Director's Note:

All plays have symbolic values. For me, in this play, Venice represents the daily world where we busily pursue the outer events of our lives, competing, scheming, plotting, buying, selling, falling in and out of love, involved in the material world with all of its anxieties and discontents. Belmont represents our inner life, hidden away from the world, a place that must be deliberately sought. It is the place of the spirit. It is best reached in those quiet moments when we reflect and meditate on inner feelings and values. The quest for inner values is dangerous and hazardous. The treasure that dwells within is difficult to obtain. It is even more difficult when we live in such a rich, comfortable world. Frequently we are tempted like Bassanio to undervalue the treasure we have sought and found or like Antonio, to despair. We need understanding, courage, humor and love to add meaning. Portia is a symbol of that inner spirit liberated by love that rescues lives too concentrated on the material world. Shylock is the symbol in the play of a life oriented towards money and achievement. When he is betrayed by the material world, he, like all of us, seeks to get even. That struggle between inner and outer values represented by the conflict between Portia and Shylock symbolizes a struggle that goes on in each of us. Shakespeare made Shylock a Jew playing to the popular prejudice of his day that would help him make his point. In our day he would have made him a J. R. Ewing. Portia would be a Sister Teresa. Viewed from this perspective, the play can hopefully make us aware that each of us has both impulses within us competing for our allegiance.

The director,
Pat Cook
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

by William Shakespeare

Directed by PATRICIA COOK

Settings Designed by WILLIAM T. SHERRY

Costumes Designed by JAMES W. SWAIN

Lighting Designed by TIMOTHY M. LOGAN

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager — Lisa Simmons
Assistant Stage Manager — Cynthia Khoury
Set Mistress — Amy Stuart
Prop Master — Neale Jones
Sound Master — Brent Blair
Light Mistress — Alison Frost
Costume Mistress — Annette Dixius
Makeup Mistress — Amy Ross
House Manager — David-Michael Hall

CREWS

Set — Russell Collins, Tim Decker, Lori Greenlee, Chad Henry, Monty Hicks, Kevin Little, Charles Lunda, Jennifer Mosher, Greg Tiptit, Kathy Trageser
Prop — Amy Bradley, Suzanne Dunlap, Lynn Howerton, Neale Jones, Karen Lamb, Del Pentecost, Clay Storseth, Jean Williams
Sound — Pat Tollett, Linda Wiseman
Light — Janette Lowell, Nancy Lutz
Costume — Evette Fuenteas, Kim Hilbrich, Edward Mitchell, Kim Penta, Cari Powell, Val Reichert
Makeup — Suzette McCanlies, Jana Rogers, Russell Latham
House — Cynthia Khoury

THE SCENE — Partly at Venice and partly at Belmont, Portia’s estate.

THE PLOT — Portia, a wealthy heiress at Belmont, is pursued by suitors from all parts of the world, but to win her they must answer the riddle of the three caskets.

Bassanio, who wishes to try his fortune, asks his friend Antonio, a wealthy merchant, to lend him money so that he can go to Belmont. Antonio’s goods are tied up at sea, but he agrees to stand bond for three thousand ducats from Shylock, the Jewish moneylender. The “merry bond” Shylock agrees to, if the forfeiture falls due, is a pound of Antonio’s flesh.

Launcelot Gobbo, a servant of Shylock, leaves the Jew’s service for Bassanio. Jessica, Shylock’s daughter, also leaves his household by eloping with Bassanio’s friend Lorenzo after stealing her father’s jewels and gold.

At Belmont, Bassanio is successful and Portia seals their marriage with a ring, but Antonio’s ships have foundered and his fortune is lost. Bassanio tries to free him from his bond, but Shylock insists upon his pound of flesh. Portia, disguised as a young lawyer, manages to unravel the legal knot to save Antonio. She demands Bassanio’s ring as payment and returns it to him at Belmont.

Performances April 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 1984 at 7:30 p.m.
and April 14 at 1:30 p.m.
Mabee Theater
The Merchant of Venice is a fairy tale replete with a fair maiden, a questing hero and demonic villain and, like the fairy tale, it expresses underlying truths about human nature. The framework for this story of a search for real values and inner meaning is money. Shakespeare reflects a world in transition between the break down of the church controlled monetary system of the Middle Ages and the free enterprise system of the Renaissance. Banking had not yet been invented in England and enterprising individuals called moneylenders stepped into the vacuum. However, the medieval notion that charging interest for loans was a sin was still very much in effect. In fact, at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth’s reign, a government decree stated firmly that usury was a sin but it also went on to state that ten per cent was a legal rate of interest. Half of the members of Shakespeare’s audience had either lent or borrowed money at high rates of interest and they knew perfectly well that “He is accounted a fool that doth lend his money for nothing.” But still, in theory, the Christians in Shakespeare’s play clung to the medieval conception of usury as a wicked occupation fit only for Jews even if in the real world every Londoner made it a part of his normal business procedure.

Most historians and critics agree that Shakespeare had little opportunity to see any real Jews. They had been exiled from England in the Middle Ages and the law that kept them out was in full force. The only “Jews” that Shakespeare could have met in London were baptized Christians of Jewish ancestry, and none of these would have served as a model for Shylock. The model was medieval Christian tradition, and this tradition was so strong that even the greatest of writers had been unable to shake themselves loose from it. When Geoffrey Chaucer described a “cursed Jew” it was to show him murdering a little Christian boy as part of his normal behavior. The degree to which Shakespeare was able to break loose from this tradition is astonishing. Less and less as he continued his career was he able to simplify—to look at his characters through half-closed eyes and record only a few effective characteristics. Even in his folk portraits he was unable to prevent himself from seeing real human beings, and where his audiences expected only a comic villain they got Shylock—“I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? . . . If you prick us, do we not bleed?” Four hundred years later audiences still find his characters compelling.

Marchette Chute
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A special Thank You to the CHI's Service Organization for acting as ushers for the 1983-84 season.

Special thanks to the following musicians:

Bassoon — Jeff Verver
Flute — Carol Kautilus
Oboe — Jeff Rainwater
Violin — Vicki Campion
Viola — Nancy Headlee
Mandolin — Jeff Wallace

Saxophone — Cedric Johnson
Clarinet — Darrell Woodliff
French Horn — Lorie Sefcik
Percussion — Fernando Meza
Cello — Mary Ellen Ferrell

Additional thanks to Dr. Richard Willis for the use of the electronic studio, and Dr. William Casey for use of the mandolin.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS

David-Michael Hall
A. Bryan Humphrey
Cynthia Khoury
Randol Wilson

UNDERGRADUATE ASSISTANTS

Annette Dixius
Allison Frost
Thom Gilbert
Matt Lagan
Russell Latham
Luann Purcell
Amy Ross
Rich Waugh

THEATER PRODUCTION STAFF

Marcia Cooper
Faye Heine
Stephen Palacios
Elizabeth Sherry