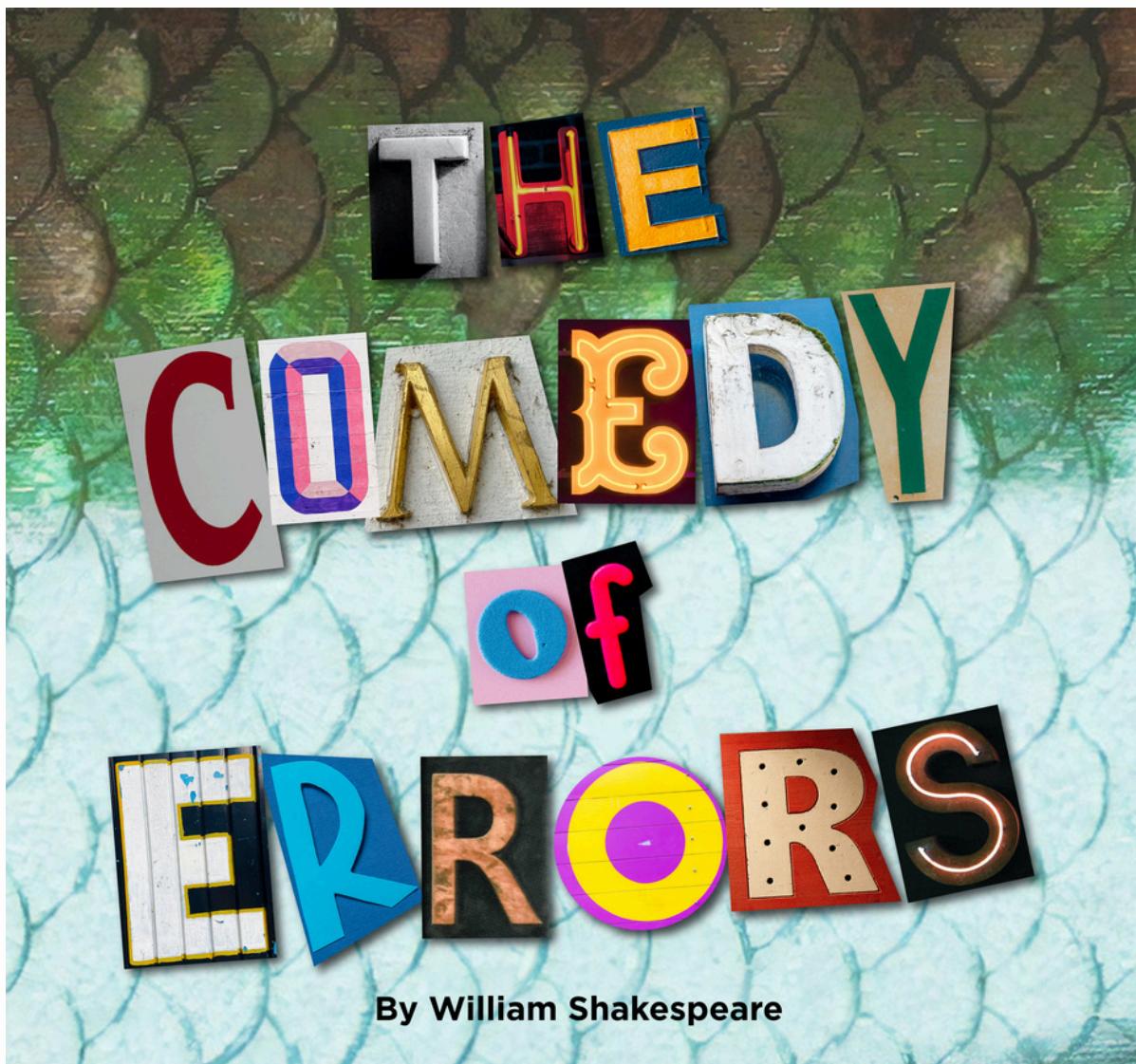




UTAH SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

2026 Shakespeare in the Schools Tour

TEACHER TOOLKIT CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDE



By William Shakespeare

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WELCOME!

Since 1993, the Utah Shakespeare Festival's education touring program--Shakespeare in the Schools--has brought professional theatre performances to schools and communities across the state of Utah and the Intermountain West. Our mission is to meet students where they are, and provide everyone with the opportunity to access and create theatre.

Our touring company returns this winter to bring one of Shakespeare's most iconic comedies, *The Comedy of Errors*, to K-12 students in more than 50 schools and community centers across Utah, Wyoming, Arizona, & Nevada.

This Study Guide is designed to pair with the 75-minute cutting of the play performed for middle and high schools on tour. However, the information and activities within could easily be adapted to the 45-minute assembly show.

Enjoy!

The content of this study guide and the resources within it were created by Elyna Mellen and Marian Esplin Peterson in collaboration with the Utah Shakespeare Festival Education and Communications Departments.

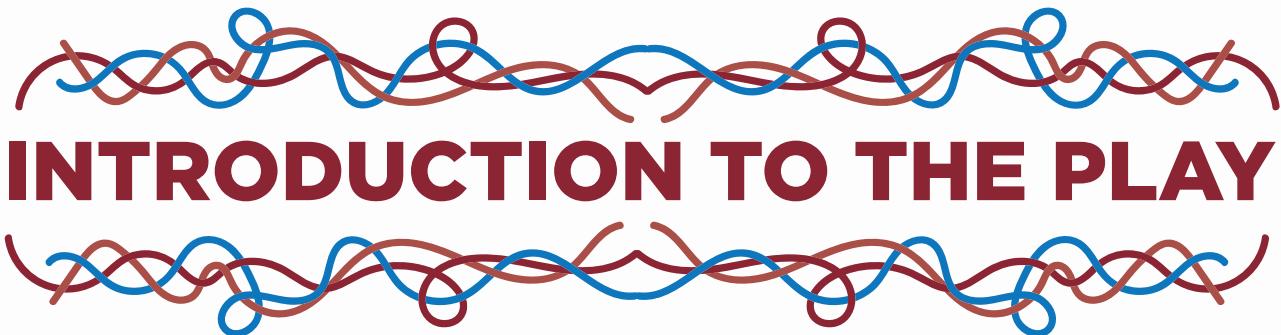
Director's Note

Welcome to the world of *The Comedy of Errors*! This play is ultimately a story about outcasts and homecomings. The story begins with Egeon, an old man, facing execution for no other reason than where he comes from. Before the sentence is carried out, he is ordered to speak, and Egeon, with nothing, tells us his story. He speaks of his search for his family, his lost twin sons and their servants, also twins, and his hope they might be reunited. His story offers him a glimmer of hope as his sentence is prolonged. Throughout that one day, a series of mishaps and seeming errors, at long last, brings him together with his loved ones.

Our play strives to highlight the contrast of Egeon's potential tragedy in order to make his homecoming all the more joyful. We craft magic from nothing; taking the discarded, the outcast, the trash, and create a story of welcoming and hope.

From a full outcast refugee tragedy, to a comedic homecoming feast of equals, *The Comedy of Errors* teaches us that we are more alike than different. It teaches us there is more that connects us than separates us. We hope to model that as we go; building connections with students and teachers, and leaving them more connected to each other in our wake.

- Marco Antonio Vega



INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

Play Synopsis

When the Syracusean merchant, Egeon, arrives as a refugee in the rival city of Ephesus, he is arrested for trespassing and sentenced to death by Duke Solinus. However, when the Duke hears his tragic story, he is granted one day to find the funds to free himself. Egeon shares that he is in search of his son and servant, and they are searching for their twin brothers who were lost in a storm in infancy.

Miraculously, his son, Antipholus of Syracuse, is unknowingly in Ephesus too, with his servant, Dromio. Almost immediately, strange happenings arise when members of the town begin addressing Antipholus and Dromio by name, offering them goods, asking for money, and claiming to know them well. It seems that after many years of searching, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse have stumbled into the very town where their identical twin brothers live without realizing it!

Despite the many clues that could clear up this comedy of errors, both the Antipholuses and the Dromios remain oblivious to their nearby twins, resulting in mistaken identities, avoidable arguments, and confusions of the zaniest degree. But when our characters listen and communicate, they find the clarity and community they've been seeking.

We hope you enjoy this 75-minute touring production of *The Comedy of Errors* which has been carefully trimmed and tailored for a younger audience while still preserving the full arc and structure of the play.



Character List

Egeon

A poor merchant from Syracuse. He was separated from his wife, Emelia, and one of his twin sons, Antipholus of Ephesus, after a shipwreck when the children were infants. Now he is in search of his other son, Antipholus of Syracuse, who set out in search of his lost twin. When Egeon enters Ephesus he is arrested and sentenced to death unless he can pay a fine of one thousand marks.

Duke Solinus

The Duke who rules Ephesus. He is responsible for upholding the law, including the one that decrees trespassers from Syracuse must be sentenced to death. Though bound by oath to uphold the decree, his sympathy for Egeon's plight persuades him to grant Egeon a day to raise the ransom that could save his life. As the play unfolds, Duke Solinus serves as the authority figure, presiding over the resolution of the chaos, and restoring order once the truth is revealed.

Antipholus of Syracuse

One of Egeon and Emelia's twin sons raised in Syracuse by Egeon. As a young man, he sets out with his servant, Dromio, to search for his lost twin brother. His journey brings him to Ephesus, where his identical twin already lives, and where a series of mistaken identities causes him to question his own reality. The audience sees the unfolding chaos through his central lens.

Dromio of Syracuse

The servant of Antipholus of Syracuse and the twin brother of Dromio of Ephesus. He is also in search of his missing half, and more suspicious of the strange happenings in Ephesus than Antipholus. His quick wit, physical comedy, and growing unease amplify the confusion of mistaken identity and provide much of the play's humor.



Antipholus of Ephesus

A well-known and loved merchant in Ephesus, who is married to the lady Adriana. He is the twin brother of Antipholus of Syracuse and the son of Egeon and Emelia, but he is unaware of his lost family. As his familiar world begins to turn against him, he becomes increasingly frustrated and defensive, driving most of the conflict and misunderstandings.

Dromio of Ephesus

The trusty servant to Antipholus of Ephesus and the lost twin brother of Dromio of Syracuse. He is frequently caught in the crossfire of his master's frustration, while his resemblance to his twin drives the play's physical comedy.

Adriana

The passionate wife of Antipholus of Ephesus and older sister to Luciana. She strives to keep her household and marriage intact, but Antipholus's absence and strange behavior cause her frustration and emotional distress.

Luciana

The unmarried younger sister of Adriana who becomes the confused recipient of Antipholus of Syracuse's affections. Thoughtful and idealistic, she offers counsel on patience and restraint in love, serving as a foil to her sister and highlighting different perspectives on marriage and devotion.

Balthazar

A fellow merchant and friend to Antipholus of Ephesus. He tries to defuse his friend's anger with reason.

Angelo

The Ephesian goldsmith whose delivery of a commissioned gold chain triggers a cascade of legal and financial complications for Antipholus of Ephesus.



Courtesan

The friend and mistress of Antipholus of Ephesus whose expectations and accusations further complicate the confusion surrounding Antipholus's identity.

Doctor Pinch

A doctor of mind and medicine, who is brought in to diagnose, heal, and possibly exorcise the seemingly mad Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus. His presence heightens the absurdity of the situation and adds to the play's physical and verbal comedy.

The Abbess/Emelia

The Abbess of Ephesus. She is eventually revealed to be the long-lost wife of Egeon and mother of the two Antipholuses. Her presence provides a moral compass for the finale, where her authority and compassion guide the characters toward truth and reconciliation.

Gaoler

The jailer and executioner serving Duke Solinus.

Officer

An officer of the law who's ordered to arrest Antipholus of Ephesus, enforcing the legal consequences that arise from the play's misunderstandings.

First Merchant

A merchant friend of Antipholus of Syracuse. He warns him to hide that he's from Syracuse if he wishes to remain safe.

Second Merchant

A merchant of Ephesus to whom Angelo is indebted. His claim escalates the legal and financial confusion surrounding the chain.

Servant

A servant of Adriana who warns her of Antipholus's apparent madness.



Scene-by-Scene Breakdown

1.1

- When the Syracusean merchant Egeon arrives in the rival city of Ephesus, he is arrested for trespassing and sentenced to death by Duke Solinus. Moved by Egeon's tragic story, the Duke grants him a single day to raise the ransom for his life. Egeon recounts how, years earlier, a shipwreck tore his family apart, claiming his wife, Emelia, one of his twin sons, and one of their twin servants. This disaster left Egeon to raise the remaining pair in Syracuse. However, when his surviving son reached adulthood, he set out to find his lost brother. Egeon is now in a final, desperate journey to find the son who never returned.

1.2

- Coincidentally, Antipholus of Syracuse has also arrived in Ephesus with his servant, Dromio of Syracuse. A fellow merchant warns them that anyone from Syracuse faces arrest in Ephesus and urges Antipholus to conceal his identity. After the merchant returns Antipholus's funds, he asks Dromio to secure the money at their inn. Left alone, Antipholus reflects on his loneliness and his search for his lost family. Soon after, Dromio of Ephesus appears, mistakes Antipholus of Syracuse for his own master, and orders him to come home to dinner, leaving Antipholus confused and uneasy.

2.1

- Adriana anxiously waits for her husband, Antipholus of Ephesus, who has not returned home for dinner. She argues with her sister, Luciana, about marriage, obedience, and whether a husband should be free to come and go as he pleases. Adriana's frustration reveals her growing jealousy and fear that her husband's absence signals infidelity. When Dromio of Ephesus returns without his master, he reports that Antipholus claimed not to know her and acted strangely. Convinced that something is wrong, Adriana orders Dromio to go back and bring her husband home.



2.2

- Antipholus of Syracuse reunites with his servant, Dromio of Syracuse, only to discover that neither can agree on what has just occurred. Each insists the other has behaved strangely, deepening Antipholus's suspicion that something unnatural is happening in Ephesus. Adriana and Luciana arrive and insist that Antipholus is Adriana's husband, despite his protests that he has only just arrived in the city. Believing himself caught in a dream or enchantment, Antipholus decides to go along with the situation until he understands the truth.

3.1

- Antipholus of Ephesus returns home with his friends, expecting to enter his house and eat dinner. Instead, he finds the doors locked and is refused entry by Dromio of Syracuse, who has been told to guard the house. Adriana, inside, also denies knowing him and insists he is not her husband, because her husband is inside. Humiliated and angry at being shut out of his own home, Antipholus threatens to break in. Persuaded by his friend, Balthazar, that public violence would damage his reputation, Antipholus leaves and vows to seek revenge by giving a gold chain meant for his wife to another woman instead.

3.2

- Inside the home, Luciana confronts Antipholus of Syracuse, believing him to be her brother-in-law, and urges him to treat Adriana with kindness. Antipholus denies being Adriana's husband and instead declares his love for Luciana. Alarmed by his sudden confession, Luciana leaves to inform her sister. Shortly after, Dromio of Syracuse arrives, shaken by his own encounter with a servant woman who claims to be his wife. Disturbed by these encounters, Antipholus resolves to flee Ephesus immediately. His departure is stalled by the goldsmith Angelo, who mistakenly gives him the gold chain intended for Antipholus of Ephesus, promising to collect payment from him later.



4.1

- Angelo is confronted by a merchant who demands immediate repayment of a debt. Angelo promises to settle the account once he collects the fee for the gold chain from Antipholus. When Antipholus of Ephesus appears, Angelo demands payment, which Antipholus angrily refuses because he has not received the chain. Amidst this dispute, Antipholus sends Dromio of Ephesus ahead to buy a rope, intending to punish his household for locking him out. As the argument over the chain boils over, Antipholus is arrested for the unpaid debt. In a final twist of fate, Dromio of Syracuse arrives and Antipholus, mistaking him for his own servant, orders him to rush to Adriana and retrieve bail money, setting the stage for further confusion.

4.2

- Luciana informs Adriana of Antipholus's strange denial of their marriage and his sudden profession of love for her. Adriana is torn between fury and heartbreak, certain that her husband is either unfaithful or losing his mind. Her distress is interrupted by the arrival of Dromio of Syracuse, who frantically reports Antipholus's arrest and demands money for his bail. Although baffled by the sudden legal crisis, Adriana provides the gold and sets out with Luciana, determined to confront her husband and restore order in her household.

4.3

- Meanwhile, Antipholus of Syracuse wanders the streets, bewildered as strangers greet him by name and offer him goods. When Dromio of Syracuse returns with the money meant to free Antipholus from arrest, their mutual confusion deepens. The tension peaks when a courtesan approaches, demanding either her ring, or the gold chain Antipholus promised her. Convinced that the city is full of deception and danger, Antipholus orders Dromio to secure passage on the next ship so they can escape before nightfall.



4.4

- Antipholus of Ephesus waits in custody, expecting the bail money from Adriana to arrive. Instead, Dromio of Ephesus returns with the requested rope, confirming Antipholus's belief that his entire household has conspired to mock him. When Adriana, Luciana, and others arrive, they interpret Antipholus's rage and confusion as signs of madness. Doctor Pinch is summoned to restrain him, and Antipholus is bound and hauled away. Adriana resolves to settle her husband's debts and uncover the truth behind her husband's arrest.

5.1

- The play reaches its climax outside a local abbey, where Angelo and the Second Merchant confront Antipholus of Syracuse over the unpaid chain he is visibly wearing. As the argument escalates, Adriana and Luciana intervene, insisting that Antipholus has gone mad. Seeking sanctuary, the Syracusean twins flee into the abbey, where the Abbess protects them and challenges Adriana's claims.

Duke Solinus arrives, leading Egeon to his execution. Adriana begs the Duke for justice, only to be interrupted by reports that her husband has escaped his bonds and is nearby. When the Ephesian twins appear, the confusion becomes absolute. Egeon recognizes Antipholus of Ephesus as his son, but Antipholus insists he has never seen him before. Finally the Abbess emerges with the Syracusean twins, revealing that there are two identical pairs. Then the ultimate truth is unveiled: the Abbess is Emelia, Egeon's long-lost wife. With the family finally reunited and the errors untangled, the Duke pardons Egeon, and leads everyone into the abbey to celebrate their miraculous journey.



Before the Performance



Pre Show Discussion Questions:

1. In this production many characters wear masks. People often “wear masks” in everyday life. They change how they act depending on expectations, roles, or environments. What are some masks that you put on? How do masks make us feel protected? How do they limit us?
2. This play begins with characters who have spent years searching the world for their lost family, driven by love, grief, and responsibility. What responsibilities do family members have toward one another during difficult times? How far should someone go to protect or reconnect with the people they love? How do family bonds shift as people grow and circumstances change?
3. This play explores the consequences, both funny and serious, of being mistaken for someone else. Can you remember a time when someone misunderstood who you were or assumed something untrue about you? What did that moment teach you about how we judge people, and how often we might be wrong?
4. The design of this production utilizes found objects and recycled materials because the characters have lost almost everything else. How can creativity become a survival tool or a source of resilience when circumstances are difficult? Have you ever used imagination or resourcefulness to handle a challenging situation?
5. In this staging, some characters are treated as outsiders the moment they appear, not because of anything they’ve done, but simply because they are unfamiliar. Being different or new isn’t negative, yet people often respond with fear or judgment. How do these reactions shape our relationships with others? What helps us look past differences and recognize the dignity and humanity we all share?



Meet the Cast!



Zay Williams

Antipholus of Syracuse, Egeon, Pinch

From: Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Studied/Trained: Dobbins Conservatory of Theatre & Dance at Southeast Missouri State University

Three Favorite Past Credits: Brutus in *Julius Caesar*, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Robby in *Dontrell Who Kissed the Sea*

What did you think about Shakespeare when you were a student? Has that changed?

"When I was in high school I didn't have much exposure to Shakespeare other than learning about him in English Class. Now and after going to college for acting, learning more about him, and performing one of his plays I've realized that his text isn't out of my reach; it is something I can comprehend and feel."

What is your favorite comedy? (film, play, tv show, etc!)

"The play *Noises Off*, is one of my favorite comedic plays!"

Emily Michelle Walton

Adriana, Second Merchant

From: Chicago, Illinois

Studied/Trained: University of Cincinnati, College Conservatory of Music

Three Favorite Past Credits: Gertrude in *Hamlet*, Camillo in *The Winter's Tale*, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

What excites you most working with Shakespeare?

"The language! Approaching Shakespeare's text as an actor is a bit like decoding a puzzle. The key to every moment is in the text: little things like punctuation, repetition, or the rhythm of the poetry are clues to how your character might be thinking or feeling."

What's something you have learned about yourself through acting?

"I'm braver than I think. It took me many years, but acting taught me how to push myself into the unknown and go before I'm ready."



Christian Watts

Antipholus of Ephesus, Emelia

From: Alabama

Studied/Trained: Jacksonville State University

Three Favorite Past Credits: Patrick Star in *Spongebob: The Musical*, Duke Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, and Theseus/Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

What is your favorite part of the production?

"The read-through, because I love meeting people that I have never met, and just seeing other cast members putting in the work is so inspiring to watch."

What's something you have learned about yourself through acting?

"Always take care of yourself. Don't be afraid to give yourself grace and ease for all the work you've done. Nothing wrong with taking a break."



Meet the Cast!



Jeric Gutierrez

Dromio of Syracuse, Gaoler, Officer

From: Sacramento, California

Studied/Trained: University of California, Irvine

Three Favorite Past Credits: Wilbur in *Charlotte's Web*, Winston Smith in 1984 and Jean in *Julie: After Strindberg*

How do you connect with characters whose experiences are very different from your own?

"I try to substitute the character's circumstance with the closest thing that I have experienced. For example, I have never been torn apart from a twin brother like Dromio, but I know what having a hole where "that" person in your life used to be feels like, and I know how hard I would fight to get them back."

Why did you want to become an actor?

"My high school drama teacher told me that I didn't have to raise my hand or ask for permission to make a choice on stage. Theatre class was the first time where I felt free to make decisions on my own regardless of whether or not the choice worked."

Who or what are your comedic inspirations?

"Michael Shur (Writer: The Office, Parks and Rec, The Good Place), Edgar Wright (Film Director: Shaun of the Dead, Baby Driver, Last Night in Soho), and the TV show *Severance*."

Mikki Pagdonsolan

Dromio of Ephesus, Servant

From: Southern California

Studied/Trained: California State University, Fullerton

Three Favorite Past Credits: Eponine in *Les Misérables*, Gigi Van Tran in *Miss Saigon*, and Queen of the Night in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*

Do you have a favorite Comedy of Errors or Shakespeare quote?

"And now, let's go hand in hand, not one before another.' I love the thought of people treating each other as equals regardless of their similarities and/or differences."

What is a challenge you've faced as an actor and how did you work through it?

"There have been times when I felt like I am not good enough, but I have learned to accept that I am on my journey as an actor/artist and not to judge myself for where I am now. I also receive a lot of support from my friends and family, who have encouraged me and lifted me up when I am hard on myself."

What's something you have learned about yourself through acting?

"Starting anything new can be challenging, but once you commit the time to learn and grow, that is when the fun begins!"





Meet the Cast!



Giuseppe Michael Pipicella

Duke Solinus, First Merchant, Angelo, Courtesan

From: Florence, Italy

Studied/Trained: BA in Theatre Performance, University of North Carolina Wilmington; MFA in Acting, University of Central Florida; one year abroad at Rose Bruford College (UK)

Three Favorite Past Credits: Mercutio & Fight Director in *Romeo and Juliet*, Professor Otto Lidenbrock in *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and Duke of Buckingham in *Richard III*

What was your first exposure to Shakespeare?

"My first exposure to Shakespeare was actually back home in Florence. My mom was working as a staff member for an American theatrical company based there, and they produced *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She had to drag me to it against my will because I thought Shakespeare was going to be so boring and definitely not engaging for a 7 year old. I then proceeded to laugh my face off and went to see the show 4 times in a row. I never thought about or engaged with Shakespeare again until I was in college in the US, and now I credit that production with my undying love for the Bard's work."

What is your favorite part about performing?

"My favorite part about performing is feeling the audience's energy! Having you there reacting to us in real time is such a thrill. The best moments are when we are all one, experiencing a theatrical situation collectively."

Gianna Profano Luciana, Balthazar

From: Lebanon, New Jersey

Studied/Trained: NYU Tisch School of the Arts (NYC), The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art (London)

Three Favorite Past Credits: Lilli Vanessi/Kate in *Kiss Me Kate*, Patsy Cline in *Always...Patsy Cline*, and Ophelia in *Hamlet*

What is something you have learned about yourself through acting?

"I credit so much of who I am to my early exposure to theatre education. I was very shy growing up. Acting instilled a sense of confidence in me that has allowed me to pursue my dreams, overcome challenges, and engage with others in a way that I never thought possible when I was a child. I believe that acting is a powerful tool for cultivating self-esteem, which is why I am particularly passionate about bringing theatre education to students."



How do you connect with characters whose experiences are very different from your own?

"One of my favorite things about acting is the practice of empathy that it requires. The best way for me to connect with characters whose experiences are different from mine is to start from a place of understanding, and work to see things from their point of view without judgement. I think empathy is one of the strongest lessons that theatre has to teach actors and audience members alike."



Meet the Tour and Stage Managers

The Tour Manager and Stage Manager are essential to keeping everything running smoothly while the production is on the road. The Tour Manager helps make sure the company is safe and comfortable as they travel from school to school. The Stage Manager focuses on keeping the show running and they support the actors in adapting the performance to each new space. They also track props and costumes, and ensure the story is told clearly, safely, and consistently at every performance.



Alyssa Peters Tour Manager

From: Arlington, TX (Yeehaw!)

Studied/Trained: BA in Theatre & Performance, Minor in Film & Directing, Oklahoma City University; MA in Nonprofit Leadership with an Arts Administration focus

Three Favorite Past Credits: Pamela in *Head Over Heels*, Claudia in *The Bluest Eye*, and Motormouth Maybelle in *Hairspray*

What is your favorite part of being a Tour Manager?

“Taking care of the team’s needs and wants! I’m a fierce advocate for people, especially for folks I work closely with. My favorite part of being the tour manager is making sure that everyone is happy, healthy, comfortable, and thriving!”

What’s the biggest challenge you face as a Tour Manager, and how did you overcome it?

“Taking care of my needs just as much as I take care of others. I tend to put others’ needs before my own, which has led to burnout in the past. I overcome it by having daily check-ins with myself to gauge my thoughts/feelings and meeting with my therapist once a week!”

Fiona Misiura Stage Manager

From: Hightstown, NJ

Studied/Trained: BA in History/Theatre, Ramapo College of New Jersey

Three Favorite Past Credits: *Awake in the Dark* with The Flea, *Eleanor and Alice* with Urban Stages, and *Henry IV* with Utah Shakespeare Festival Shakespeare in the Schools Tour

What is your favorite part of being a Stage Manager?

“I love getting to be a part of the entire process, from before rehearsals even start to the closing of the show. This is the only role in theatre that gets to be there the entire time.”

How do you help keep everything running smoothly behind the scenes?

“Throughout the tour, I am here to make sure that the show is staying in line with the director’s vision, no matter the challenges we face on the tour. I work with actors to solve problems as they come up. I am here to fix props, costumes, and scenery as needed.”





Meet the Creative Team!



Marco Antonio Vega

Director

From: Provo, UT

Studied/Trained: BA, Southern Utah University; MFA, The University of San Diego

Three Favorite Past Credits: "My very first season at USF I played the Second Merchant in a Western *Comedy of Errors*. In 2021 I was able to perform in *Comedy of Errors* again as Antipholus of Ephesus with a 1970's *Mamma Mia* vibe. Both were fun for different reasons! But maybe the favorite was playing "as himself" in the 2017 production of *William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play (abridged)*."

What was your first exposure to Shakespeare?

"My first experience with Shakespeare was auditioning to get into the Shakespeare Competition team in Jr High. I used Sonnet 116 to audition, on the advice of my older sister, and the rest is history. I don't believe I would be acting or directing if it wasn't for the High School Shakespeare Competition."

What makes you excited about this production?

"Directing! I had the privilege to act on this tour twice previously, and I couldn't be more excited to join the process again from this side of the table."

What's one thing you hope students take away from this production?

"I want students to say, 'I can do that.' I want students to see the fun and magic we can create as an ensemble, I want them to be inspired, I want them to gather and create!"

Ben Hohman

Scenic Designer

From: Ohio, but I've been in Utah full-time for 25 years

Studied/Trained: University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music

Three Favorite Past Credits: Scenic Co-designer for *Dear Jack, Dear Louise* USF, Float Designer Storybook Cavalcade Parade, USF Educational Tour designer over 20 years

What was your first exposure to Shakespeare?

"I remember seeing a crazy production of *A Midsummer's Night Dream* at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park when I was 19, where Puck rappelled from the ceiling of the theater in a tutu playing a saxophone. The color, the visual world, and the language all enthralled me, and I was hooked."

What excites you most about designing?

"Working with the director to find a way to physically represent their ideas on stage in a way that helps the performers to tell the story clearly to the audience."

What's something people may not realize about your role in this production?

"As we design and build the scenery and props, we have to think about not only how it helps tell the story, but also how to make those objects survive transportation from city to city for months. We also consider how they can be used in different venues from schools, to theaters to community centers, and more."





Meet the Creative Team!



Marielle Boneau Properties Designer

From: Cedar City, UT

Studied/Trained: BA Theater, University of Notre Dame; MFA Drama, University of Virginia; 29 years in props at USF

Three Favorite Past Credits: Scenic Co-designer *Dear Jack, Dear Louise* with USF, Properties Supervisor *Twelve Angry Men* with USF, and Scenic Design *Six Degrees of Separation* with ND

What was your first exposure to Shakespeare?

"In high school we went to a theater in Odessa, TX to see *Twelfth Night* performed in a Globe-style space. A local oil company sponsored the trip so we also had to go to an oil museum while in Odessa. I enjoyed the performance more than the museum."

What is your favorite part of being a designer?

"We make a lot of props that look great on stage, but are not at all what you would expect when looked at up close. They are either much simpler than expected or made of odd things that we had in our shop. Successfully creating that 'Theater Magic' is a great feeling."

What's one thing you hope students take away from this production?

"That you really only need a story. How you tell that story is up to you and can be full fledged or with just a few things you find. The words are what is important."

Diana Girtain Costume Designer

From: Currently in Cedar City, but have lived in NY, NJ, VA, SC, KS, MN, IL, & GA

Studied/Trained: BA in Theatre, James Madison University; MFA in Costume Design, Florida State University

Three Favorite Past Credits: Costume Designer *USF Greenshow 2025*, Draper for *HMS Pinafore* with Guthrie Theatre, Draper for *Antony & Cleopatra* with USF

What was your first exposure to Shakespeare?

"My 7th grade English class read *Romeo & Juliet*. I'm still in contact with my English teacher."

What makes you excited about this production?

"I love the challenge of creating distinctive characters with very few actors."

What's one thing you hope students take away from this production?

"That art can be made with objects around you. You don't need expensive paints or fabric, just use your imagination."

How do you approach bringing Shakespeare to student audiences?

"I pretty much do the same thing I would do for a normal play. I think kids are brilliant and we don't need to simplify things for students. They understand even the nuances of Shakespeare."





Bringing the Vision to Life



Directors Vision

“Once I understood I wanted to highlight the tragedy in Act 1 Scene 1 to elevate the comedy throughout the rest of the play, I decided to lean into the refugee story. In Utah and across the southwest, we have a history of refugees who came to settle; pioneers who made their way into the unknown searching for something. To bring that story into the modern context, I imagined a pioneer handcart, made from modern materials. Maybe if our audience sees something familiar in our outcast, we can stop thinking of them as an outcast.”

-Director, Marco Antonio Vega

Design

“The design for this production started with the idea that all the performers were refugees traveling to meet up and perform this show. On their journey, they would gather junk and everyday objects, and once they arrived, they would use those objects to help tell the story. To make this concept accessible and show schools that they could also do this type of production, we aimed to spend as little on materials as we could; instead using donated or found objects. We asked volunteers to save their recycling, and in ten days we had collected hundreds of pieces of material: bottles, cardboard boxes, paper board, food containers, etc. This became the base for our design.

The overarching idea is that with a little bit of imagination and some grit anyone can tell a good story. Boil down the ideas to a simple thought and find objects to tell that story in the most theatrical way possible.”

-Scenic Designer, Ben Hohman



Process Photos



Can you spot these everyday items like egg cartons, bottles, cans, and paper towel rolls in the costumes?



We utilized old toys, and other broken items to decorate costumes and props.



This orange juice bottle was cut in half and turned into a mask, with its handle acting as a nose!



Adriana's dress was created with old denim, scrap fabric, and paper.



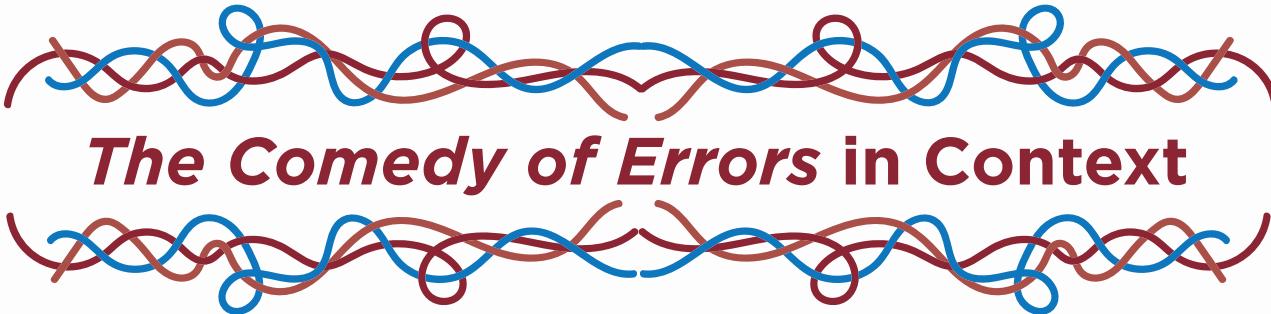
Antipholus's vest is made up of old ties, which were cut and woven together to create a bold and zany pattern.



The cart is made of all scrap material, including panels from an organ that sustained water damage in a flooded basement.



Many of the masks, including this fox mask, were constructed with scrap cardboard and glue.



The Comedy of Errors in Context

Greek and Roman Comedy

The Greeks and Romans are often credited with introducing theatre as we know it to the Western world! In fact, Shakespeare took many of his most popular stories from Greek and Roman literature, including Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Seneca's *Ten Tragedies*, and Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, to name a few.

The Comedy of Errors is no exception to this. Shakespeare drew very closely from a play called *The Menaechmi* by the Roman playwright Plautus, written in the 2nd century B.C. In this play, there are also two twin boys (both named Menaechmus) who are the sons of a Syracusean Merchant and his wife, until they are separated at birth by a storm. The Syracusean brother goes in search of his twin and arrives in his city, leading to mix-ups of mistaken identity involving merchants, a piece of jewelry, and entanglements with a courtesan and his brother's wife.

The biggest difference between *The Menaechmi* and *The Comedy of Errors* is that Shakespeare adds a parallel set of twins in the servants Dromio, doubling the chaos. He also makes Adriana, the wife, a much more prominent character and adds her sister Luciana. Finally, Shakespeare makes the father, Egeon, a central character, and it is his tragedy that frames the comedy.

Twins and comedic hi-jinks are also at the heart of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. So why did Shakespeare like twins so much? Shakespeare had three children, two of whom were fraternal twins, so we can assume this is one of the reasons the twin concept is so important to him.



Commedia dell'Arte

When Shakespeare was a young boy, it was popular for traveling troupes of actors to tour shows to villages and communities in the countryside, very similar to what we do with our Shakespeare in Schools Tour. A popular form of theatre that Shakespeare may have seen when he lived in Stratford-upon-Avon was Commedia dell'arte, or Commedia for short.

Commedia dell'arte started in Italy in the 1500s, almost a century before Shakespeare. It quickly spread all over Europe, and Commedia troupes remained popular in England for a long time. Commedia was so popular because it combined well-known stock characters and archetypes with improvisation and strong ensemble work. Each character in Commedia has a specific role, name, physicality, and mask. Actors could then take these stock characters, mix them with a few familiar scenarios, and create fresh plots and performances every time!

For example, almost every Commedia performance included stock characters such as an older, more mature couple; a younger, more naïve set of lovers; a foolish servant character called Zanni; an old merchant called Pantalone; and a haughty doctor called Il Dottore, to name a few. Do some of these character descriptions sound familiar? Well, they should!



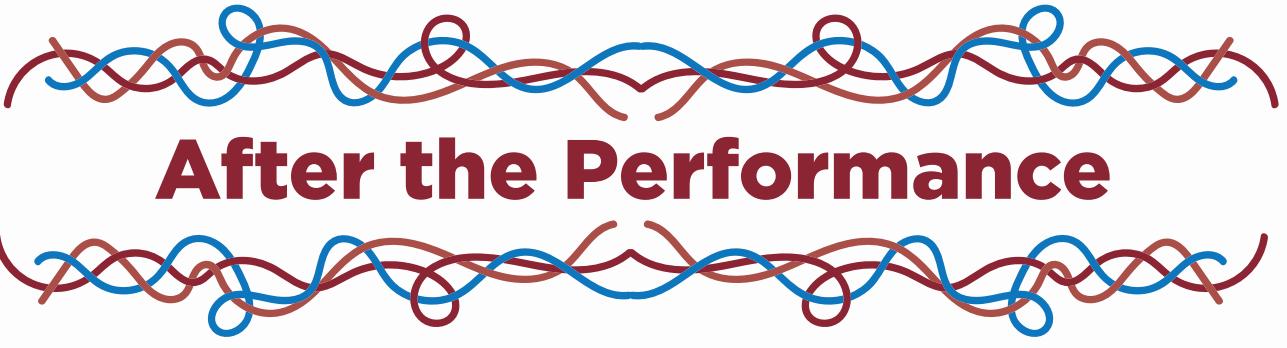
Shakespeare's Comedies

When we think of a young Shakespeare reading those Roman comedies in school or watching touring Commedia groups in the town square, it's not hard to imagine how a young boy from Stratford-upon-Avon grew up to write so many plays we still love and laugh at today.

The Comedy of Errors is one of Shakespeare's most popular takes on Commedia and Roman comedy. He used many of the plot elements of Greek and Roman comedy, as well as character archetypes and stock scenarios found in Commedia to build the plot of *The Comedy of Errors*. As you study and watch the play, pay attention to these characters and events. Can you spot the archetypes or tropes we've described? If you look closely, they may even remind you of characters you recognize from popular media today!

We are still inspired by these early forms of comedy in the movies, TV, and theatre being made today and we often don't even realize it! Think about your favorite rom-com or sitcom: is there a main love interest who experiences many setbacks before the couple finally ends up together? What about a quirky best friend who seems simple but is probably smarter than the lead? Or a group of goofy lackeys who mess up every task they're given? A jerk who goes around trying to prove they're better than everyone else and probably wants to win over the main love interest? A teacher or parent who's super uptight or overly protective? All of these are great examples of timeless comedy tropes!

Shakespeare's use of these familiar character types found in Roman theatre and Commedia helps explain why *The Comedy of Errors* still feels recognizable and funny to us today.



After the Performance

Post Show Discussion Questions:

1. During the production, characters literally removed their masks as their true identities were revealed and relationships were restored. How did the use of physical masks change your understanding of each character? Were there moments where the mask made a character seem more limited or more powerful?
2. Think back to a moment in the play when a character confidently believed something about someone only for it to be completely mistaken. Which mix-up did you find the most entertaining or surprising? After seeing how easily the characters misjudged each other, what reflections do you have about how we form judgments or jump to conclusions about people?
3. Throughout the show, the ensemble turned simple items like fabric scraps, boxes, sticks, and trash into the setting, props, and characters of the story. How did these resourceful choices help build the world of the play and what do they suggest about creativity as a tool for resilience or survival?
4. The performers in this production arrive carrying only what they can hold, yet by the end, they have created a community onstage. What moments in the show illustrated the difference between being “new” and being “excluded”? What helped the characters finally accept one another and form a sense of belonging?



Classroom Activities and Lesson Plans

Commedia Character Matching

Exploring Archetypes, Commedia dell'arte, and Creative Analysis

Overview:

As discussed earlier in the study guide (see pages 22 and 23), *The Comedy of Errors* is one of Shakespeare's most popular takes on Commedia dell'arte. In this activity, students compare Commedia dell'arte stock characters (Il Capitano, Zanni, Pantalone, Il Dottore, etc.) with characters from *The Comedy of Errors* to explore how Shakespeare borrowed, blended, and adapted familiar archetypes.

Activity Flow:

Below is a chart listing some Commedia stock characters, their descriptions, and *The Comedy of Errors* characters they most closely resemble. You can print the chart and cut out each box for students to play a matching game in groups or individually.

Students may disagree with some of these matches, which is encouraged. Shakespeare never told us exactly what he imagined, and he combined multiple Commedia plots and character types within this play. These descriptions are best guesses and are absolutely up for debate.

Encourage students to think back to the performance they saw:

- What do you think Shakespeare maintained from the Commedia tradition?
- What did he change or complicate?
- How does adding twin characters heighten or disrupt the archetypes?



Post Activity Reflection and Discussion

Prompts:

- Are there situations in your own life where you feel expected to act like a certain “type”? How does that role affect how you behave or how others see you?
- If someone only observed you in one setting like school or playing a sport what archetype might they assign you? How complete or incomplete would that picture be?
- Commedia characters were designed so audiences could recognize them instantly. What are the benefits and risks of being easily “read” by others?
- How does this activity change the way you think about character not just in theatre, but in everyday life?

Ways to Extend and Adapt for your Classroom:

Performance Challenge

- Partner this activity with the *Commedia Physicality* activity to give students a chance to embody the character types discussed. Invite students to explore how they breath, where they hold tension, and what part of their body they lead from changes when playing a *Comedy of Errors* character through a specific Commedia archetype.

Modern Archetype Match

- Invite students to think of modern characters from movies, TV shows, books, or real life that fit into Commedia archetypes. How are characters that fit into the same archetype similar or different?

Design Connection

- Ask students to imagine what a mask, costume, or prop for their chosen archetype might look like. How could visual design help communicate the character quickly to an audience? For deeper exploration, this activity can be paired with the *Found-Object Mask Making* activity.

COMMEDIA STOCK CHARACTER	COMMEDIA DESCRIPTION	THE COMEDY OF ERRORS CHARACTER
Il Capitano	The swaggering outsider on a mission. He puts on a facade of confidence and nobility, but may be compensating for his insecurities. Quick to anger and quick to infatuation.	Antipholus of Syracuse
Zanni	The foolish comedic servant. Preoccupied with finding his next meal, making folks laugh, and pleasing his master. Despite his seeming simplicity, he has moments of surprising wit and wisdom.	Dromios
1 st Actor	The powerful and passionate partner of the 1 st Actress. He is high class, well-educated, and a popular city man who is used to getting what he wants. This unchecked pride may have consequences for him.	Antipholus of Ephesus
1 st Actress	The most powerful woman onstage. She is high class, well-educated, and opinionated. She and her love interest, the 1 st Actor, have a fiery and sometimes contentious relationship.	Adriana

2nd Actress

The young lover. She is the younger, demure, and naive counterpoint to the more mature 1st Actress. She is eager for love and though high class and educated, inexperienced to the ways of court and courtship.

Luciana

Magnifico

The ruler of the city where our story is set. He is an intimidating force who knows the law and will execute it. He often swoops in at the end to enact justice or grant pardon.

Duke Solinus

Pantalone

The greedy merchant. He is high class, but still fixated on keeping and getting more money. He'll be your friend until you owe him money.

Angelo

Il Dottore

The pompous academic. He pretends to know a lot, but may be making up everything. He thinks he is the final authority on everything.

Doctor Pinch



Commedia Physicality

Exploring Movement, Character, and Physical Storytelling

Overview:

How we move, breathe, where we hold tension, and how we carry ourselves communicates information before we ever speak. In Commedia dell'arte, these physical choices were distilled into recognizable character types that audiences could identify instantly. Shakespeare drew on these traditions in *The Comedy of Errors*, using physical storytelling to heighten comedy and clarify relationships as discussed earlier in the study guide.

This activity invites students to look at some Commedia dell'arte characters and their movements to explore how physical choices shape character.

Activity Flow:

1. Finding Your Own Physicality

Begin by giving students space to move freely around the room as themselves. There is no “right” way to move. This phase is about awareness of one's self, not performance.

After students have been moving around the space for a bit invite students to notice things about themselves:

- Where do you notice yourself breathing? Is it in your shoulders and chest or deeper in your stomach and diaphragm? Do you take full long breaths or more short shallow ones?
- Where do you hold tension as you stand and walk? Is it in your shoulders? Neck? Hips? Is your posture upright or relaxed?
- Where do you lead from? In other words, what body part moves first when you walk? Is it your head? Maybe your chest or hips? What about your feet?

Have the students stop moving and invite them to reflect on if they have ever paid much attention to how they move before. Explain how these things can be clues about ourselves and deciding how a character moves in a space is a powerful tool for building a character.



2. Exploring Commedia Character Physicality

Now give students the opportunity to try out the clearly defined physical traits of different Commedia dell'arte characters. Invite them to focus on how they breathe, where they hold tension, and which part of the body changes.

Do this by inviting your students to move continuously around the space while you read the description of a particular Commedia character.

Character descriptions and key physical attributes are listed below and invite them to change their breath, where they carry their tension and what part of the body they lead from as you read the description of each. After giving time to move around the space as a particular character tell them to “Shake off the (insert character type here) and return to your natural walk” before going to the next character.

Commedia Characters:

The Lover (2nd Actor or Actress)

Description: These characters are our young lovers. They're youthful, full of energy, somewhat shy, and ready to fall in love. Think Disney Princess/Princes Romeo and Juliet, or your favorite sweet rom-com couple. In Commedia, the young lovers are the only characters we're looking at who don't wear a mask, so your face needs to reflect the character too!

- **Breath:** The lovers are all full of sighs and pining. If they happen to catch sight of their lover they may gasp with surprise or sigh in disappointment if they turn away. As they move around the space they take full deep breaths that open them up to the world, and release them with dramatic longing!
- **Tension:** The lovers are usually very flowing and carefree as they go through the world. As nobles they have good posture, but it's still light and up and airy. However, they may have moments where they feel shy when approaching their crush, or insecure when trying to avoid unwanted attention.
- **Lead:** The lovers are driven by their daydreamy personality and search for each other. They lead with their chest because their hearts are in charge! Think of a sting pulling your heart up and forward.



The Captain/Il Capitano:

Description: Lets look at our swaggering noble man, Il Capitan! As his name suggests, Il Capitan is a military man. He's always looking for an adventure or a fight, although he can actually be quite a scaredy cat in any real confrontation. He's always trying to put on a front of confidence and fake his way around.

- **Breath:** Chest puffed out. Big full breaths! He may even scoff or growl at those he views as beneath him.
- **Tension:** As a noble and a military man, he has a very stiff, upright posture. He stands with his legs far apart to take up a lot of space.
- **Lead:** He leads with his hips in wide, heavy strides. Imagine that you've got big boots on and a sword on your belt that you want everyone to see and be intimidated by.

Zanni:

Description: Zanni are the lowest class of characters, and they act as a servant to the noblemen. The traditional Zanni is very observant, but tries not to be observed unless he's entertaining or flattering the nobles. He's very active and even acrobatic as he explores the world, gets into mischief, and strives to please his employer.

- **Breath:** Short and shallow breaths that are mostly in his shoulders. He's one of the chattiest characters, but may only speak in nonsense and silly sounds.
- **Tension:** Zanni keeps low to the ground, with his knees bent and apart, feet splayed, and elbows bent and lifted. Think chicken!
- **Lead:** He leads with his nose, as though he's sniffing out his next meal or opportunity to make some extra money. His head is always moving quickly and looking around.

3. Interactive Character Play

Now that students have explored several Commedia character types, invite them to choose one character to continue exploring. As they move through the space, encourage students to interact with one another without speaking, responding in character as they cross paths.



Prompt students to explore power dynamics and relationships through movement:

- Do you move out of someone's way or stand your ground?
- Do you bow formally, flirt, or puff yourself up?
- Do you follow, avoid, intimidate, or beg?
- Who takes up space? Who gives it up?

Remind students that there is no correct interaction. The goal is to discover how character, status, and relationship can be communicated through physical choices alone.

Post Activity Reflection and Discussion Prompts:

- How did changing your physicality affect the way you felt or behaved?
- Which physical choices were easiest or hardest to maintain?
- What did you notice about power, status, or relationships through movement alone?
- How does this activity change the way you watch physical comedy or performance?

Ways to Extend and Adapt for your Classroom:

Connect Back to the Production

- Pause between character explorations and invite students to connect physical traits to characters from *The Comedy of Errors* for example:
 - What kind of Zanni energy shows up in the Dromios?
 - How might Luciana or Adriana embody elements of the Lovers?

Freeze & Guess

- Have a student secretly select one of the characters then freeze in a pose. Observers guess the archetype based on posture and energy alone.

Seated Option

- If needed, students can explore physicality using only the upper body, facial expression, and gestures while seated.



Found-Object Mask Making

Exploring Identity, Creativity, and Visual Theatrical Storytelling

Overview:

In this production of *The Comedy of Errors*, masks play a central role. Each mask represents a role or identity the characters wear. The performers themselves are imagined as refugees who have lost nearly everything and must use whatever materials they can find to tell their story. Their masks are created from recycled or found objects things like cardboard, fabric scraps, wire, plastic packaging, broken toys, and other everyday items.

This activity invites students to explore a similar creative process. By designing their own found-object masks, students consider how identity is shaped, how labels influence perception, and how art can transform simple materials into powerful tools for storytelling.

Material Needed:

- Found or recycled objects (cardboard pieces, paper bags, plastic containers, bottle caps, twine, fabric scraps, broken costume jewelry, sticks, wire, netting, etc.)
- Basic craft supplies to attach objects (tape, glue, scissors, markers, string)
- Optional: Printed mask template for each student to use as a base
- Optional: Hot glue guns, hole punch, elastic bands

Invite students to bring materials from home! Items like packaging, cardboard, or objects that would otherwise be thrown away are great.

Activity Flow:

1. Gather and Experiment with Materials

Students begin by sorting through the found materials and experimenting with shapes, textures, and colors.

Encourage them to think like the performers in the production:

- How can ordinary objects be transformed?
- What does each material suggest about a character or identity?
- How can limitations spark creativity?



2. Construct the Mask

After giving students time to explore and draw inspiration from the materials, invite them to assemble their masks by layering, shaping, and combining objects. Teachers may choose to give students full creative freedom or set specific parameters, depending on classroom needs. See the Extension Option: *Choosing an Identity or Role* below for suggestions on how to guide students' design choices. Below can also be found images of masks used in the production which can be shared for inspiration.

Once masks are complete, invite volunteers to share their work with the class and explain the design choices they made.

Post Activity Reflection and Discussion Prompts:

- What mask do you think you wear most often in your daily life? When do you take it off and who gets to see what's underneath?
- If someone judged you only by the mask you present, what might they assume? How accurate would those assumptions be?
- What material did you choose for your mask? Why did you choose it, and how did it inspire your design?
- How did wearing your mask change the way you moved or acted? What does that reveal about how roles shape behavior?

Ways to Extend and Adapt for your Classroom:

Choosing an Identity or Role

- Before creating their mask, invite students to choose an identity or role to represent. This could be inspired by the play or Commedia dell'arte, based on a real-life role they play (for example student, sibling, teammate, or caregiver), or an embodiment of an abstract concept such as hope, confusion, strength, chaos, or curiosity. This extension helps students connect their mask more directly to the themes and characters explored in the production.

Performance Challenge

- After creating their masks, invite students to put them on and create a short scene using only movement and gesture, just as the ensemble uses physical storytelling in the production.



Identity Flip

Students create one mask of how they feel they are seen and a second mask representing how they *wish* to be seen. Students can then reflect on or discuss how they are different and similar.

We'd love to see the masks you create!

Share photos by emailing pictures to teachingartist@bard.org
or posting on social media with **#UtahShakes**.

Mask Template:

