

VARNDEAN SCHOOL FOR BOYS
1954

THE MERCHANT
OF VENICE

by

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

P R O G R

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

ANTONIO, <i>a merchant of Venice</i>	- - -	L. B. Carter
SALERIO	} <i>friends to Antonio and Bassanio</i>	} M. D. Greenow P. H. Spicer C. D. Boyce
SOLANIO		
GRATIANO		
BASSANIO, <i>friend to Antonio, suitor to Portia</i>	- - -	- C. B. Geer
LORENZO, <i>in love with Jessica</i>	- - -	- K. W. Welfare
PORTIA, <i>a rich heiress</i>	- - -	- J. R. O'Toole
NERISSA, <i>her waiting maid</i>	- - -	- G. Ness
SHYLOCK, <i>a rich Jew</i>	- - -	- M. F. Cager
THE PRINCE OF MOROCCO, <i>suitor to Portia</i>	- - -	- B. Beavis
LAUNCELOT GOBBO, <i>servant to Shylock</i>	- - -	- I. H. Nunn
OLD GOBBO, <i>his father</i>	- - -	- J. I. Bolter
LEONARDO, <i>friend to Bassanio</i>	- - -	- D. Akehurst
JESSICA, <i>daughter to Shylock</i>	- - -	- P. B. Marley
THE PRINCE OF ARRAGON, <i>suitor to Portia</i>	- - -	- D. C. Collings
BALTHASAR, <i>servant to Portia</i>	- - -	- G. N. Wimshurst
TUBAL, <i>a Jew</i>	- - -	- H. G. Morgan
THE DUKE OF VENICE	- - -	- M. J. Tribe

Gaoler, Officers of the Court of Justice, Servants, etc.—

R. Covell, D. W. Eyles, A. P. Weager, R. K. Harwood

H. R. Silverman, J. A. Hoskins, J. R. Tyrrell

<i>Producers</i>	- - - - -	- D. J. Ashcroft, M. Johnson
<i>Stage Manager</i>	- - - - -	- G. K. Green
<i>Make-up</i>	- - - - -	- M. Wylie, M. Johnson
<i>Scenery</i>	- - - - -	- S. E. Armstrong, M. Bruce
<i>Lighting</i>	- - - - -	- H. G. Hobdell, P. W. Knight, J. F. Matthews
<i>Music</i>	- - - - -	- R. K. W. Taylor
<i>Seating</i>	- - - - -	- O. F. Hills
<i>Costumes</i>	- - - - -	- B. & H. Drury Ltd., Brighton
<i>Properties and Effects</i>	- - - - -	- M. Bruce, D. J. Ashcroft

A M M E

The action of the play takes place partly at Venice and partly at Belmont, the seat of Portia.

ACT I

The play opens in Venice where we learn that the merchant, Antonio, has all his wealth invested in ventures overseas. When his friend, Bassanio, tries to borrow money from him, Antonio, being unable to furnish it himself, offers to use his credit to raise it. Bassanio needs money to visit Belmont to seek the hand of Portia, a rich heiress.

Portia is sought by many suitors, but most of them are discouraged when they learn that she is only to be won by the man who can choose from three caskets the one containing her portrait.

In Venice Antonio borrows money from a Jewish moneylender, Shylock, his mortal enemy, who proposes the infamous agreement that there shall be no interest on the loan, but should Antonio fail to repay it by the appointed time, Shylock shall cut from him a pound of flesh.

When Bassanio leaves for Belmont he takes his young friend Gratiano with him ; and at the same time Shylock's daughter, Jessica, elopes with a Christian.

INTERVAL

ACT II

After the Prince of Morocco and the Prince of Arragon have tried unsuccessfully to choose the right casket, Bassanio arrives at Belmont. In the choice of caskets, which is intended as a test of character, he chooses correctly. The two declare their love, Portia gives Bassanio a ring, and Gratiano announces his engagement to her maid, Nerissa. Then comes news from Venice that Antonio has failed to repay Shylock, and Shylock intends to exact his pound of flesh. Portia agrees to Bassanio's departing immediately after their wedding to try to save Antonio.

When Bassanio has left Portia reveals her intention to go to Venice, disguised as a lawyer, to help Antonio at the trial.

INTERVAL

ACT III

Scene I

In the trial scene, the dramatic climax of the play, Antonio's fate seems inevitable. Even after the arrival of Portia it seems that Shylock must succeed, but she is merely giving him rope to hang himself, for having offered him every opportunity to temper justice with mercy, Portia insists that he shall have merely justice. She reveals weaknesses in the bond, and shows that Shylock's intentions are criminal. He leaves the court a broken man.

Scene II

Portia and Nerissa obtain from their husbands the rings they had formerly given them, asking for them as a reward for their help in the trial. The play ends with the return to Belmont where the husbands are taken to task for parting with the rings.

Extra buses have been arranged on the Braybon Avenue-Old Steine route for the end of all performances.



A scene from "The Merchant of Venice," which is being presented by the boys of Yarudean School. Report on Page 9

Continue down for local press review and news item about Michael Cager

Varndean Victorious In "The Merchant"

A TRADITION MAINTAINED

BUT for the war years, a Shakespearean play has been produced annually by the boys of Varndean School on nearly thirty occasions.

This year, in the Stainer Hall, the choice is "The Merchant of Venice," last presented seven years ago. Large audiences gave the cast several curtain calls on Thursday, there was similar acclaim last night, and the boys should be on top form when they take the stage for the final performance to-night.

Thanks to the skilful, imaginative approach of Mr D. J. Ashcroft and Mr M. Johnson, the masters who produce, this latest essay into the realms of Shakespeare is well up to the Varndean tradition. The principal characters are played not with the gawkish mannerisms of self-conscious schoolboys, but with confidence, a fine sense of stagecraft, admirable diction and keen awareness of Shakespeare's matchless lines.

There is an almost immediate impression of keen appreciation by the players of just what is required of them and of the finely-woven admixture of comedy and drama which this, one of the Bard's most famous plays, demands.

Portia's verbal broadside, fired with such telling accuracy at Shylock in the trial scene, is a triumph in itself, and throughout there is a robust, strutting arrogance about much of the acting.

But the play has, too, its humour and its more delicate moments, all mirrored with faithfulness by the

boys. One forgets, most of the time, that they are boys, in fact.

Simplicity combined with effectiveness sums up the scenery, the work of S. E. Armstrong and M. Bruce, and it is enhanced by some beautiful lighting effects, thanks to H. G. Hobdell, P. W. Knight and J. F. Matthews.

The costumes are excellent, but in fairness the credit must go to the firm from which they are hired. Properties and effects by Mr Ashcroft and Mr Bruce put the finishing touches on the show.

Lasting impressions which audiences take away with them include J. R. O'Toole's contrasting Portias—the one a comely heiress sought by many suitors, and the other the all-conquering young lawyer who puts paid to Shylock's devilry once and for all.

Equally worthy is the Shylock of M. F. Cager, who personifies the Jew's avarice and frenzied determination to gain his pound of Antonio's flesh with compelling realism. Here is character study among the best Varndean has produced to date.

C. B. Geer, as Bassanio, provides an object lesson in fine diction, and L. B. Carter, in the title rôle, proves equal to an exacting task.

Gallant Trio

Three worthy gallants, friends of Antonio and Bassanio, are capably played by M. D. Greenow, P. H. Spicer and C. D. Boyce, and making the most of their opportunities are K. W. Welfare (Lorenzo), B. Beavis (Prince of Morocco), J. I. Bolter (Old Gobbo), D. Akehurst (Leonardo), P. B. Marley (Jessica), G. N. Wimshurst (Balthasar), H. G. Morgan (Tubal) and M. J. Tribe (Duke of Venice).

A trio who bring just that something extra to their rôles are I. H. Nunn, who makes a memorable Launcelot Gobbo, Shylock's servant, with his rustic ruminations and irrepressible humour; D. C. Collings, whose study of the foppish Prince of Arragon is a highlight of humour; and G. Ness, a diverting Nerissa, Portia's waiting maid.

Appearing in minor rôles are R. Covell, D. W. Eyles, A. P. Weager, R. K. Harwood, H. R. Silverman, J. A. Hoskins and J. R. Tyrrell.

The stage manager is G. K. Green, responsible for make-up are M. Wylie and M. Johnson, the music is by Mr R. K. W. Taylor, and O. F. Hills is in charge of seating.

HIS FRIENDS WILL "TUNE IN" ON TUESDAY

VARNDEAN schoolboys will be "tuning in" to the Light Programme on Tuesday evening when "The Younger Generation" goes on the air.

For compèring the show will be one of their fellow pupils, Michael Cager, 15-year-old son of Mr and Mrs A. T. Cager, of Havelock-road.

"I went for an audition last August," said Michael, "but as I didn't hear anything I thought nothing would come of it. But the B.B.C. rang me up on Thursday and asked if I would act as compère, and I said yes."

Michael is a pupil of the Brighton School of Elocution, under the



MICHAEL CAGER

direction of Miss O. Von Der Heyde. He is a keen actor and takes the part of Shylock in Varndean's production of "The Merchant of Venice" this week.

His ambition is to be a character actor, and his hero is Sir Laurence Olivier. Apart from being an actor, Michael is an amateur conjurer. "But only to the family," he said. "Conjuring helps me to get confidence in appearing in front of people."

He takes his General Certificate of Education examination next summer, and then hopes to get into one of the London dramatic schools.