

Regarding E.L.T

Formed in 1952 to let producers know that a talent pool of actors existed in Chicago, Equity Library Theatre remains the Midwest's only ongoing producer of showcases. E.L.T is open to any and all members of Actors' Equity Association who are in good standing with that union.

ELT offers performance opportunities to actors in many venues from full performance to staged readings, from scene showcases to various workshops and discussions with visiting artists.

Members are encouraged to bring ideas for new projects to one of four yearly meetings. The Alternative Classic Theatre Project began this way in 1986 and has become one of the most successful ventures ELT has produced.

Another new idea was the establishment of a radio theatre. The first offering was a production of Studs Terkel's *Home Sweet Home*, presented at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in 1991.

In 1993, we became a resident theatre of the Chicago Cultural Center. Each year we provide high quality, low cost Theatricals to the downtown area. Three to four fully produced plays in the Studio Theatre plus six to twelve one hour presentations in the Main Theatre on the second floor. Our last production, *The Roads to Home* by Horton Foote, was so successful that it was extended and moved to Eclipse Theatre, 2074 N. Leavitt. It must close December 17th. Tickets are still available at (312) 743-0266. Our next production at the Cultural Center will be Shakespeare's **Macbeth**, Feb 1-11.

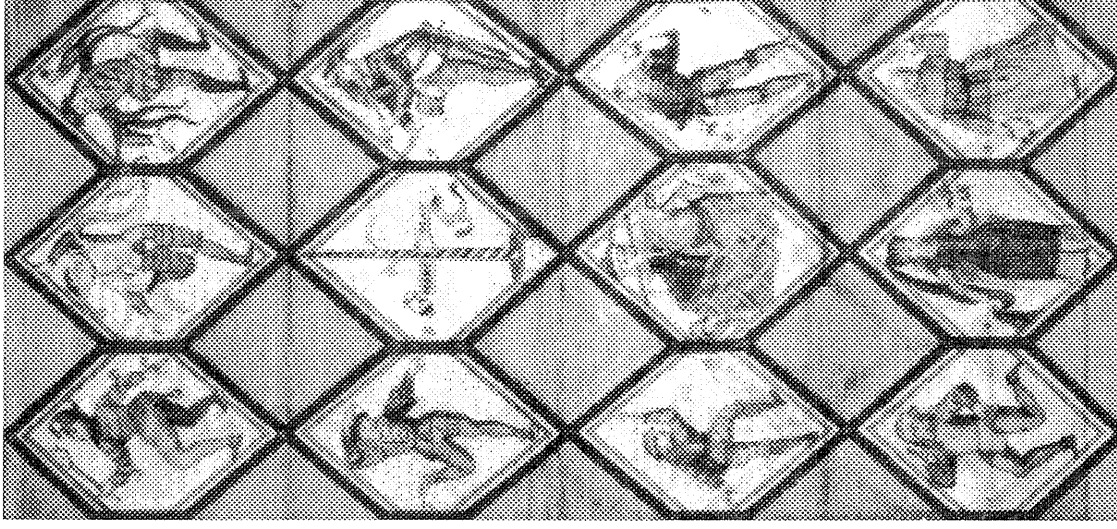
Workshops for children and the elderly have been conducted by ELT Members. These workshops encourage participation from both groups to keep the spirit of the theatre alive and to bring theatre into new areas.

You can also see ELT at work during our summer season at Chicago Dramatists Workshop 1030 W. Chicago. We produce two to four full productions—everything from World Premieres to Shakespeare.

Equity Library Theatre Chicago is a nonprofit organization, and as such, may receive tax-deductible contributions. If you would like to contribute to ELT to help us continue programs such as this, please send any contributions to Treasurer, Equity Library Theatre, 4738 N. Laporte Avenue, Chicago 60630-3801. A confirmation letter for tax purposes, will be sent by return mail.

The Shakespeare Project

Presents



A Theatrical Reading of The Merchant of Venice

Direction: Gary Houston

This is a Special Project of EQUITY LIBRARY THEATRE CHICAGO. All of the actors are members of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers, and are contributing their talents under a Special Agreement between E.L.T. and A.E.A.

About **The Merchant of Venice**—the entry written by William Green, Queens College of the City University of New York, in [The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama](#) (1969), edited by John Gassner and Edward Quinn:

Merchant of Venice, The (c. 1596). A comedy by William Shakespeare. The Heyes Quarto of 1600 (the First Quarto), the first published text of *The Merchant of Venice*, furnished the copy for the 1623 First Folio. According to the quarto title page, this work had been acted "divers times" by the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Two tales, cleverly synthesized, serve as primary sources for the plot. From Ser Giovanni Fiorentino's *Il Pecorone* (1558) comes the pound-of-flesh story; the story of the caskets derives from a tale in the *Gesta Romanorum* (translated into English in 1577, revised 1595). The play also shows influences from Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* (c. 1590). Tenuous attempts have been made to like Shakespeare's play with an actual event of the day—the hanging for high treason in 1594 of Dr. Roderigo López, a converted Portuguese Jew serving as personal physician to the queen.

The Plot revolves around a bond made between **Antonio**, the merchant of the title, and **Shylock**, a Jewish usurer, so that Antonio may finance his young friend **Bassanio** in an expedition to Belmont to woo the wealthy and beautiful **Portia**. In order to win the lady, Bassanio, on arriving in Belmont, must undergo the test of the three caskets. He selects the correct one, and Portia, already in love with him, consents to be his wife. Meanwhile, report comes to Antonio that his three ships have been wrecked. Shylock demands payment for his loan, calling for the prearranged penalty of a pound of flesh. Bassanio, upon receiving the news, returns to Venice. Portia follows in male disguise, leaving her estate in care of Bassanio's friend Lorenzo. **Lorenzo** and his wife, **Jessica**—Shylock's daughter—having eloped, are new arrivals in Belmont. Shylock presses his claim in court. Posing as a lawyer, Portia, through deft legal argument, saves Antonio. The play closes in Belmont with all confusions set aright.

BY GENRE, *The Merchant of Venice* is a romantic comedy. It is concerned with love, mirroring and anatomizing various facets of that emotion. Shylock is the comic butt, the anti-love figure. The very settings underscore the themes, for Venice is depicted as a harsh, morally bankrupt city, whereas Belmont—where Shylock never sets foot—becomes the epitome of beauty and harmony, symbolized by the moonlit night and music of the too-easily-dismissed last act. The main characters are complexly constructed, especially Shylock, who has been endowed with some highly positive traits that lift him far above a typical stage villain. Although, The Merchant of Venice shows a great advance over the earlier comedies in its integration of plot, characters, settings and poetry, it is diffuse in tone and focus.

STAGE AND POLITICAL HISTORY have also had their clouding effect in interpreting the play. Commencing in the mid-18th Century, actors, fascinated by the complexities of Shylock, began a still-current tradition of playing him as a serious, sometimes tragic, character. The play has become centered around Shylock, although the usurer appears in but five of the twenty scenes. It has been further wrenched out of focus as a result of the periodic waves of anti-Semitism that have swept over Europe, culminating in the Nazi persecutions. Today, the play has social overtones almost certainly never intended by Shakespeare.

About *The Shakespeare Project*—This group of Chicago actors, under agreement between Equity Library Theatre and Actors' Equity Association, is dedicated to reading the works of William Shakespeare aloud, in a presentation that achieves the clarity that could otherwise only be accomplished by producing the plays. Assembled by project director and producer, Mara Polster, these exceptionally skilled actors have been seen on the stages of Shakespeare Repertory, The Goodman, Steppenwolf and other successful theatres in the Chicago area and around the country.

Beginning in January of 1996, *The Shakespeare Project* will present one play per month at The Chicago Cultural Center at 78 East Washington. For the months of March, June, September and December, there will be second performances at the Berger Park Mansion, 6205 N. Sheridan. Join us at the Cultural Center on Sunday, January 21, 1996 at 1:00 P.M. for the Theatrical Reading of *The Comedy of Errors*. For further information about *The Shakespeare Project*, call (312) 252-8544.

The Shakespeare Project

Presents

The Merchant of Venice

The Players

(in order of appearance)

<i>Antonio, merchant of Venice</i>	<i>Joe Van Slyke</i>
<i>Salerio, a friend</i>	<i>David Skidmore</i>
<i>Solanio, a friend</i>	<i>Edmund Wyson</i>
<i>Bassanio, a friend, suitor to Portia</i>	<i>Eric Krame</i>
<i>Lorenzo, in love with Jessica</i>	<i>Paul Boyer</i>
<i>Gratiano, a friend</i>	<i>Peter Garinc</i>
<i>Portia, a rich heiress</i>	<i>Judy Bluu</i>
<i>Nerissa, her waiting maid</i>	<i>Nancy Nicke</i>
<i>Stephano, servant to Portia</i>	<i>Julia Walke</i>
<i>Shylock, a rich Jew</i>	<i>Fredric Ston</i>
<i>The Prince of Morocco, suitor to Portia</i>	<i>Jack Hicke</i>
<i>Launcelot Gobbo, servant to Shylock</i>	<i>Cheryl William</i>
<i>Old Gobbo, his father</i>	<i>John Mohrleit</i>
<i>Leonardo, servant to Bassanio</i>	<i>Joseph Bower</i>
<i>Jessica, daughter to Shylock</i>	<i>Mara Polster</i>
<i>The Prince of Aragon, suitor to Portia</i>	<i>Robert W. Beh</i>
<i>Servant</i>	<i>Jack Hicke</i>
<i>Tubal, a Jew, friend to Shylock</i>	<i>Robert W. Beh</i>
<i>Jailer</i>	<i>John Mohrleit</i>
<i>The Duke of Venice</i>	<i>Joseph Bower</i>
<i>The Clerk</i>	<i>Robert W. Beh</i>

Scene: Partly at Venice and Partly at Belmont, the Seat of Portia

There will be one 10 minute intermission