



# THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

BY WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE

NERISSA  
SPILLS  
THE  
TEA

BY FELICITY  
BURKE

## Audition Information

**Auditions:** Casula Powerhouse, Saturday 4th Feb – 10.00am to 4.00pm.

Please note **all roles are unpaid.**

Please email the director to secure an audition time.

Director Felicity Burke Email: [felicitymayburke@gmail.com](mailto:felicitymayburke@gmail.com) AD Mat Blake.

## PRODUCTION DETAILS:

This production is an interactive incursion into the play, with excerpts of the play included, not a full version of the play itself. The actors will work as a dynamic ensemble, presenting the piece in an entertaining and accessible way. The production is for senior school students and as such there are day-time performances. There is one open to the public night-time performance also. Please see character descriptions and auditions pieces following.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

**You must be available for all the listed performance and rehearsal dates below. Please do not book an audition if you are not available for these dates.**

### Performances:

Wed 17th May 10:30 and 13:00

Thu 18th May 10:30 and 13:00

Friday 19th May 10:30 and 19:30

Friday 19<sup>th</sup> May 13:00 Please Note: This additional day time performance may be added depending on booking numbers.

### Rehearsals:

At a venue in Bonnyrigg, or as advised on Tuesday and Thursday nights from 13th February till 11th May 2023.

### Sunday & full day rehearsals:

April 23 & 30, 2023

May 7, 2023

10.00 to 3pm, CPAC Sunday 14 May – LPAE Bump in and rehearsal 10am to 3:45pm.

Monday 15 – CPAC and LPAE tech rehearsal and dress rehearsal 9am to 3:45pm. Tuesday 16 May – CPAC and LPAE full rehearsal 9am to 3:45 pm

Successful auditionees will need to become a member of The Liverpool Performing Arts Ensemble. Details will be forwarded.

## PLAY DETAILS:

This is an interactive incursion into the play with excerpts from the text included. Actors should be comfortable with working with a young adult audience. Skills in improv, presentation and interaction would be useful!

**CHARACTERS AND AUDITION PIECES:**

All auditionees are requested to prepare the pieces listed. If applying for more than one part, please audition for the character of first preference. You may also be asked for cold reads on the day and may be given an improv situation to work with on the day. It will be a fun, positive environment. We will support you!

**FEMALE (3):**

**Narrator/Nerissa**

**Portia**

**Jessica/Hostess**

**MALE (4):**

**Shylock**

**Antonio/Borrower**

**Bassanio/Notary/Borrower**

**Lorenzo/Borrower/Gratiano/Duke**

## **Audition parts- Nerissa**

Age range 20-35

### **NERISSA**

In this version Nerissa is the lead actor. She is a narrator and also speaks as her character in the play. She guides us through the actions and themes of the play. She needs to be an experienced actor, comfortable with facilitating discussion, fielding audience comments, working with improv and humour. My view is that she is a 'bit of a westie' with a handle on youth issues. Age range roughly 25-35.

Audition pieces:

### **NARRATOR NERISSA**

*Hey there, I'm Nerissa and this is "The Merchant of Venice" by some bloke you may have heard of, William Shakespeare. I think he wrote a few plays, but the one I'm in, definitely the best. In your face Juliet! For some reason, old Willy Shakespeare decided to name the play after the Merchant, big mistake. Maybe Jessica's Dad should have had the title, "Shylock, the Money Lender of Venice". Okay, I can see how it might not have as good a ring to it, I mean naming it after a Jew. In Venice, Jews are tolerated, well, just. Prejudice? Hmmm.. it depends where you sit doesn't it? Although Jessica is at least doing something about it and she's OK really. I mean her father Shylock is just obsessed with money.*

### **NERISSA**

Your father was ever virtuous; and holy men at their death have good inspirations: therefore the lottery, that he hath devised in these three chests of gold, silver and lead, whereof who chooses his meaning chooses you, will, no doubt, never be chosen by any rightly but one who shall rightly love. But what warmth is there in your affection towards any of these princely suitors that are already come?

NB:

The people auditioning for **Nerissa** will (in addition to the pieces listed) be required to facilitate a discussion amongst those present on any controversial topic of their choosing. Please be prepared to facilitate a discussion amongst those present on any controversial topic of your choosing. To go for about 5-10 mins max.

You will also be given an improv situation to work with on the day.

## **Audition parts -Portia**

Age Range 20-40

### **PORTIA**

You know I say nothing to him, for he understands not me, nor I him: he hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian, and you will come into the court and swear that I have a poor pennyworth in the English. He is a proper man's picture, but, alas, who can converse with a dumb-show? How oddly he is suited! I think he bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany and his behaviour everywhere.

### **PORTIA**

The quality of mercy is not strain'd,  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown;  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
Though justice be thy plea, consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy. I have spoke thus much  
To mitigate the justice of thy plea;  
Which if thou follow, this strict court of Venice  
Must needs give sentence 'gainst the merchant there.

Additional- improv/cold reading.

**Audition parts -Jessica**

Age Range 20-30

**JESSICA**

Here, catch this casket; it is worth the pains.  
I am glad 'tis night, you do not look on me,  
For I am much ashamed of my exchange.  
But love is blind, and lovers cannot see  
The pretty follies that themselves commit;  
For if they could, Cupid himself would blush  
To see me thus transformed to a boy.

**JESSICA**

Alack, what heinous sin is it in me  
To be ashamed to be my father's child!  
But though I am a daughter to his blood  
I am not to his manners.  
O Lorenzo,  
If thou keep promise, I shall end this strife,  
Become a Christian and thy loving wife.

Additional- improv/cold reading.

## **Audition parts -Shylock/Other**

Suggested stage age 40+ .

### **SHYLOCK**

To bait fish withal; if it will feed nothing else, it will feed my revenge. He hath disgraced me, and hindered me half a million, laughed at my losses, mocked at my gains, scorned my nation, thwarted my bargains, cooled my friends, heated mine enemies – and what's his reason? I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die? And if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge! The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

### **SHYLOCK**

I hate him for he is a Christian.

But more, for that in low simplicity

He lends out money gratis, and brings down

The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

If I can catch him once upon the hip,

I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.

He hates our sacred nation, and he rails,

Even there where merchants most do congregate,

On me, my bargains and my well-won thrift,

Which he calls interest. Cursed be my tribe,

If I forgive him!

If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge! The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction...But soft, how many months do you desire?

Additional- improv/cold reading.

**Audition parts- Antonio/Borrower/Other**

Small speaking part but multiple on-stage business. Age range 25-40

**ANTONIO**

I pray you think you question with the Jew:  
You may as well go stand upon the beach  
And bid the main flood bate his usual height;  
You may as well use question with the wolf  
Why he hath made the ewe bleak for the lamb;  
You may as well forbid the mountain pines  
To wag their high tops, and to make no noise  
When they are fretten with the gusts of heaven;  
You may as well do any thing most hard  
As seek to soften that—than which what's harder?—  
His Jewish heart!  
Therefore I do beseech you  
Make no more offers, use no farther means,  
But with all brief and plain conveniency  
Let me have judgment and the Jew his will.

Additional- improv/cold reading.

**Audition parts -Bassanio/Bassanio/Notary/Borrower/Other**

This is a very small speaking part but has multiple character parts and on-stage business.  
Age range 25-40

**SHYLOCK**

Three thousand ducats; well.

**BASSANIO**

Ay, Sir, for three months

**SHYLOCK**

For three months, well.

**BASSANIO**

For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

**SHYLOCK**

Antonio shall become bound; well.

**BASSANIO**

May you stead me? will you pleasure me? shall I  
know your answer?

**SHYLOCK**

Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.  
May I speak with Antonio?

Additional- improv/cold reading.

**Lorenzo/Borrower/Gratiano/Duke/Other**

There is a minimal speaking part but has multiple character and on-stage business. Age range 25-40

Audition will be by improv/cold reading.