Nobel Prize winning playwright Harold Pinter’s

Old Times
comes to STC

Also featuring...

FELA! The Broadway Musical

Free For All

ALSO INSIDE:

Ethan McSweeny closes the season with

The Merchant of Venice
Dear Friend,

Welcome to the final two plays of the 2010-2011 Season: Harold Pinter’s Old Times and William Shakespeare’s The Merchant of Venice. It is very important to me that the Shakespeare Theatre Company produce both plays that we consider modern classics and well-known plays that have endured for centuries. This will be the first time that STC has produced a Pinter play, though I have loved Old Times for many years. We have not staged The Merchant of Venice in more than a decade, and I am confident that Ethan McSweeny’s production will be a powerful and memorable close to this season.

We continue to look ahead to our 25th Anniversary Season, which will begin with Free For All. Our generous Friends of Free For All make this much-loved Washington tradition of free Shakespeare possible. Please consider joining them to show your support and to enjoy special benefits like premium reserved seating for Julius Caesar.

As I hope you have heard, we recently announced several special anniversary shows as well. This fall we will host the first stop of the North American tour of the award-winning Broadway musical FELA! We will also welcome Oscar-nominated actor John Hurt for a limited number of performances of Samuel Beckett’s Krapp’s Last Tape from the Gate Theatre in Dublin. We continue to plan the two previously announced performances that will be performed in concert-style staging as part of The Bard’s Broadway as well.

I hope to see you in our theatres for many of these performances, both this season and next.

Best,

Michael Kahn
Artistic Director, Shakespeare Theatre Company

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Dear Friend,

It is hard to believe that the Shakespeare Theatre Company’s very successful 2010-2011 Season is nearing its close. We hope you will join us for this season’s final offerings, including the Happenings at the Harman series which spotlights a variety of performers in the Washington, D.C., area. We also continue to present high-definition screenings of great works from around the world: The Importance of Being Earnest from Roundabout Theatre Company and The Cherry Orchard from the National Theatre in London.

STC will remain committed to partnering with other local arts organizations in our 25th Anniversary Season and beyond. This September we will once again host the Fall Arts Preview at Sidney Harman Hall as part of the 19th Annual Arts of Foot Festival. More than 25 presentations on two of our stages will showcase the wealth of world-class theatre, dance, music and performing arts offerings in our community.

We are additionally thrilled to have announced three new presentations that continue our efforts to bring amazing theatre from around the globe to D.C.: FELA! in its first run in the U.S. since its Broadway engagement; Krapp’s Last Tape with John Hurt’s acclaimed solo turn; and Petrushka as part of a festival highlighting the unique puppetry of Basil Twist.

Please mark your calendar for these events. We hope you will join us and continue to support STC’s work to present the very best of performing arts.

Sincerely,

Chris Jennings
Managing Director, Shakespeare Theatre Company

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Critics have observed that time, particularly memory of past time, is central to Pinter’s work. Pinter’s biographer Michael Billington has remarked that “Memory is almost the key to Pinter’s whole work as an artist.” In Harold Pinter Billington observes that “the omnipresent power of memory is the defining theme of [Pinter’s] plays”:

Pinter’s characters live as much in the past as in the present, and are haunted by a recollection, however fallible, manipulative or imaginary, of some lost and vanished world in which everything was secure, certain, fixed. [...] Memory is what gives his work its strong emotional undertow. It also, in an age of historical amnesia, motivates a lot of his political thinking.

Dubbed by critics one of Pinter’s “memory plays,” Old Times focuses on how the past encroaches on what happens in the present and affects what may happen in the future. “Thematically,” Martin Esslin pointed out, Pinter explored “the operation of memory: the way in which the passage of time changes our perception of what the past was like and what we were—in that past.” Dramatic complications arise from his characters’ disparate, conflicting, and fallible memories of romantic love and sex, often deployed as weapons in battles waged on the shifting turf, the “quicksand,” of time.

Sir Peter Hall, the first director of Old Times in London and New York, has written: “I believe that Pinter is essentially a poetic dramatist. He and Beckett have brought metaphor
back to the theatre, where Eliot and Auden failed.” Pinter’s eclectic “poetic” imagery relating to time and memory forms confluences, like rivers joining together, intersecting and (to shift the metaphor to a photographic/cinematic one) supplying him with filters for his own life experiences (biographical sources documented in Billington’s Harold Pinter and in Antonia Fraser’s Must You Go? My Life with Harold Pinter). Such confluences also inspired innovative and cinematic uses of time in his plays: flashbacks, flash-forwards, freezes, tableaux vivants, montages, jump cuts, voice overs, echoes, and various amalgams of these dramatic techniques.

In Pinter’s “memory plays” one hears reverberations of the opening lines of T.S. Eliot’s “Burnt Norton,” the first of his Four Quartets (1935):

Time present and time past Are both perhaps present in time future, And time future contained in time past.

Pinter echoed Eliot’s imagery during his “conversation” with Mel Gussow about Old Times, in December 1971, when he and Peter Hall worked in rehearsals with a new cast, as they readied the play for its first New York production. Agreeing that “the past” had become “much more of an artistic concern” for him by then, Pinter observed: “I think I’m more conscious of a kind of everpresent quality in life. [...] I certainly feel more and more that the past is not past, that it never was past. It’s present. [...] I know the future is simply going to be the same thing. It’ll never end. You carry all the states with you until the end.” Embarking on “the most difficult task” of his life, Pinter would spend the next year, in collaboration with film director Joseph Losey, adapting Marcel Proust’s massive novel À la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time) into The Proust Screenplay (1972); later he and director Di Trevis adapted his screenplay to the stage as Remembrance of Things Past (2000). As Billington noted, Proust’s “ideas about time, memory and the importance of art in many ways coincided with [Pinter’s] own.”

“What interests me a great deal is the mistiness of the past,” Pinter told Gussow, echoing also the imagery of John Webster, who was, along with William Shakespeare and Cyril Tourneur, one of Pinter’s favorite Elizabethan/Jacobean playwrights. Characters’ “misty” reminiscences about the past (“old times”)—“The memory of all that” (a line from George and Ira Gershwin’s popular romantic tune “They Can’t Take That Away from Me” sung by Deeley during his second-act dueling duet with Anna)—are ultimately unverifiable in Pinter’s plays, just as memories often are in life. The past becomes embattled territory, as memories of “time past” take place in “time present.” As Kate, Deeley, and Anna “remember” old times, their vying reconstructions of the past occupy present time and space on stage. Pinter told Gussow, “It happens. It all happens.”

Anna’s and Kate’s “shared” past experiences—whatever they may have been—encroach on Kate’s present life with Deeley, even though Anna’s and Deeley’s pasts may or may not ever have intersected. In a cinematic jump

“There are no hard distinctions between what is real and what is unreal, nor between what is true and what is false. A thing is not necessarily either true or false; it can be both true and false.”

Harold Pinter

Production Support has been provided by the
Artistic Leadership Fund

Prepare, I say. I thank you, gracious lords,
For all your fair endeavors;

Love’s Labor’s Lost, act 5, scene 2

The Artistic Leadership Fund recognizes generous STC supporters of $25,000 or more for the vital role they play in our artistic program, through expanded access to the production process.

Susan Hollis Merritt is the author of Pinter in Play: Critical Strategies and The Plays of Harold Pinter and the Bibliographical Editor of The Pinter Review.
Harold Pinter, In His Own Words

Mel Gussow: Who’s Harold Pinter?

Harold Pinter: He’s not me. He’s someone else’s creation. It’s very curious. Quite often when people shake me warmly by the hand and say they’re pleased to meet me, I have very mixed feelings—because I’m not quite sure who it is they think they’re meeting. In fact, who they are meeting at all. I can’t explain it very well. I sometimes feel in others an awful kind of respect which distresses me.

MG: That must be off-putting.

HP: Yes, it is.

MG: What do they expect? A proper phrase or a certain kind of appearance?

HP: Some people are very surprised. The fact that one of my main obsessions in life is the game of cricket—I play and watch and read about it all the time—that apparently surprises people. It’s a normal, healthy activity. I think I’m making a little bit of a meal of all this really. Life is quite tolerable. I have three main interests, I suppose. I live with my family very, very closely. A pretty tight life we have, which is very good. And, of course, I enjoy very much working in the theatre, and in films for that matter. And then cricket.

MG: How long did it take for the first draft of Old Times?

HP: About three days.

MG: The second draft?

HP: That took a few months.

MG: When you finished, did you have the play read to you?

HP: I read the play aloud to myself, so I know if it’s playable. I walk the characters through. I move them about. I play all the parts.

MG: Does anybody watch?

HP: I’m also the audience.

MG: Do you laugh?

HP: I laugh during the writing, sometimes.

MG: Does the title come first?

HP: No.

MG: Last?

HP: Yes.

MG: Any working title while you were writing?

HP: There was, yes. A silly one. In the play Anna talks about the cafes we found where artists and writers and sometimes actors collected, and “others with dancers.” And I couldn’t get the phrase “and others with dancers” out of my mind. I did actually put “Others with Dancers,” and thought, no, no, that’s not it at all. No, I was very pleased about the title when it eventually came. It did strike me as accurate.

MG: I think it really sums it up. Actually all your titles have been very apt.

HP: Well, thanks. It’s very important for me...

In December 1971, theatre critic Mel Gussow interviewed Harold Pinter about his new play Old Times. The following is an excerpt of the interview, from Gussow’s Conversations with Pinter.

Mel Gussow: In His Own Words
When Harold Pinter wrote *Old Times* in 1970, he was already 13 years into a singular playwrighting career. In plays like *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker* and his masterpiece *The Homecoming*, he had unearthed the menace buried beneath domestic life. His writing sounded like no other English playwright, as its spare utterances and potent pauses only hinted at underlying terror. He was more a child of Samuel Beckett than of Noël Coward (though the latter, surprisingly, wrote him a fan letter).

But by the late 1960s, Pinter was beginning to explore new territory. He became fascinated above all with what he called “the mistiness of the past”—the ways in which memory proves shifting and unreliable. He wrote two one-act plays, *Landscape* and *Silence*, in which characters try to remember meaningful episodes from their past. And he wrote the screenplay for *The Go-Between*, based on L.P. Hartley’s novel about an old man recalling the tumultuous events of his youth. The novel’s famous opening line—“the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there”—might be the motto of Pinter’s writing during this period. Shortly after writing *Old Times*, Pinter would go on to adapt Marcel Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past*, one of the greatest works ever written on the peculiar nature of memory.

In *Old Times*, Pinter set out to turn the past into a battlefield, with competitors fighting over whose memory will win out. The play tells the story of Deeley and Kate, a couple who host Kate’s former roommate Anna for dinner. As the evening goes on, Deeley and Anna present their very different memories of Kate. Through snippets of songs, funny stories and half-remembered conflicts, they each lay claim to her. Multiple versions of the same events overlap; the play is dazzling “not because of the lack of information provided, as was the case with some of his earlier works,” writes the scholar Steven H. Gale, “but because there is too much information available.” Pinter drew on his own fractured memory in writing the play, recalling details of his own life as a young man in London 20 years before. He even sent a copy of *Old Times* to the woman he had dated then, along with a note that read: “this will ring bells.”

Pinter claimed that he wrote the first draft of *Old Times* in only three days, with the words flying out of him. His second draft, however, took many months in the winter of 1970, as he honed the language and the characters to their essentials. The play finally premiered in London in June of 1971, in a production directed by Pinter’s frequent collaborator Peter Hall and featuring Pinter’s wife Vivien Merchant in the pivotal role of Anna; an acclaimed Broadway run followed with a new cast later that year. This Pinter reached audiences in a new way: not with terror, but with the universal mystery of the human memory.

### OLD TIMES CAST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steven Culp</td>
<td>Deeley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracy Lynn Middendorf</td>
<td>Kate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holly Twyford</td>
<td>Anna</td>
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</tbody>
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### ARTISTIC TEAM

- **Michael Kahn**
  Director

- **Walt Spangler**
  Set Designer

- **Jane Greenwood**
  Costume Designer

- **Scott Zielinski**
  Lighting Designer

- **Martin Desjardins**
  Sound Designer

- **Laura Stanczyk, CSA**
  Casting Director

- **Ellen O’Brien**
  Voice and Dialect Coach

- **Daniel Rehbehn**
  Resident Casting Director

- **Beth Ellen Spencer**
  Stage Manager

- **Elizabeth Clewley**
  Assistant Stage Manager

*Member of Actors’ Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers.*

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**Upcoming Events for Old Times**

**Open Rehearsal**

FREE

Tuesday, May 10

Seating at 7:30 p.m.

Lansburgh Theatre*

**Windows**

FREE

Sunday, May 22 at 5 p.m.

The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall*

Engage in a lively discussion with local scholars and the artistic staff.

**Post-Performance Discussion**

FREE

Wednesday, May 25, after the performance

Lansburgh Theatre*

Ask questions of the acting company.

**Classics in Context**

FREE

Saturday, June 11 at 5 p.m.

The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall*

Learn about the social and cultural context of our plays during this roundtable discussion.

Reservations not required.

*Seating for all events is based on availability on a first-come, first-served basis.

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**For tickets call 202.547.1122 or visit ShakespeareTheatre.org.**
Holly Twyford Takes a Pause
by Tim Treanor

She could probably have her name legally changed to “Helen Hayes Nominated Holly Twyford” without offending accuracy, though it would probably look awkward on the program. She has 16 nominations (she’s won four times), including for last year’s *Orestes: A Tragic Romp*, and she has played everything from Juliet to a tap-dancing pig. Now, for the first time, she’s gracing a Shakespeare Theatre Company production—as Anna, the enigmatic visitor in Harold Pinter’s *Old Times*. I asked her how she’s going to do it—and why.

**Tim Treanor: What is there about acting that compels people to do it despite the financial challenges?**

Holly Twyford: The benefit is it’s an opportunity to get back to your imagination, an opportunity to explore somebody else’s world and leave yours at the stage door. There is something about these characters who are larger than life, and whose problems are larger than life. And whose joys are larger than life, also. So I think I must walk away from that having learned something. And if somebody in the audience can see that and maybe see a little bit of him or herself, that’s another kind of payoff.

**TT: Tell us a little bit about Anna. In an interview with Joel Markowitz you said that to be able to play a character you have to fall in love with her, you have to “find the love in the scene.” Have you found something about Anna to love?**

HT: Oh, there’s so much. I love her—I mean, she’s got a great wit, and she’s clearly got love of life, and I love the way she tells a story. If you’re going to get into a character, it’s not that hard to find the love in there somewhere. Even the real baddies. It was a professor of mine from college who told us to find the love in the scene. I’ll never forget it and it’s served me well. Because I think that’s where truthfulness comes from. If you comment, and judge your character, you’re not coming at it from the right way, also, if you’re concerned about how your character is going to be perceived, then you’re also not coming at it the right way.

**TT: Is there anything about Anna which sets her apart from the other characters you’ve played?**

HT: I think one of the things that struck me was her stillness. And I’m interested in exploring that more as an actor...I usually play characters that are very expressive. I’m thinking back to Diane in *The Little Dog Laughed* (Signature Theatre). She had a loud way of moving through the world. And Bella in *Lost in Yonkers* (Theater J) had a certain energy. And so, I’m really interested in exploring the opposite of that, with Anna, because I think it would be interesting for me as an actor. What I can turn off.

**TT: You’ve appeared in virtually every theater in Washington. But this will be the first time working with the Shakespeare Theatre Company. So what about this play or this production drew you to STC?**

HT: To have Michael Kahn call you on the phone is rather flattering. So that’s how it began. And then when I read the play, it was a no-brainer. There’s something amazing about Pinter. There’s something magic about his words and his rhythms, his rhythms especially. You know, the joke of Pinter is about the Pinter pauses, and the key to the pauses is that they are sometimes as full as the words. And I’m fascinated to explore that. There are so many factors but sometimes you read a play, and you think, “I gotta do that.”

**Tim Treanor is the senior reviewer for DC Theatre Scene (DCTheatreScene.com) and has written more than 350 reviews of Washington-area professional theatre productions over the past six years. He is a member of the American Theater Critics Association. By day, he’s a trial lawyer for a federal agency.**
STC Artistic Director Michael Kahn and director Ethan McSweeny (Ion, Major Barbara, The Persians) sat down during a break between auditions in New York City to discuss their upcoming productions.

Ethan McSweeny: So, Old Times. I reread it yesterday, and it was such a pleasure to read it again. I directed it in the George Street Playhouse in 2001.

Michael Kahn: I didn’t know that.

EM: Yeah, Lisa Harrow and Dee Hoty as Anna and Kate respectively, and Sam Tsoutsouvas as Deeley. I don’t know why David Saint let me do it; it was my first year there as his Associate Artistic Director. But the critics loved it.

MK: That’s funny. I bet Sam was very good.

EM: Yeah, he was. He has a sort of bulldog quality that I really like. And Deeley is interesting. I mean, he has these jealousies, and his masculinity is challenged by both of those women, isn’t it?

MK: Right. One of Pinter’s largest themes is power in relationships. In this play it’s watching a man who’s completely sure of his position with women, but discovering that not everything is what he thinks it is. I think it’s a wonderful play; the language is amazing, all of the stories and the metaphors that he uses are all absolutely perfect. Plus, it’s very funny. Did you find it funny?

EM: I found it hysterical.

MK: One of the great things about Pinter plays is that they are always a mystery—who means what, and what’s the subtext. In this play, the desire for ownership or possession of somebody is very strong. But the way these characters try to own the other characters is through memories. What you remember, or what you say happened, whether it did or not, is a way of fixing that person as your possession. Memories are weapons, and that fascinates me.

EM: Do you think we ever know which version is true?

MK: I’m very reluctant to say what I think the play means because Harold Pinter was very, very careful never to do so. There’s a reason why playwrights who are actually very smart, like Harold Pinter and Edward Albee, don’t explain ambiguous plays, because they want the audience to figure it out for themselves. I mean, we all have our theories about the play. For me, I find the play very clear. But I don’t want to tell the audience what I think it’s about. I hope they’ll get an idea.

EM: What I found when I directed it was we had to agree to disagree about what actually had happened, because all of us had our own narrative. And the audience, after the play is over, has only its memory to go back to and put the pieces together. So you get stuck in the same situation as the characters.

MK: I did the play 30 years ago, and the audience was always intrigued. I mean, this is one of Pinter’s most successful plays. We’re doing it because there’s a responsibility for the Shakespeare Theatre Company to say we believe these modern plays will be classics. And I think this play is definitely a 20th century classic, in the same way that A Streetcar Named Desire is, and Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? I’ve always thought that there is a direct line from the Shakespeare of Much Ado About Nothing to Oscar Wilde to Noël Coward to Pinter. There is a kind of black comedy and economy of language that runs through these masters.

EM: What’s your strategy for the Pinter pause?

MK: You have to decide what they mean. They can’t be artificial. And Pinter used to always say this is a one pause, this is a two pause, but that’s not how you act it. I think they get filled with a thought or an activity. I don’t think everything stops.

EM: No. [Laughs]

MK: I mean, we have pauses in life and things don’t stop. But I think he’d say there’s rhythm, an emotional rhythm, and once you find what the internal logic is, the pauses are pretty inexorable.

EM: It’s almost a musical notation in a way.

MK: Exactly. When I do an opera and there’s a pause or a rest, I know it’s there for a reason. Something has happened. It’s totally fun to work it out in rehearsal. For me, it’s 30 years later, I’m a different person, I understand relationships in a more mature way and I’m looking forward to rediscovering a play that I loved then, and that I fell totally in love with again when I reread it.

EM: It’s my favorite play of Pinter’s and I cannot wait to see your production of it.

MK: I can’t wait to go into rehearsal so I can see how it turns out. Now let’s talk about your return to STC.
EM: I also think Antonio and Shylock are birds of a feather. And with Derek Smith as Antonio, paired with Mark Nelson as our Shylock, I consciously wanted them to both be a little bit younger than what is often the case, a little closer to the age that they might actually have been. But I also feel that but for a trick of birth, either one of them could be the other one.

MK: I think that’s a wonderful idea. I think that’s why Shakespeare felt it okay to call the play The Merchant of Venice. That refers to Antonio, but he didn’t call the play Antonio and he didn’t call it Shylock.

EM: Because they’re both merchants.

MK: Since you were at the theatre last we’ve finally gotten rid of the sand from The Persians. You’ve been so busy since you were here, you’re now doing Arms and the Man at Guthrie Theater, and you’re about to do A Time To Kill at Arena Stage, which is a modern play. Do you enjoy going back and forth between the different genres of the theatre?

EM: It’s my favorite thing. The same year I did Ion I did two world premieres and a musical. You taught me this, but I find as a director, doing each kind informs the other. I don’t actually treat a contemporary play all that differently than I treat a Shakespeare play. It’s funny, because the play at Arena is another trial play. So, I’m going to be “trial-scened out”.

MK: Well, I’m looking forward to seeing your production of The Merchant of Venice.
What keeps bringing us back to The Merchant of Venice? By some accounts, it is second only to Hamlet in frequency of performance. Perhaps its popularity lies in its timeless themes: cut-throat business dealings, the challenges of true love and religious conflict. The play tells the story of Antonio, the title merchant whose generosity to his friend Bassanio endangers his own life, and of the trials that threaten Bassanio’s marriage to the lovely heiress Portia. Their journeys through peril to triumph are the equal of any found in Shakespeare’s works.

Despite its memorable protagonists, however, what has kept The Merchant of Venice so popular for so long has been its memorable antagonist. This character appears in only five scenes, but makes such a strong impression that great leading actors have flocked to play him. Shylock, the Jewish moneylender who offers Antonio a loan with a fearsome collateral, fascinated audiences from the beginning. When Shakespeare’s company registered the play for publication in July 1598, in fact, they declared it “otherwise called The Jew of Venice.” Shylock is one of Shakespeare’s most complex and (particularly in our time) most controversial characters, a troubling figure who has held the stage for more than four centuries.

Jewish characters had appeared in Elizabethan plays before The Merchant of Venice; perhaps because they had been banned from England since 1290, Jews made for convenient cardboard villains on stage. That is not to say that no real Jews lived in England, for small communities practiced their religion in secret. One of those Jews, a converted Portuguese doctor named Rodrigo Lopez, was executed in 1594 for allegedly plotting to poison Queen Elizabeth. This case brought back to the stage a five-year-old play, the late Christopher Marlowe’s The Jew of Malta, in which a cartoonishly evil Jewish villain poisons an entire convent of nuns before he is killed. Shakespeare may have been capitalizing on this play’s popularity when he wrote The Merchant of Venice, but he created a Jewish villain that was much more than a cartoon.

Shakespeare borrowed his plot almost whole cloth from a 14th-century Italian book called Il Pecorone. Beyond the story, the very name of Venice would have conjured up specific associations in the Elizabethan mind: tremendous wealth generated from trade, well-ordered political and legal systems and tolerance for foreigners. In reality, however, Venice was far less tolerant, restricting its Jewish residents to enclosed neighborhoods it called “ghettos.” As with his Italian plays before and after, Shakespeare used Venice as a stand-in for London, commenting more on the personal conflicts generated in his city’s commercial interactions than on Italian religious persecution.

But it was Shylock, whose anguish over losing his daughter and his money fuels his vengeful rage, that kept this play on stage almost continuously since its writing. The Irish actor Charles Macklin chose Shylock as his star vehicle in a 1741 production, playing him as a resolute villain. Edmund Kean, by contrast, created a much more sympathetic figure in 1814. After the late-19th century actor Henry Irving followed suit, the play all but became The Tragedy of Shylock, so much so that the other parts were edited down. One production to restore the balance was John Barton’s 1978 Royal Shakespeare Company version, which featured Patrick Stewart as a memorable Shylock but also gave the other characters their due. Still, great actors have continued to engage with Shylock, including Dustin Hoffman in London in 1989 and Al Pacino on film in 2004 and on Broadway in 2010. This challenging and fierce play is unlikely to disappear from the stage in its next four centuries.
Imagine any one of our productions operating at 60%. Would you cut Mrs. Cheveley’s purple dress or the staircase from An Ideal Husband? The rain in Cymbeline or the orchestra from Candide? Donors are critical to the Shakespeare Theatre Company. Ticket sales cover just 60% of the cost of producing the plays you love at STC. We rely on gifts from our generous Stars and Artistic Circle members to cover the gap.

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The Merchant of Venice: Comedy or Conundrum

by John W. Mahon

Shortly after she enters the courtroom disguised as a young lawyer, Portia asks the defendant and plaintiff to identify themselves. Generations of readers and audiences have asked the same question with regard to the identity of the play itself. The Merchant of Venice appeared in print for the first time in 1600 as The most excellent Historie of the Merchant of Venice; however, on the sheet which followed the title page appeared another title, The comical History of the Merchant of Venice. Near the end of the 20th century, one publisher of Shakespeare’s works listed the play as a tragedy. History? Comedy? Tragedy? In the end, the play seems more of a conundrum than anything else.

In shaping The Merchant of Venice, Shakespeare consulted a number of sources that ultimately yielded two plots and a sub-plot. There are, in fact, two climaxes in the structure of the play, the first at its center, when Bassanio wins Portia—the kind of climax typical of other Shakespearean romantic comedies. The second climax comes at the critical moment of the courtroom scene, when Shylock comes perilously close to winning his case against Antonio.

This second climax undercuts, and, some would argue, scuttles what many have seen as the real theme of the play. In the introduction to his Arden edition of the play, John Russell Brown concludes with a statement of this theme: “In the scramble of give and take, when appearance and reality are hard to distinguish, one thing seems certain: that giving is the most important part—giving prodigally, without thought for the taking.”

The theme of love as selfless giving finds its finest flowering in Portia’s offer of herself to Bassanio. After Bassanio finds her picture in the lead casket, she gives him everything: “Myself, and what is mine, to you and yours / Is now converted.” Her complete gift of self underlies the famous speech

“Which is the merchant here? And which the Jew?”
Portia, act 4, scene 1

John Everett Millais, Portia (Kate Dolan) (1886).
on mercy in the courtroom scene, but it is withheld at the end of the scene, when she puts mercy aside to render judgment.

Here we come to the second principal cause of audience difficulty with the play, Shakespeare’s treatment of Shylock. The playwright’s apparent intentions are clear from Shylock’s very first appearance: “I hate him for he is a Christian...If I can catch him once upon the hip, / I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.” Shylock reinforces his villainy with virtually everything he does in later scenes, until we reach the speech that echoes down the centuries to haunt us: “Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections...?” In his refusal to simplify the complexity of all things human, Shakespeare demonstrates the truth of Shylock’s last words in this speech: “The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.”

The Fifth Act serves as a coda to the play, reinforcing the theme of self-sacrificing love in the resolution of the quarrel over rings. But the damage has been done, and audiences emerge from performances of the play unable to forget the vivid “Hath not a Jew eyes” speech or the image of a Shylock leaving the play bent down under the weight of burdens.

The play remains a conundrum, in Kenneth Rothwell’s words, “the woefullest but most complicated comedy ever written.” But, second only to Hamlet in popularity among Shakespeare’s works, The Merchant of Venice will continue to attract readers and audiences seeking to understand its complexities and to enjoy its vividly-realized characters.
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### FREE EVENTS

**Happenings at the Harman**

Conversations and performances with some of the area’s leading artists. Seating based on availability on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations not required. Artists subject to change.

### SHAKESPEARE STARS EVENT

**Meet the Cast**

Meet the cast and artistic team of our productions while enjoying a glass of wine and a delightful reception with other Theatre donors. The director will talk about his/her vision for the play, followed by a presentation by the production’s designers.

For more information about Shakespeare Stars, visit ShakespeareTheatre.org/Support.

Dates and times subject to change; visit ShakespeareTheatre.org.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

**Will on the Hill**

*All the World’s a Stage*

Monday, May 2

Sidney Harman Hall

**Trey McIntyre Project**

Presented by The Washington Performing Arts Society

May 13–14

Sidney Harman Hall

**Carmen**

The Washington Ballet

May 18–22

Sidney Harman Hall

Photo of Holly Twyford, Tracy Lynn Middendorf and Steven Culp.
FREE EVENTS
ReDiscovery Reading
Works for the ReDiscovery series are chosen by Artistic Director Michael Kahn. Guest artists join members of the Washington theatrical community to investigate these great but lesser-known plays of world literature. Reservations required.

Happenings at the Harman
Conversations and performances with some of the area’s leading artists. Seating based on availability on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations not required. Artists subject to change.

OTHER EVENTS
Shakespeare and the Law Panel Discussion
The Shakespeare and the Law discussion series, moderated by Abbe Lowell, brings together a panel of experts in different areas of law to explore contemporary legal issues through the window of Shakespeare’s plays. Tickets are $25.

Young Prose Nights
Join other savvy theatregoers ages 21–35 for a fantastic performance and time to mingle. Events are fun, classical and financially friendly.

SPECIAL EVENTS
The Importance of Being Earnest Screening
screened in HD from the Roundabout Theatre Company Tuesday, June 28 Sidney Harman Hall

The Merchant of Venice Symposium
Saturday, June 25 The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall

Join us for our next Young Prose Night!
Old Times June 1
The Merchant of Venice June 30

SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY
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Old Times 2:00 and 7:30 | ReDiscovery Reading 7:30 | Old Times 7:30 | Happenings: Chelsey Green noon | Old Times 8:00 | Old Times 8:00 | Old Times 2:00 and 8:00
Old Times 2:00 and 7:30 | Old Times 7:30 | Happenings: WPAS: Men and Women of the Gospel Choir noon | Old Times 8:00 | Old Times 8:00 | Old Times 2:00 and 8:00 | Old Times 2:00 and 8:00
Old Times 2:00 and 7:30 | Old Times 7:30 | Happenings: Antonini Dance noon | Old Times 8:00 | The Merchant of Venice 8:00 | Old Times 2:00 and 8:00 | The Merchant of Venice 2:00 and 8:00
Old Times 2:00 and 7:30 | Old Times 7:30 | Happenings: Furia Flamenco noon | Old Times noon and 7:30 | The Importance of Being Earnest Screening 7:30 | Old Times 8:00 | Old Times 8:00
Old Times 2:00 and 7:30 | The Merchant of Venice 7:45 | Opening Night | Old Times 7:30 | The Merchant of Venice 7:30 Post-Performance Discussion | Old Times 8:00 | The Merchant of Venice 8:00
Old Times 2:00 and 7:30 | The Merchant of Venice 7:30 | The Importance of Being Earnest Screening 7:30 | Old Times 7:30 | The Merchant of Venice 7:30 | The Merchant of Venice 8:00 | The Merchant of Venice 2:00 and 8:00

Dates and times subject to change; visit ShakespeareTheatre.org.
### Special Events

**NT Live**
- *The Cherry Orchard*
  - Monday, July 11
  - Sidney Harman Hall

**SPECIAL EVENTS**
- Photos of Aubrey Deeker, Andrew Long, Dan Kremer and Tom Hammond by Carol Rosegg.

### Free Events

**Happenings at the Harman**
Conversations and performances with some of the area’s leading artists. Seating based on availability on a first-come, first-served basis. Reservations not required. Artists subject to change.

Dates and times subject to change; visit ShakespeareTheatre.org.

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### Calendar

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The Shakespeare Theatre Company is proud to present performances by many of Washington’s most acclaimed companies as well as visiting national and international artists through the Harman Center for the Arts. Located in the heart of the arts district in Washington, D.C., the Harman Center for the Arts opens doors for many multi-disciplinary art forms to be enjoyed.

Furthering this mission, Happenings at the Harman offers another exciting season of free performances celebrating the best of dance, film, poetry and theatre. Memorable performers will return and the introduction of new directions in jazz and dance are just some of the highlights planned for the upcoming season. Many of this year’s Happenings also celebrate the work of STC’s 2010–2011 mainstage productions along with several city-wide festivals.

These free afternoon performances are held in The Forum in Sidney Harman Hall on Wednesdays from noon to 1 p.m.

A schedule of events can be found in the Asides calendar (pages 26–31) or online at ShakespeareTheatre.org.

Remembering Sidney Harman

We are deeply saddened by the passing of our dear friend, trustee and loyal supporter Sidney Harman. His generous investment in the mission and expansion of the Shakespeare Theatre Company resulted in the construction of Sidney Harman Hall. The many performances on its theatre and Forum stages have honored and will continue to honor Sidney’s interest in providing Washington audiences a wide variety of performances held in world-class spaces.

Sidney was fond of quoting Maxwell Anderson’s editorial: “if we are to be remembered as more than a mass of people who lived and fought wars and died, it is for our arts that we will be remembered.” Thanks to Sidney’s generosity, spirit, leadership and philanthropy, we will always remember Sidney fondly for his great contributions to the arts and to our nation’s capital.
ABOUT FREE FOR ALL

The Shakespeare Theatre Company’s Free For All is a much-loved Washington tradition, offering free performances of a Shakespearean classic to the general public. STC is thrilled to kick off our 25th Anniversary Season with Julius Caesar, originally presented during the 2007–2008 inaugural season at Sidney Harman Hall.

ABOUT THE PLAY

As swift and enthralling as a political thriller, Julius Caesar portrays the life-and-death struggle for power in Rome. Fearing that Caesar’s growing strength and imperial ambitions threaten the Republic, a faction of politicians plots to assassinate him. But when Caesar is killed, chaos engulfs Rome. Alive with stunning rhetoric, Julius Caesar investigates the intoxicating effects of power and the dangers of idealism. In Caesar, Brutus, and the young Marc Antony, Shakespeare created three fascinating, dynamic characters.

TICKETS

Blocks of tickets will be made available to the public for each performance of Julius Caesar. All 2011–2012 Season subscribers and Friends of Free For All may reserve Free For All tickets in advance for select performances. Subscribers are eligible for two tickets per subscription seat; the number of tickets that Friends of Free For All may reserve varies by level of giving. Visit ShakespeareTheatre.org/FFA for more information.

REFLECTIONS ON FREE FOR ALL

Free For All gives me a renewed sense of relevance of the classics. We need to continue to produce innovative productions of classical works that amplify and illustrate issues we confront in modern life. We have truly an Elizabethan reach, just as Shakespeare did in his own time. There is genuine delight and interest on the part of our Free For All audiences and a definite response to the complexity of thought and language in the plays. The people who fill the seats—especially the young people—give me great hope. We are creating the audiences of tomorrow.

Michael Kahn, Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company

I remember once when I was at the Free For All, there was a couple sitting next to me with a very, very young child, and I began to talk to them and I asked, “Why are you here?” And they said, “Where else would we have the opportunity to introduce our child to Shakespeare and be able to afford it?”

Jane Alexander, former Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts

Some of my proudest moments during seven years at the Shakespeare Theatre Company came from working on the Free for All. It’s a cherished Washington tradition for good reason: the Free For All brings world-class productions of Shakespeare, for FREE, to anyone and everyone, including children experiencing Shakespeare for the first time and families who can’t normally afford a night at the theatre.

David Muse, Artistic Director of The Studio Theatre and former Associate Artistic Director of the Shakespeare Theatre Company

FRIENDS OF FREE FOR ALL

Free For All would not be possible without the hundreds of individuals who generously donate to support the program each year. Only with the help of the Friends of Free For All is STC able to offer free performances, making Shakespeare accessible to Washington, D.C., area residents every summer.

In appreciation for this support, Friends of Free For All receive exclusive benefits during the festival such as reserved Free For All tickets, the option to have tickets mailed in advance, special event invitations, program recognition and more.

For more information, please visit ShakespeareTheatre.org/FOFFA or call us at 202.547.1122, option 7.

Photo by Kevin Allen.
Who are the ShakesPEERS?
ShakesPEERS is a unique program at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in which D.C. teens spend their afternoons exploring the work of William Shakespeare on their own terms. The PEERS find a safe environment in which they can take creative risks, find their artistic voices, build a sense of community and discover the relevancy of classical theatre in their lives. For the PEERS, Shakespeare isn’t bound inside a book for class but is an exciting part of every week.

ShakesPEERS in 2011
In January, the PEERS program undergone some exciting new changes. The program tripled its number of participants by expanding from its home base in the STC Education Studio into two new locations in the District: Sitar Arts Center and H.D. Woodson High School, a D.C. Public School in Anacostia. Despite being spread out across the city, the PEERS all follow the same curriculum taught by STC Education staff and teaching artists.

In another new move, the PEERS’ final performance will now be chosen based on STC’s season; this spring, the PEERS will perform Cymbeline. In February, the PEERS from each site met for the first time and saw Cymbeline free of charge, looking for inspiration for their own production. After the show, the PEERS had a special talkback with the actors, where they were able to ask questions about the play and even learned a few tips about how to dispel pre-show jitters.

Before their performances in May, the PEERS will unite several more times for special All Cast meetings. Together, they’ll have special workshops on stage combat, physical comedy and more. All of these changes have invigorated the ShakesPEERS program and widened the opportunity for D.C. teens to discover just how relevant classical theatre can be to their lives.

You can see the ShakesPEERS perform Cymbeline May 12 in the Forum in Sidney Harman Hall and May 13 at THEARC.

Many in-kind partners help the Shakespeare Theatre Company tackle its production challenges.

MAC Cosmetics (maccosmetics.com), the Official Cosmetic of STC since 2009, assists with make-up for all mainstage productions (including Cymbeline, shown above) and hosts educational make-up seminars for STC’s production staff and performers. All make-up looks, from traditional to fantastical, are show-specific and sometimes require more than a dozen trials.

STC maintains a large stock of shoes and boots and orders show-specific footwear for every production. During our 2009–2010 Leadership Repertory Production of Richard II and Henry V, there were two sets of costumes, boots and armor packed into the dressing rooms at once—a very full house. Old Town Shoe and Luggage Repair (donshoe.com) repairs and rubbers STC shoes throughout the season. This is necessary for the actors’ safety, and STC uses 15 to 150 pairs of shoes per show. At $35 per pair, the cost of rubbering adds up quickly!

Cleaning togas can be a challenge but Parkway Custom Dry Cleaning (parkwaydrycleaning.com) has provided superior care to hundreds of STC costumes. Our costumes are dry cleaned every Monday and laundering is usually done overnight. The togas in Julius Caesar take 18 hours to launder, dry and press because they come in contact with stage blood. There is not enough time to clean them on days with both matinee and evening performances, so two sets of costumes will be created for this year’s Free For All.

These companies provide thousands of dollars in budget relief to STC and allow the theatre to direct funds back to staging quality productions and providing innovative education and community engagement programs.

To join our growing list of in-kind sponsors, contact the Corporate Giving Office at 202.547.3230 ext. 2342 or CorpSTC@ShakespeareTheatre.org.

Emily Townsend is the Education Intern at the Shakespeare Theatre Company.

Noreen Major is the Corporate Giving Manager at the Shakespeare Theatre Company.

Above photo of the Queen (Franchelle Stewart Dorn) in Cymbeline wore MAC Cosmetics. Photo by Scott Suchman.
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Asides.ShakespeareTheatre.org