**Education Resources
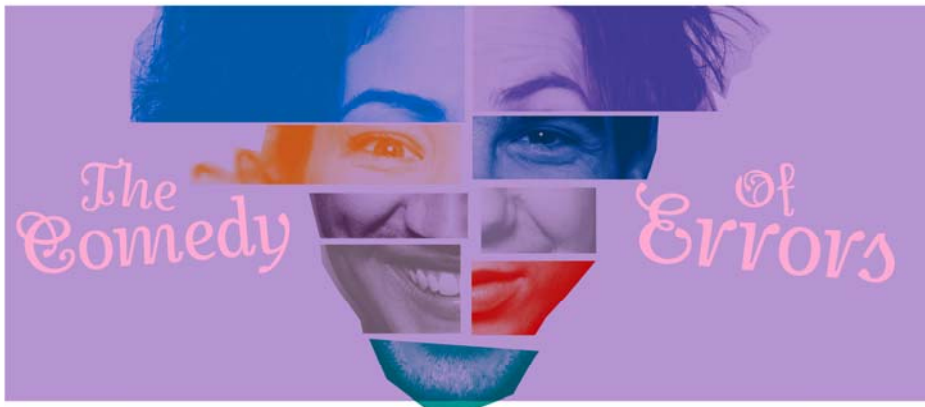Pre-Production**

STC Ed presents

THE COMEDY OF ERRORS

By William Shakespeare

Education Resource compiled by Education manager **Naomi Edwards,** Education Coordinator **Toni Murphy,**

Editor **Lucy Goleby,** Contributors **Jeffrey Dawson, Michael Mitchell**and **Elizabeth Surbey**

KEY

→ AIM of exercise or section + Extension Exercises ▶ You Tube Download and watch

Drama Exercises English Exercises ▶ Play online

ABOUT SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about

ABOUT STCED

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/stced/about

ABOUT THE RESIDENTS

Sydney Theatre Company's permanent ensemble of performers commenced work at the Company's home base, The Wharf, in June 2009. The Residents, formed as an evolution of the original STC Actors Company, are nine actors employed full time by Sydney Theatre Company with a particular focus on the development of theatre while working across all aspects of the Company's program.

Audiences have the opportunity to enjoy the work of the ensemble in a variety of ways. The Residents are occasionally seen in their own Main Stage shows and just as importantly they work in the Company's Next Stage, Back Stage and Education streams, moving regularly between these different areas.

With the exploration, shaping and fine-tuning of new works as a guiding objective, it is anticipated that The Residents will provide an invaluable resource to playwrights, and directors and that the results of their pioneering work will benefit the whole Australian theatre scene.

The Residents occupy a central role in the day-to-day operations of the Company and work very closely with Associate Director Tom Wright as well as Artistic Directors Andrew Upton and CateBlanchett. The actors were chosen after a lengthy round of auditions and interviews, and were selected for their range of skills, their history of devising new work, their abilities to collaborate with writers and directors, and their innate curiosity.

CREATIVE TEAM

Director – Charmian Gradwell

Sydney Theatre Company's Voice and Text Coach, Charmian Gradwell, has worked as an actor, director, voice/text specialist and movement director on productions worldwide. Prior to joining Sydney Theatre Company, Charmian worked with the Royal Shakespeare Company's Voice and Text department in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, from 2005-2008. She is a strong advocate for bringing the power of Shakespeare's language into different environments, including schools, prisons, private gardens, market squares and puppetry festivals.

CAST – THE RESIDENTS

Alice Ansara

Cameron Goodall

Ursula Mills

Julia Ohannessian

Zindzi Okenyo

Richard Pyros

Sophie Ross

Tahki Saul

Brett Stiller

> "
>
> **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**
>
> Every why hath a wherefore
>
> Act Two, Scene Two
> The Comedy of Errors
> "
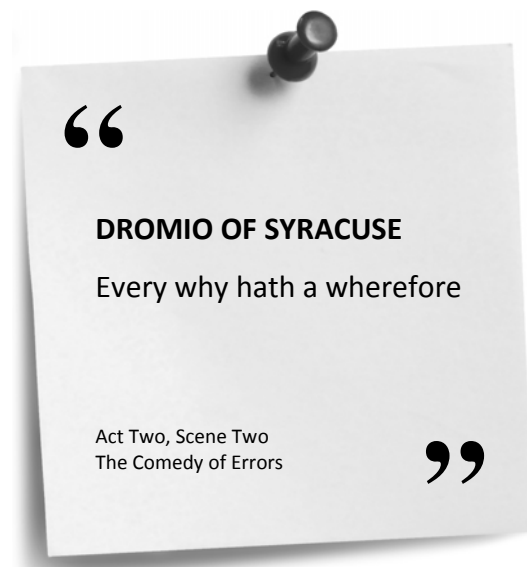
THEMES

Identical twins, mistaken identity, self-awareness, family ties, belonging, jealousy, time, love independence, master/servant relationship, financial debt, marital obligation, coincidence

The play opens with Aegeon, a merchant of Syracuse, being arrested in Ephesus because of enmity between Ephesus and Syracuse. Aegeon tells Solinus, the Duke of Ephesus, his tale: he was shipwrecked many years ago while sailing with his wife, Aemilia, and two pairs of identical twins—their twin sons, both named Antipholus, and twin servants, both named Dromio. In the course of the storm, his wife, one of their sons, and one their servants, were lost. At eighteen, Aegeon allowed the remaining Antipholus and Dromio to leave Syracuse for Ephesus to search for their long-lost twins, at which point both of them disappeared as well. After five years, Aegeon has come to Ephesus to find them.

Solinus, moved by the old man's tale, postpones Aegeon's sentence; Aegeon has until nightfall to produce a ransom, or he will be put to death. At this point, Antipholus of Syracuse arrives in Ephesus, and the farce commences as everyone—including the twins themselves—confuses the identities of the twins. Antipholus of Syracuse ends up invited to dinner at the home of Antipholus of Ephesus and dines with his twin's wife, Adriana. Meanwhile, Angelo, a merchant, gives a gold chain commissioned by Antipholus of Ephesus to Antipholus of Syracuse by mistake, telling him he'll come back later for payment. When Antipholus of Ephesus refuses to pay later on, Angelo has him arrested. All this time, Adriana and her sister, Luciana, are convinced that Antipholus and Dromio (of Ephesus) have gone mad, which leads them to forcibly restrain them and take them to a doctor.

Of course, when Adriana later encounters Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, she thinks they've escaped from the doctor. The pair from Syracuse are forced to flee into a nearby abbey for refuge. In the meantime, Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus do escape from the doctor, and arrive to petition the Duke as Aegeon is being led to his death. In the midst of everyone trying to tell their varying accounts of the day, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse arrive with the abbess—who turns out to be Aemilia, Aegeon's long-lost wife. The twins all sort out their stories in the presence of the Duke. In the end, Aegeon is released from his death sentence and reunited with his wife and sons, Antipholus of Syracuse is set to marry Luciana, and all has been put to right. www.bardweb.net/plays/errors.html

Shakespeare's comedies, as well as providing entertainment, reveal customs, traditions, prejudices, specific modes of thought and behaviour and beliefs typical of the Elizabethan period. While analysing the structure of *The Comedy of Errors*, you cannot avoid historical and political connotations. In order to understand how Shakespeare's society as a whole was regarded and what the gender roles were, it is necessary to research the history of the period.

Shakespeare's comedies indicate there was a clear division between men and women. Their obligations were strictly subdivided. Men were given drive and power while women had to content themselves to be obedient and submissive.

On the surface, Shakespeare's comedies seem to prove that in the Renaissance it was obligatory for a woman to marry well, be faithful and obedient to her husband and procreate children – preferably boys rather than girls.) In contrast, a man in that period had to be well-educated, have refined manners and grace, air his wit and intelligence, have high standards of proper behaviour and know the arts and sciences. Both men and women had to be elegant and be of noble birth.

A detailed study of *The Comedy of Errors* reveals that the situation was not that simple!

Consider

- The main action of *The Comedy of Errors* is about love.
- The would-be lovers overcome obstacles and misunderstandings before being united in harmonious union – marriage.
- The ending of Shakespeare's comedies involves a parade of couples to the altar and a festive celebration.
- Shakespearean comedy frequently contains elements of the supernatural, the improbable or the miraculous.
- Often there is a philosophical aspect involving weightier issues and themes, personal identity and the importance of love in human existence, for instance.

SHAKESPEARE WANTS TO BE YOUR FRIEND ON FACEBOOK

➡️ **AIM: To learn more about William Shakespeare himself: the man behind the plays.**

" What would Shakespeare's Facebook profile look like? "

FACEBOOK

Facebook is a modern networking tool that connects people from all over the world.

Make a Facebook page for William Shakespeare.

Research and create the following sections of Shakespeare's Facebook page.

Remember that Shakespeare loved language and gave a lot of in-depth descriptions in everything that he wrote.

ABOUT ME

Home Town

Birthday

Gender

Political Views

Researching the British Monarchy will help here.

Religious Views

There was major religious conflict during Shakespeare's lifetime. Where do you think

Shakespeare stood in this conflict, and why?

Biography

How would Shakespeare describe himself?

Favourite Quotations

Work

Education

LIKES AND INTERESTS

Use this section to discover what people got up to for fun in Elizabethan times.

Activities

Interests

Music

Books

Links to other pages

You can invent your own pages, but they must be based on research.

Groups

You can invent groups that Shakespeare may have joined, also based on your research.

Friend list

Think about who Shakespeare associated with, his contemporaries, his fans, his enemies.

CONTEXT OF RENAISSANCE AND ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND

Write an Elizabethan newspaper for the Renaissance audiences of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Include

1. A full-page ad announcing a new folio performance of *The Comedy of Errors*.

For example, "Shakespeare actually wrote this one – following on from the rumour that Christopher Marlowe wrote The Gentlemen's Company production of *Measure For Measure*."

2. A column with all the latest Royal gossip on Queen Elizabeth I

3. Classified advertisements for available jobs at the Globe Theatre

4. A What's On page for other plays at the Globe and Swan Theatres – make sure you advertise some genres besides comedy, such as a pastoral, tragedy, history plays, sonnet readings etc.

5. A positions vacant notice for a Town Crier needed around London to alert Londoners of current events of the day.

**Compose a catchy and repetitive speech for the towncrier to learn for his/her audition.

6. Good Elizabethan Living supplement to promote a Feast Day in Hyde Park featuring a food and drinks fair for the times – a real banquet for one and all.

AIM: To explore the way Shakespeare used language, including iambic pentameter.

SHAKEAPEARE'S METRE

Metre refers to how a word or sentence is said. It dictates which syllables are emphasised and which are not.

Say your name out loud.

Emphasise different syllables as you repeat your name aloud.

Think about how different it sounds when you say it in an unusual way.

Divide your name into syllables and write it on a piece of paper.

Capitalise the syllables you normally emphasise.

For example, WILL-iam SHAKES-peare.

Then

Use the internet to find the lyrics to a song that you are familiar with.

Copy the lyrics in the fashion that they are sung, by capitalising the syllables that are usually emphasised.

Imagine that you have never heard the song and that you are reading rather than singing it.

Consider

1. What syllables would be emphasised if the song were spoken normally?

2. Does the placement of stresses change the meaning of the words?

DROMIO OF EPHESUS

Let's go hand in hand,

Not one before another

Act Five, Scene One
The Comedy of Errors

IAMBIC PENTAMETER

Much of Shakespeare's drama is written in Iambic pentameter. This means that every line is made up of ten syllables and every even numbered syllable is stressed.

Log on to the internet and find one of Shakespeare's sonnets.

Read it out loud.

Listen to where you naturally put the stresses.

Find a partner to work with.

Split one of your sonnets into syllables.

Take it in turns to read a syllable each.

Read the syllables that should be stressed, using as much emotion and emphasis as you like.

Your partner reads the odd numbered syllables as flatly as possible.

Repeat this process until your poem runs so smoothly that the timing between syllables makes it flow enough to read it to the group.

Discuss

1. How is the overall meaning affected by the placement of the stresses?
2. How does stressing more or different syllables change the emotion or tone of a sentence?

Compose your own sonnet for a loved one.

Use iambic pentameter

Remember that each line should contain 10 syllables.

Share your composition with the group.

Compose a song about deceiving love for a Shakespearean comedy. Sarah Blasko has done this for *Hamlet*, now you try.

Remember, it doesn't have to rhyme. It can be in free or blank verse.

PUNCTUATION PERAMBULATION

Choose a soliloquy from *The Comedy of Errors.*

Mouth the lines while walking through the space.

Turn at a right angle on any punctuation.

Stop on a full stop (and start again as you begin the next line!)

Discover the length and speed of your character's thoughts.

Repeat the exercise, this time whispering the text.

Pay attention to how the words make you feel.

Consider

1. Do you want to move quicker, slower?

2. Are their long thoughts or short ones?

3. What can this tell us about the character's emotional state?

Repeat the exercise, this time speaking quite loudly.

Again, **allow** the words to affect your tempo, speed and style of your walk.

Read the speech aloud without moving.

Embody what you have discovered about the character's internal state through gesture and posture.

COUPLE THAT

Shakespeare often let the audience, actors, and stage crew know that a scene was over by using a couplet.

Research couplets.

Identify two couplets used in *The Comedy of Errors*.

Write your own couplet, based on one of the themes of the play.

AIM: To provide alternatives for listening and understanding Shakespeare's text.

The way Shakespeare wrote his plays made it as easy as possible for his audience to understand what was happening. Don't let large chunks of text scare you away. If you look at a longer soliloquy, you can usually get the gist of what is being talked about by looking at the last word of each line. This idea works on the principle that Shakespeare chose carefully the last word of each line as these hung in the audience's ear, and therefore carried the most meaning. If you haven't read the play, this is a handy short cut!

Read aloud the last word of each line of the soliloquy below.

Guess and **infer** what the speech is about.

Consider

1. How do these words link?

2. What idea/s is the character talking about?

3. Do you know who the character is talking to?

4. What do you think has happened before this speech?

5. What do you think will happen as a result of this speech?

Read the whole speech aloud, with the information you have inferred from the final words.

Test this activity on any of Shakespeare's longer speeches and see if it works.

Use just the last words from the soliloquy as a template to write your own composition.

Share your soliloquy with the group.

Discuss

1. How close was your composition to the original text?

2. How similar was yours to the rest of the class?

3. How has this affected the way you will listen to Shakespearean dialogue?

Act One, Scene One

DUKE SOLINUS

Merchant of Syracuse, plead no **more**;

I am not partial to infringe our **laws**:

The enmity and discord which of **late**

Sprung from the rancorous outrage of your **duke**

To merchants, our well-dealing **countrymen**,

Who wanting guilders to redeem their **lives**

Have seal'd his rigorous statutes with their **bloods**,

Excludes all pity from our threatening **looks**.

For, since the mortal and intestine **jars**

'Twixt thy seditious countrymen and **us**,

It hath in solemn synods been **decreed**

Both by the Syracusians and **ourselves**,

To admit no traffic to our adverse towns Nay, **more**,

If any born at Ephesus be **seen**

At any Syracusian marts and **fairs**;

Again: if any Syracusian **born**

Come to the bay of Ephesus, he **dies**,

His goods confiscate to the duke's **dispose**,

Unless a thousand marks be **levied**,

To quit the penalty and to ransom **him**.

Thy substance, valued at the highest **rate**,

Cannot amount unto a hundred **marks**;

Therefore by law thou art condemned to **die**.

➡ **AIM: To explore the complex casting requirements and restrictions of *The Comedy of Errors.***

In Shakespeare's time, all actors were males. Women were not allowed to act on stage and elaborate costumes including wigs, make-up, and full-body dresses were used to convince the audience.

Imagine you are a casting agent, restricted to Shakespearian 'rules'.

Identify the famous actors in our society today who you would cast in the roles of

Antipholus of Ephesus	Emilia
Antipholus of Syracuse	Luciana
Dromio of Ephesus	Adriana
Dromio of Syracuse	

Give your reasons.

The Comedy of Errors becomes a classic in terms of what people are always saying about his stories. It is about twins, mistaken identities, people hiding their true motivations, search for identity and parents losing children, mystery and good and bad and everything that makes great and terrifically fun theatre.

The play calls for two set of identical twins.

Imagine you have to cast the play with a set ensemble – that doesn't have any twins in it!

Consider your group, or look at photos of The Residents at Sydney Theatre Company.

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/about/artistic/the-residents

Come up with several ways to cast your group or The Residents in *The Comedy of Errors.*

Discuss

1. What is it about the play that can lead you to consider alternatives?

2. How does the suspension of disbelief work with Shakespeare?

3. What other contingencies and conventions outside of realism exist in *The Comedy of Errors*?

4. Can we do Shakespeare by doubling roles – is it expected almost?

AIM: To consider the comic conventions Shakespeare used in his plays, within the broader context of comedy vs. tragedy, and the historical influences of Commedia dell'arte.

DEBATE

" *The Comedy of Errors* is more of a tragedy than a comedy. "

OR

" Comedy is for those who think; tragedy for those who feel. "

Find excerpts of dialogue from the play and snippets of footage from previous interpretations of the play on youtube to support your argument.

SHAKESPEARE RE-TOLD

Watch one of the four plays by Shakespeare's plays that were adapted for *Shakespeare Retold*, a BBC series that includes fascinating and hilarious appropriations of *Much Ado About Nothing, The Taming of the Shrew, A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth*.

Download and watch one of the snippets below to give you an idea of the style of each adaptation.

Shakespeare Retold – *Much Ado About Nothing* – Part 1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lx6El4xDQw8

Shakespeare Retold – *The Taming of the Shrew* – Part 1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ1U5XTR148&feature=related

Shakespeare Retold – *A Midsummer Night's Dream* – Part 1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=mX1boc-Bga8&feature=related

Shakespeare Retold – *Macbeth* – Part 1
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fgj8GhcxDeo&feature=related

LAZZI

Lazzi is most commonly associated with the traditions of Commedia dell'Arte performers. A lazzi is any bit of stage business from a simple single action or word through to a whole scene, which is devised and rehearsed beforehand and inserted into an improvised or scripted performance, and usually called for by the needs of the particular scenario. Most lazzi have been passed down to us via pantomime, circus, music hall and silent film.

> **ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**
> Thou hast thine own form.
>
> **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**
> No, I am an ape.
>
> Act Two, Scene Two
> *The Comedy of Errors*

The rehearsed stage business we call lazzi today are by their very nature familiar and stereotypical, borrowed, stolen, appropriated, adapted and amended, so that the original scenario can rarely be identified. They have been handed down from Commedia player to Commedia player, from clown to clown, from pantomime dame to panto horse, from music hall artiste to holiday camp comedian; each taking what was useful and adding something of their own.

Research the lazzi traditions of Commedia dell'arte.

Write a 'recipe book' for an actor performing as a member of a Commedia dell'arte troupe.

Include a list of 'rules' around improvising.

Hint: see what you can find about the rules for playing theatresports – a contemporary version of Commedia dell'arte.

Suggest some ideas for characters, relationships or situations that you could 'default' to if you get stuck. (This may seem like cheating, but you'll notice that the Commedia dell'arte performers had some set structures they could invoke for a lazzi, ensuring that the players all had the same understanding of the basic structure their improvisation would follow. You'll also note that theatresports employs a similar technique: by choosing a particular game, players are given a framework on which to build their improvisation.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY LAZZI

Use your lazzi 'recipe'.

Build a lazzi around a scene from *The Comedy of Errors*.

Reread Act Four, Scene I (below). This is a marvellous scene for you to explore mistaken identity.

To summarise: Antipholus of Syracuse is again approached by someone who thinks they know him, but is mistaking him for the other Antipholus. This time it is Angelo the goldsmith, with the chain he was to deliver to Antipholus of Ephesus at the Porpentine.

Perform the scene as written.

Improvise a continuation of the scene, building on the feelings of madness and confusion.

Introduce a range of characters, who enter the scene one by one, each claiming to know Antipholus of Syracuse from past encounters.

> **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**
> I am transformed, master, am not I?
>
> **ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**
> I think thou art in mind, and so am I.
>
> **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**
> Nay, master, both in mind and in my shape.
>
> Act Two, Scene Two
> *The Comedy of Errors*

DISGUISE LAZZI

This Commedia dell'Arte interlude was beloved by Shakespeare, as can be seen in the mask work involving the two sets of twins in *The Comedy of Errors*. This lazzi became particularly prevalent during the last years of the seventeenth century when both Arlecchino and Colombina took on various identities, such as Colombina, Lawyer for the Prosecution and for the Defence.

You will find that the main factor in all such disguises is that they are rarely, if ever, complete. By convention, however slight the camouflage may be, it is sufficient to fool the intended members of the cast, but no one else – least of all the audience.

COSTUME CHANGE LAZZI

While the other characters are fooled by Arlecchino's costume changes, the audience can always see part of his distinctive costume beneath his attempted disguise. This convention is known as a 'token change,' requiring beards and moustaches to be patently false, wigs and hats to be ill fitting, and clothes clearly made for someone of another size and shape. Cross-dressing in a lady's bonnet is made ridiculous by facial hair, false breasts are expected to slip around, or out, and the final joy is the obvious masculinity of the impersonator.

> **"**
>
> **ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**
>
> Am I in earth, in heaven, or in hell?
>
> Sleeping or waking, mad,
>
> or well-advis'd?
>
> Known unto these,
>
> and to myself disguis'd! **"**
>
> Act Two, Scene Two
> *The Comedy of Errors*

Perform improvisations around the two sets of twin brothers: Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse, and their servants: Dromio of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse.

Remember that the twin Dromios are the clowns of the piece.

Play around with facial hair, padding and other easily seen-through or removable disguises.

Design a trick costume. For example, can a skirt be pulled up to make a dress?

Replace traditional solutions with your individual ingenuity. *Hint: make the most of velcro!*

Decide how your character will disguise him or herself:

1. **Onstage**, in full view of the audience.

2. **Attempt** to hide while assuming your disguise – perhaps behind a screen, curtains or scenery.

3. **Obscure** the audience's view of the costume change by having several of the other actors surround you as you complete your disguise.

Consider the following implications of your disguise choice for the plot of your improvisation:

1. The audience is in on the joke – how will this effect your character?

2. The audience is not supposed to know you are in disguise – how do you keep up the pretence?

3. Other characters now know that you are in disguise – how does this impact on your relationship?

Give free rein to the absurdity of the improvised scenes you come up with!

ACT FOUR, SCENE ONE

[Enter a MERCHANT, ANGELO, and an OFFICER.]

MERCHANT	You know, since Pentecost the sum is due,
	And since I have not much importun'd you;
	Nor now I had not, but that I am bound
	To Persia, and want guilders for my voyage;
	Therefore make present satisfaction,
	Or I'll attach you by this officer.
ANGELO	Even just the sum that I do owe to you
	Is growing to me by Antipholus;
	And in the instant that I met with you
	He had of me a chain; at five o'clock
	I shall receive the money for the same:
	Pleaseth you walk with me down to his house,
	I will discharge my bond, and thank you too.

[Enter ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS, and DROMIO OF EPHESUS.]

OFFICER	That labour may you save: see where he comes.
ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS	While I go to the goldsmith's house, go thou
	And buy a rope's end; that will I bestow
	Among my wife and her confederates,
	For locking me out of my doors by day.--
	But, soft; I see the goldsmith: get thee gone;
	Buy thou a rope, and bring it home to me.

DROMIO OF EPHESUS   I buy a thousand pound a year! I buy a rope!

[Exit DROMIO.]

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   A man is well holp up that trusts to you:

I promised your presence, and the chain;

But neither chain nor goldsmith came to me:

Belike you thought our love would last too long,

If it were chain'd together; and therefore came not.

ANGELO   Saving your merry humour, here's the note,

How much your chain weighs to the utmost carat;

The fineness of the gold, and chargeful fashion;

Which doth amount to three odd ducats more

Than I stand debted to this gentleman:

I pray you, see him presently discharg'd,

For he is bound to sea, and stays but for it.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   I am not furnished with the present money;

Besides I have some business in the town:

Good Signior, take the stranger to my house,

And with you take the chain, and bid my wife

Disburse the sum on the receipt thereof;

Perchance I will be there as soon as you.

ANGELO   Then you will bring the chain to her yourself?

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   No; bear it with you, lest I come not time enough.

ANGELO   Well, sir, I will: have you the chain about you?

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   An if I have not, sir, I hope you have,

Or else you may return without your money.

ANGELO   Nay, come, I pray you, sir, give me the chain;

Both wind and tide stays for this gentleman,

And I, to blame, have held him here too long.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   Good Lord, you use this dalliance to excuse

Your breach of promise to the Porcupine:

I should have chid you for not bringing it,

But, like a shrew, you first begin to brawl.

MERCHANT   The hour steals on; I pray you, sir, despatch.

ANGELO   You hear how he importunes me: the chain,--

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   Why, give it to my wife, and fetch your money.

ANGELO   Come, come, you know I gave it you even now;

Either send the chain or send by me some token.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   Fie! now you run this humour out of breath:

Come, where's the chain? I pray you, let me see it.

MERCHANT   My business cannot brook this dalliance:

Good sir, say whe'r you'll answer me or no;

If not, I'll leave him to the officer.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   I answer you! What should I answer you?

ANGELO   The money that you owe me for the chain.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   I owe you none till I receive the chain.

ANGELO   You know I gave it you half-an-hour since.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   You gave me none: you wrong me much to say so.

ANGELO   You wrong me more, sir, in denying it:

Consider how it stands upon my credit.

MERCHANT   Well, officer, arrest him at my suit.

OFFICER   I do; and charge you in the duke's name to obey me.

ANGELO   This touches me in reputation:

Either consent to pay this sum for me,

Or I attach you by this officer.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   Consent to pay thee that I never had!

Arrest me, foolish fellow, if thou dar'st.

ANGELO   Here is thy fee; arrest him, officer:--

I would not spare my brother in this case,

If he should scorn me so apparently.

OFFICER   I do arrest you, sir: you hear the suit.

ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS   I do obey thee till I give thee bail:--

But, sirrah, you shall buy this sport as dear

As all the metal in your shop will answer.

ANGELO   Sir, sir, I shall have law in Ephesus,

To your notorious shame, I doubt it not.

[Enter DROMIO OF SYRACUSE.]

DROMIO OF SYRACUSE	Master, there's a bark of Epidamnum
	That stays but till her owner comes aboard,
	And then, sir, bears away: our fraughtage, sir,
	I have convey'd aboard; and I have bought
	The oil, the balsamum, and aqua-vitae.
	The ship is in her trim; the merry wind
	Blows fair from land; they stay for nought at all
	But for their owner, master, and yourself.
ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS	How now! a madman? Why, thou peevish sheep,
	What ship of Epidamnum stays for me?
DROMIO OF SYRACUSE	A ship you sent me to, to hire waftage.
ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS	Thou drunken slave! I sent the for a rope;
	And told thee to what purpose and what end.
DROMIO OF SYRACUSE	You sent me, sir, for a rope's end as soon:
	You sent me to the bay, sir, for a bark.
ANTIPHOLUS OF EPHESUS	I will debate this matter at more leisure,
	And teach your ears to list me with more heed.
	To Adriana, villain, hie thee straight:
	Give her this key, and tell her, in the desk
	That's cover'd o'er with Turkish tapestry
	There is a purse of ducats; let her send it:
	Tell her I am arrested in the street,
	And that shall bail me: hie thee, slave; be gone.
	On, officer, to prison till it come.

AIM: To explore the Earth-friendly philosophies that influenced the set and costume design of *The Comedy of Errors*.

The design concept for *The Comedy of Errors* incorporates recycled materials, including found objects and made costumes. This philosophy is partially inspired by Sydney Theatre Company's Greening the Wharf project; their response to climate change.
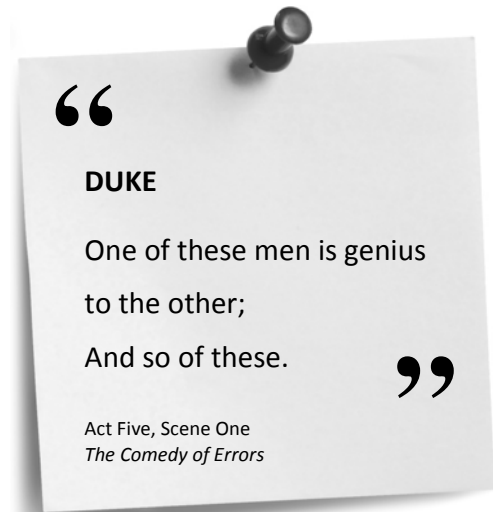
Find out about the Greening The Wharf project.

www.sydneytheatre.com.au/news/greening-the-wharf

> "
>
> **DUKE**
>
> One of these men is genius
> to the other;
> And so of these. "
>
> Act Five, Scene One
> *The Comedy of Errors*

REDUCING CARBON FOOTPRINTS

Inspired by the Greening The Wharf project, The Residents have taken up the challenge from the Australian Conservation Foundation's GreenHome program to reduce their carbon footprints. Along with the green improvements happening in their theatre home, The Residents are working towards a more sustainable lifestyle in their own homes.

Follow their journeys as they post regular updates to this blog.

Read about their challenges and successes, their experiences and ideas.

http://stcgreeningthewharf.posterous.com/

Australian Conservation Foundation's GreenHome program

Use ACF's Eco-calculator to find out your own eco-footprint.

www.acfonline.org.au/default.asp?section_id=86

Make a list of how you use energy and or water.

Brainstorm some measures you could take to reduce your carbon footprint.

RECYCLING AND RE-USING

Make a list of things that you found interesting or that worked well in the set and costume designs for *The Comedy Of Errors.*

Discuss

1. Was there a set or costume element that you felt didn't work? Why or why not?

2. What are the benefits of using only found objects to make a set?

3. What limitations are there in using found objects?

4. How well do you think the set for *The Comedy of Errors* represents Sydney Theatre Company's Greening the Wharf project?

Then

Take a trip to your local rubbish tip, or

Keep your eyes open for you or anybody else throwing things away.

Look out for residential, industrial or commercial waste.

Collect or make a list of everything you see that could be used in the construction of a set.

Create a set using your collected items, or draw your design concept.

Include at least ten things that you have written on your list of found objects.

Use the found objects in any way that suits you – they do not have to be used according to their original form or intended purpose.

Remember that you can combine a number of things to make a new thing.

Label each item that you include from your list.

Give a brief explanation of why you have chosen to put it there.

Consider

1. Why does that item suit that scene or character?

2. Does the item symbolise anything beyond its external appearance or intended purpose in the production?

3. If you were not required to include the found objects, what would be different in your design?

4. How did the found objects inspire the remainder of your design?

Imagine that your set is to be used for a touring production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Consider

1. How could you adapt your set to accommodate a number of different sized and shaped venues without causing too much distress to the actors and other designers?
2. Does your design need to be simplified?
3. Can your set be built in a way that it can be deconstructed and reconstructed easily?
4. Can you make some changes to include elements that are disposable or easily replaceable?

WHITE MODEL BOX

The white model box is the first step in designing a set. It follows the very basic space of the theatre space you are designing for, but doesn't have to completely comply with the exact dimensions, or be a perfect representation of the final set product.

Make your own white model set box.

Choose a play that you know well – perhaps another Shakespeare?

Begin with a simple and half cut out box or white cardboard, white paper, sticky tape (and scissors if you like, but most designers prefer to rip or tear).

Commence creating– straight away! *You know the saying that it's important to 'get up and do' in drama? It is just as important in the other creative arts as well.*

Start with five basic pieces of furniture and three walls (or stage dividers) as your initial kit.

Keep your 'kit' broad and vague to begin with.

Remember, the idea of a white model box is to create a blank canvas or structure, onto which you will layer your specific design ideas later.

Move the walls and pieces of furniture around to create a basic setting for each act and scene of your chosen play.
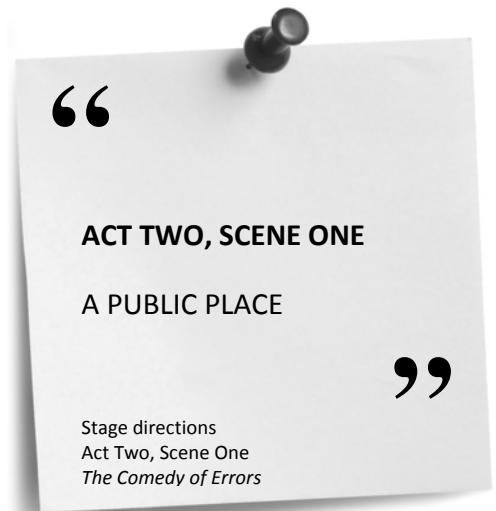
> "
> **ACT TWO, SCENE ONE**
>
> A PUBLIC PLACE
> "
>
> Stage directions
> Act Two, Scene One
> *The Comedy of Errors*

Consider

1. Do you need to add another wall/set divider or piece of furniture?

2. If so, do you simply need an extra 'something', or do you need something specific?

3. Have you incorporated all set elements specifically mentioned in the text, or provided an alternative for the actors and director?

4. Do you have appropriate spaces for entrances and exits?

5. Can you remove anything to simplify the stage space?

Then

Look at the picture of the model box for *The Comedy of Errors* created by Matt Stegh.

Begin to create a set box that you could use to demonstrate your design concept to a director.

Again, go scene by scene through your chosen play.

Layer some specific ideas onto your blank canvas.

Use colour to create mood.

Incorporate texture where you can. For example, a corrugated iron shed wall, or a fur rug.

Specify a time period – historical, contemporary or futuristic.

Locate your set geographically and demographically – London or Australia, rural or suburban.

Imagine you have no constraints to realising your set.

Consider

1. What materials would you use?
2. How often would you change your setting throughout the production?
3. What would you include in your set deign that you may not have considered previously?
4. Have you artistically or thematically justified the inclusion of all the wonderful things you could buy with a limitless budget?

" **Scene**: The play is set in Ephesus. The scene throughout represents an unlocalised street or 'mart' in front of three 'houses', structures or doors marked with the signs of the Courtesan's house (a porcupine), the house of Antipholus of Ephesus (the Phoenix), and the Priory (a cross or some religious emblem). "

Then

Come to terms with the reality of a set designer's constraints.

Reimagine your set from the following perspectives.

Financial: budgets and expenses.

Artistic: an overall vision that is realised consistently, and serves to highlight a theme of the text.

Practical: the theatre floor won't take the weight of a two-tonne cement ball, so could you use paper mache instead?

This is the set design for Sydney Theatre Company's 1997 production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

Compare this image with the set model for this year's production for STC Education in Wharf 2.

Note down the elements of the text that you you see reflected in each design.

Think in terms of the referencing of another world.

For example, the 1997 design reflects the work of the artist Magritte.

The 2010 model reflects an imagined latino world with hints of voodoo and has more information regarding costume design, as well as a clear distinction of the three houses suggested in the text.

Consider the additional information this sort of referencing may provide an audience about the artistic vision and intention of a production.

Discuss

1. How important is it that the relationships between Antipholus of Ephesus and Antipholus of Syracuse, and Dromio of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse be indicated by their clothing?

2. Is an audience just as likely to invest in the story according as the way other characters refer to their likenesses, thus endowing the two sets of twins as identical?

3. How do the settings of each design lend themselves most readily to elements of farce?

   Hint: consider the multiple doors, entrances, levels and heights represented in each.

AIM: To investigate the choices made in STC Ed's production of *The Comedy of Errors* around Shakespeare's use of language.

EDITING SHAKESPEARE

Originally written for audiences that expected plays to last for around five hours, Shakespeare's plays are very long if performed in full. Even *The Comedy of Errors*, the shortest of Shakespeare's plays (at just 1,777 lines) is usually considered too long for a modern audience. Therefore the director of STC Ed's production, Charmian Gradwell, edited Shakespeare's original text.

Choose one scene from *The Comedy of Errors* that you recall from seeing the production.

Mark down how much of the comedy of the scene is reliant on the visuals or physicality, and how much of the comedy is found in the dialogue.

Note the occasions where one comic element is useless without the other.

For example, a scene in which somebody says, "You look lovely in that hat," and the other character is wearing a nice hat is completely different from a scene in which the other character is wearing a ridiculous hat, or perhaps not wearing a hat at all!

Distill your scene into its essence.

Write one sentence that encapsulates the purpose of the scene within the play.

Edit the scene as though you are a director attempting to shorten your production.

Pay attention to maintaining the verse structure and rhyming of the play.

Consider what you can delete without altering the plot or diminishing the depth of a character.

Use your markings about physicality versus verbal comedy to assist you replace words with actions.

Prove your instincts correct by playing your scene with and without words

Write down any stage directions that become necessary to maintaining the integrity of the plot.

CONFUSED MESSAGES (homonyms)

William Shakespeare was very careful in the language he chose to put into his plays. He uses a lot of homonyms to add comedy or meaning to a line. Homonyms are often the basis for confusion for some characters because they misunderstand information that is given to them.

Compile a list of at least 15 homonyms (words that sound the same but have different meanings).

Walk around the room in a random trajectory.

Be careful not to run into any other students.

Ask one player to read out some homonyms from your list.

When you hear a word, perform the first action that comes to mind.

For example, if you hear the word sow (sew), you may begin sewing on a sewing machine or with needle and thread, or you may sow some seeds.

Remember, there are no wrong answers! The English language can be confusing if you don't know the context of the words chosen.

Keep portraying an action until the Reader tells you to continue walking.

Sneak a peek at the choices other players made.

Interpret a couple of different words.

Change the pace at which you walk around the room.

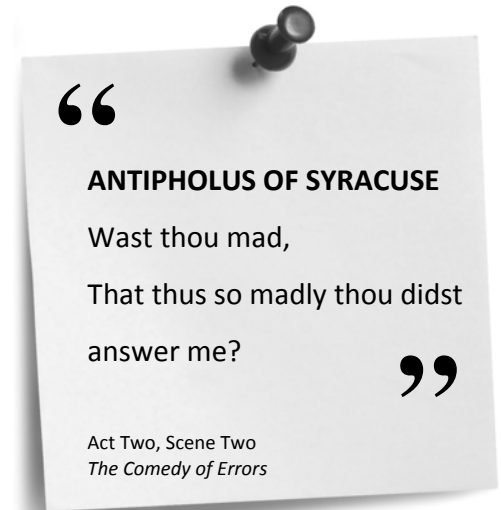**Continue** as before, by responding to the word the Reader calls out.

Perform your action at the same pace.

When you start walking again, change your pace again.

Work at extremes of tempo.

Perform an alternative for any word you hear more than once instead of repeating an action.

Consider whether or not the pace at which you were walking affected the choices you made when you heard a word.

> "
> **ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**
> Wast thou mad,
> That thus so madly thou didst answer me?
> "
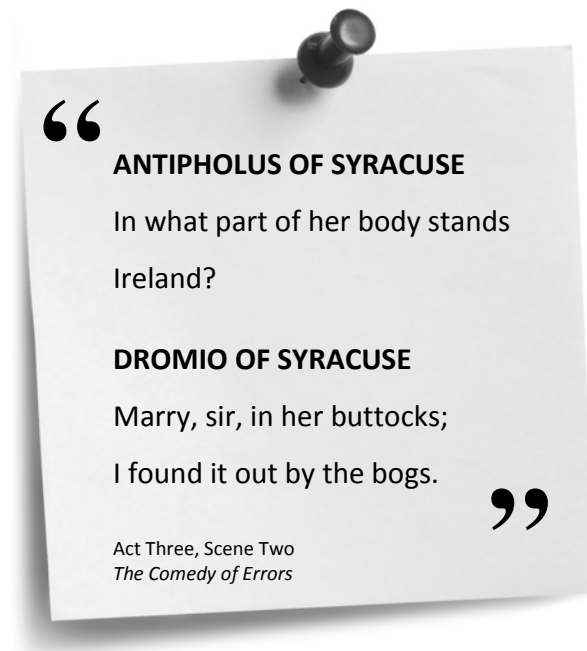>
> Act Two, Scene Two
> *The Comedy of Errors*

Then

Create and present a comic scene in which at least one character's status changes because

someone else in the scene has misheard or misunderstood something that has been said.

Use any of the words on your list.

Feel free to think of some more.

Possible scenarios could include: a master and his servant; two employees looking for a promotion;

parents and children; relationships with in-laws; a salesperson and a snobby customer.

> **ANTIPHOLUS OF SYRACUSE**
>
> In what part of her body stands
>
> Ireland?
>
> **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**
>
> Marry, sir, in her buttocks;
>
> I found it out by the bogs.
>
> Act Three, Scene Two
> *The Comedy of Errors*

AIM: To investigate the chain of coincidences that are revealed as *The Comedy of Errors* unfolds.

The Comedy of Errors includes a number of coincidences. For example, both Antipholus brothers (along with their servants) are wearing the same clothes on the day they meet in Ephesus.

> **DROMIO OF SYRACUSE**
>
> Thither I must,
>
> although against my will,
>
> For servants must
>
> their masters' minds fulfil.
>
> Act Four, Scene One
> *The Comedy of Errors*

List the other coincidences in the text.

Discuss

1. How do the coincidences in the text impact on the believability of *The Comedy of Errors*?

2. How would you, as a performer or director, choose to deal with the coincidences if you were involved in a production of this play?

3. Does the series of coincidences influence your enjoyment of the play?

4. How crucial to the plot are each of the coincidences in the text?

5. Would a similar chain of coincidences be an effective theatrical device in tragedy?

Watch the set-up for the movie *Sliding Doors*, 1998.

Directed by Peter Howitt, with Gwyneth Paltrow, John Hannah, John Lynch.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=QsQuNu4NBmQ

Discuss

1. What are the similarities in style and content between *The Comedy of Errors* and *Sliding Doors*?

2. Why do you think that audiences enjoy watching stories that revolve around the varying consequences of one moment?

3. How do the notions of coincidence and consequence influence your own decision-making?

4. What are the correlations between coincidences and a belief in fate or predetermined destiny?

5. Do you agree with the statement that everything happens for a reason? Why or why not?

Write or **devise** a short piece based on a recent coincidence in your life.

Include two alternative endings; one for the way the situation played out after the coincidence, and one based on a potential result had the coincidence not occurred.

Decide whether you would have ended up in the same position, regardless of the path you followed, or whether that one coincidental moment has had an ongoing impact on your life.

Make a mobile phone film, a photo essay, a storyboard, a cartoon or another visual representation of an instance of your life that was a comedy of errors.

The Comedy of Errors relies on the characters being identical twins.

Some might say having an identical twin is a benefit, others would argue it's a hindrance.

Imagine you have an identical twin.

Write or **devise** a short piece that demonstrates how this would help or hinder your typical day.

Emilia spends 20 years in Ephesus without ever revealing herself to her son, let alone telling him about the missing half of his family.

Discuss

1. Do you think this is a flaw in the play?

2. What reasons could there be for Emilia's behaviour?

3. If you were playing (or directing) Emilia, what could you do to ensure that an audience believes Emilia's actions?

Identify the character in the play with whom you can best relate.

List your reasons for your choice.

Write a series of diary entries, using the journey of your chosen character throughout the play as your starting point.