salanio	<b>Mark Straker</b>
Salarino	<b>Dominic Marsh</b>
The Prince of Morocco	<b>Ray Fearon</b>
Nerissa	<b>Cathy Sara</b>
Jessica	<b>Faye Castelow</b>
The Prince of Arragon and Tubal	<b>Sam Dastor</b>
The Duke of Venice and Gobbo	<b>John Hodgkinson</b>
Singer	<b>David Timson</b>
Guitarist	<b>Hugh Burns</b>
Director	<b>John Tydeman</b>
Technical Direction	<b>Norman Goodman</b>
SM	<b>Peter Novis</b>
Producer	<b>Nicolas Soames</b>

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William Shakespeare

# The Merchant of Venice

*The Merchant of Venice* is a comedy that produces a sense of creeping uneasiness in an audience watching it today. It is a play with complex themes: the broad humour of the young men getting into trouble for losing their wives' rings; their wives in turn cross-dressing as lawyers to save the life of their husbands' friend; the beautiful Portia wooed by ludicrous suitors; all mix unhappily with the persecution and cruel treatment of a human being because he belongs to another culture – of Shylock, a Jew. In this age of multi-culturalism we find the prejudice of the Christian majority at times offensive to our 21st-century susceptibilities. But this is a modern reaction that Shakespeare would not have recognized.

Many misconceptions have arisen about the character of Shylock and his relationship to the Christian society in which he has chosen to live. The

Elizabethan audience would have had a very different theatrical experience from that of a modern audience. For a start, the Jewish moneylender (or usurer) was a recognizably comic figure to them, and Shakespeare endorses this. The first words Shylock speaks are about money: 'Three thousand ducats – well'.

The impression immediately is of a man obsessed – fixed on one thought. His stilted flow of language and his foreignness of speech are immediately obvious when set against the easy babble of those gilded Venetian flies, Salerino and Solanio. The very idea of the bond, to be sealed 'in a merry sport', proposed by Shylock, is grotesquely comic. Nevertheless Shakespeare was incapable of creating a stock character without humanity. Before the bond is proposed, he provides a psychological justification for it:

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‘Signor Antonio many a time and oft  
...you have rated me

About my moneys and my usances:

Still have I borne it with a patient shrug  
For sufferance is the badge of all our  
tribe...’

Shakespeare gives a certain reality to Shylock: he is a serious man, intense, who uses words judiciously, by which he will later stand or fall. Antonio, Bassanio and the other Christians by contrast are impulsive, irresponsible and trust to chance. Bassanio takes a chance on his wooing of Portia to clear his debts, whilst Antonio, already chancing his fortune in trade, takes a greater risk by agreeing to a loan from Shylock, the terms of which threaten his very life. By contrast, Shylock respects money, whereas the Christians don’t. He hoards it, as he hoards his words; they waste it. It is a theme repeated endlessly in the play: thrift versus chance.

But did Shakespeare intend us to despise the Christians and respect the Jew? In fact, Shylock as the unjustly persecuted victim became a theatrical tradition only after the actor Edmund

Kean, in the early 19th century, chose to abandon the traditional comic red wig of the stage Jew and appeared instead with black hair and a complementary dark and brooding characterization. Later in the 19th century, the actor Henry Irving imbued Shylock with so much dignity that it unbalanced the play and he ended the play after the trial scene. This was ‘romanticising’ Shakespeare, distorting his intentions. That Shylock is a ‘comic’ character is important to the action of the play. His comedy is both grotesque and uncomfortable, typified by his anguish between the loss of his daughter and the loss of his ducats. It is this grotesque extremity that provides the humour. The often quoted speech: ‘Hath not a Jew eyes...’ (Act III Scene1) when put in context, and not quoted as proof of Shakespeare’s sympathy with his plight (which is very much a 20th-/21st-century view of the play) shows that Shylock’s motivation is not social justice but revenge:

‘If you wrong us shall we not revenge?  
– if we are like you in the rest we

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resemble you in that... the villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard, but I will better the instruction.'

It's true that his obsession for revenge is born out of gross injustice – a truth that Shakespeare observes – but obsession corrupts, and Shylock's relentless pursuit of revenge, reiterating the letter of the law (but not its spirit), leads to his downfall.

During the trial, Shakespeare maintains a comic tone for Shylock's obsession with his bond: 'Is it so nominated in the bond?...I cannot find it, 'tis not in the bond.' This *is* comic, but it is the comedy of life, where aspirations and ambitions are continually thwarted by unforeseen circumstances.

Not that the Christians escape criticism. Portia's famous 'Quality of mercy' speech is heavily ironic in its context: when Portia herself says at the end of the trial: 'The Jew shall have no mercy', and Antonio insists that Shylock must reject his faith, they show little Christian mercy to the defeated Jew. Typically, Shakespeare leaves it to us to

decide who comes off best in the trial. He merely presents things as they are, and every generation since the play was first performed has had a different response.

If Shylock represents the darkness at the heart of this play, then Portia shines throughout like a beacon of love. If too, Shylock is thrift, then Portia is chance. Her very future and happiness depend on it. By the terms of her father's will she will become the property of whomsoever chooses the correct casket. The game of chance works in her favour and she wins the suitor of her choice, but aware that money, a dominant image in this play, had a lot to do with Bassanio's quest, she 'values' herself in monetary terms, as a 'reckoning' or a 'bargain' and talks of 'the full sum of me.' But her *true* value is shown in the saving of her husband's best friend Antonio. It is an act of love. For Portia, love is the *only* wealth, and it must be generously shared for it to grow. Portia displays her generosity too towards Lorenzo and Jessica in giving them a home at Belmont, and as the play draws to a close the young men, Bassanio and Gratiano, used to Venetian ways, begin

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also to learn that love ultimately is more powerful than money.

Money dominates this play, but Shakespeare is by no means intent on showing that wealth has benefited the Christians. In contrast to Shylock, they may use their money and buy pleasure with it, but Shakespeare shows this pleasure to be idle and unsatisfying, and many characters express their discontent with their lot: 'When shall we laugh? Say when?' Bassanio asks his fellow Venetians; and this sense of the emptiness of pleasure for its own sake may in part contribute to Antonio's sadness. The wise Nerissa sums it up perfectly: 'They are as sick that surfeit with too much as they that starve with nothing.'

The Venetian Christians look at Shylock, corrupted by his obsession with money, and they see themselves; what they could become. He is the unacceptable face of Venice's deeply materialistic society, and they hate him the more for it. This explains the public vehemence against Shylock shown by pleasure-seekers like Gratiano at the trial. Standing in the garden at Belmont at the

end of the play, the three young married couples have learnt that love is more precious far than gold or silver and if nurtured and 'kept safe' will be the basis for a happy future.

The message of love is carried by the imagery of music throughout the play. Music is integral to the text; its rhythm and melody are in the verse throughout the play, but the imagery is specifically used to lift Act V after the dramatic trial scene.

Act V contains Lorenzo's eulogy to the spiritual power of music. Jessica listens, and her presence reminds us of her father stopping 'his house's ears' against music, and speaking negatively of it: 'The vile squealing of the wry-necked fife'. Lorenzo's reference to a man who has no feelings for music could be a description of Shylock himself:

The man that hath no music in himself,  
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet  
sounds  
Is fit for treasons, stratagemes, and  
spoils,...  
Let no such man be trusted..

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Thus at this point the two opposing worlds of the play are finally reconciled and harmonized through music. It is the lyricism of Act V that saves the play from being a tragedy.

**Notes by David Timson**



Considered one of the finest British actors of his generation, **Sir Antony Sher** KBE is also a writer and theatre director. He is active in theatre, film, television and radio and has won many accolades, including two Olivier Awards for Best Actor. He starred as Primo Levi in *Primo*, for which he was awarded the Critics' Circle Award for Outstanding Solo Performance. Theatre work includes *Othello*, *Macbeth*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Richard III* (among many others) at the RSC, and *Uncle Vanya* and *Stanley* at the National Theatre. On television, he has featured in *Murphy's Law*, and films include *Shakespeare in Love* and *Mrs Brown*.



**Roger Allam** is a well-known English actor who has worked extensively in film, television, radio and on stage. In 2001 he won an Olivier Award for Best Actor for his role as Captain Terri Denis in *Privates on Parade* at the Donmar Warehouse. He created the role of Inspector Javert in the original London production of *Les Misérables*, and in 2006 he appeared in Stephen Frears's *The Queen*. Television work includes *Inspector Morse*, *Midsomer Murders* and *Foyle's War*.



**Emma Fielding** trained at RSAMD. She has worked for the Royal National Theatre and the RSC, most notably in John Ford's *The Broken Heart* for which she won the Dame Peggy Ashcroft Award for Best Actress and the Ian Charleson Award. She has also appeared in numerous radio plays for the BBC and performed the parts of Desdemona in *Othello*, Ophelia in *Hamlet* and the title role in *Lady Windermere's Fan*, as well as reading *Jane Eyre*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Rebecca* for Naxos AudioBooks.



Since graduating from LAMDA, **Ben Meyjes** has performed in a number of RSC productions including *Twelfth Night*, *Hamlet*, and most recently *King Lear* and *The Seagull*. His television work includes *Foyles War*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Wallander* and *King Lear*. For radio Ben has performed in *Dear Doctor Goebbels* for BBC Radio 4.



**Robert Portal** has appeared in film, television, radio and on stage. He played Maurice Haigh-Wood in *Tom & Viv* at the Almeida, Bob Acres in *The Rivals* and Aragon in *The Merchant of Venice* at the RSC. Television work includes *Hogfather*, *Rosemary & Thyme* and *The Amazing Mrs Pritchard*. Films include *Mrs Dalloway*.



**Giles Fagan** trained at LAMDA. Since then he has worked extensively in theatre, television and radio. In 1998 he won the Carleton Hobbs award. Theatre credits include *Don Juan* and *Pericles* at the Lyric Hammersmith, *Show of Strength* at the Tobacco Factory and *Hamlet* and *Twelfth Night* at the RSC. Television work includes *Casualty* and *Tough Love*.



**Gerard Carey** trained at the Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. He created the role of Robertson Ay in Cameron Mackintosh's production of *Mary Poppins* at Bristol Hippodrome and in the West End at the Prince Edward Theatre. Gerard recently played the role of Smeed in *Peter Pan* at the Birmingham Rep, previous roles at the Rep include the Munchkin Mayor in *The Wizard Of Oz* and the White Rabbit in *Alice In Wonderland*. Television credits include *Torchwood* and *Lovesoup*.



**Mark Straker** trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama. Theatre credits include *Anna* at Greenwich, *Soloman* and *Rough* at The Royal Court and national tours of *The Real Thing*. Extensive work for BBC Television includes *Spooks*, *Eastenders*, and *Doctor Who*. Mark's feature films include *Batman Begins*. Mark has recorded many audiobooks and he has performed in around 700 radio plays, including playing Ferdinand in *The Tempest* with Sir John Gielgud and Malcolm in *Macbeth* with Ian Holm.



**Dominic Marsh's** recent theatre credits include: The Actor in *The Woman In Black* (Fortune Theatre), King George III in *Longitude* (Greenwich Theatre), Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lucentio in *The Taming of The Shrew*, Arviragus in *Cymbeline* and Curio in *Twelfth Night* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), Richard/Danus in *The Shell Seekers* (UK Tour), Simon Bliss in *Hay Fever* (Haymarket, Basingstoke), Jonathan Harker in *Dracula* (Derby Playhouse), Toby in *Murmuring Judges*, Company in *Racing Demon*, Company in *Absence of War* (Birmingham Rep), Balthazar in *Romeo and Juliet*, 1st Lord in *As You Like It* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), Rudolph in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and Fawn/Knave of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* (RSC).



**Ray Fearon's** film credits include *Harry Potter and the Philosophers Stone*, Kenneth Branagh's *Hamlet* and *The Clandestine Marriage*. On television, he has made appearances in *Waking the Dead*, *A Christmas Carol* and *As If*, amongst others. His radio work includes *Who Killed Palamino Milero?* and *A Raisin in the Sun*. Ray has worked extensively with the Royal Shakespeare Company, with roles including the Prince of Morocco in *The Merchant of Venice* and Othello in *Othello*. Ray plays Nathan Cooper in *Coronation Street*.



**Cathy Sara** has worked for the New Shakespeare Company in *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Romeo and Juliet*, as well as the Stephen Joseph Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse and in *King Lear* at the Hackney Empire. Her television appearances include *Kavanagh QC*, *Beck*, *The Detectives* and *Heartbeat*, and she has worked extensively for the BBC Radio Repertory. For Naxos AudioBooks she reads Katherine in *Henry V* and *Stories from Shakespeare 2*.



In 2007 **Faye Castelow** was a runner up for the prestigious Carleton Hobbs award. Theatre credits include *The American Clock*, *Riders to the Sea*, *The Overwhelming*, *The Long Goodbye* and *Pericles*. Films include *Ten Things I Hate About You*, *Monologues* and *Nice*.



**Sam Dastor** studied English at Cambridge and trained at RADA. His early theatrical experience included a spell at the National Theatre under Sir Laurence Olivier. In the West End he has appeared as Ariel to Paul Scofield's Prospero and in three of Simon Gray's plays – *Melon*, *Hidden Laughter* and *Cell Mates*. For the RSC he has been seen in *Timon of Athens*, *Tales from Ovid* and a world tour of *A Servant To Two Masters*. His many television appearances include *I, Claudius*; *Yes, Minister*; *Mountbatten*; *Julius Caesar* and *Fortunes of War*. He has also appeared in the films *Made*, *Jinnah* and *Such A Long Journey*, recorded over 1000 broadcasts for the BBC and read numerous audiobooks including *Kim* and *A Passage To India*. He has also read *Great Explorers* for Naxos AudioBooks.



**John Hodgkinson** has made Shakespeare a central part of his acting life with regular appearances with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Regents Park Open Air Theatre. He is regularly seen on television in contemporary drama, police thrillers and comedy. He has also read the part of Stephano in *The Tempest* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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Additional guitar music performed by Hugh Burns.

**Music programmed by David Timson**

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## Credits

Directed by John Tydeman

Produced by Nicolas Soames

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Edited by Norman Goodman

Cover picture:

Portia announces that Shylock can have his pound of flesh / 'Shakespeare's Pictures'

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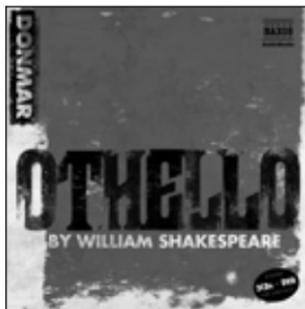
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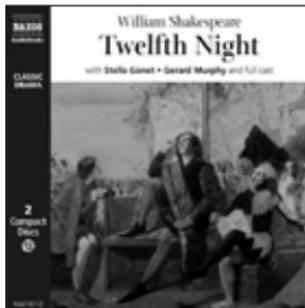
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# William Shakespeare

# The Merchant Of Venice

Performed by **Antony Sher, Roger Allam, Emma Fielding** and cast

Directed by **John Tydeman**

Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, agrees to lend Antonio, a Venetian merchant, three thousand ducats. However, Shylock has one condition: should the loan go unpaid, he will be entitled to a pound of Antonio's own flesh...

Greed, love, a dramatic trial, broad humour and some of Shakespeare's most famous speeches – *The Merchant of Venice* is both a comedy and a tragedy.

With a full cast, including Antony Sher as Shylock and Emma Fielding as Portia, this is a stunning new production.

## CAST

Shylock **Antony Sher**  
Antonio **Roger Allam**  
Portia **Emma Fielding**  
Bassanio **Ben Meyjes**  
Gratiano **Robert Portal**  
Lorenzo **Giles Fagan**  
Lancelot **Gerard Carey**

Salanio **Mark Straker**  
Salarino **Dominic Marsh**  
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Nerissa **Cathy Sara**  
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DRAMA

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