

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

A STUDY

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
A STUDY OF THE
CANADIANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF
SHAKESPEAREAN THEATRE
AT THE
STRATFORD FESTIVAL

By

VALENTINA WARDELL, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts

McMaster University

Copyright by Valentina Wardell, September 2001

MASTER OF ARTS (2001)
Department of English

McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: The Merchant of Venice: A Study of the Canadianization and
Development of Shakespearean Theatre at the Stratford Festival

AUTHOR: Valentina Wardell, B.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Graham Roebuck

NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 126

ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the Canadianization and development of Shakespearean theatre at the Stratford Festival. The Festival has developed into a national institution and ranks as one of the best English-speaking theatre companies in the world. I have chosen to study the seven productions of “*The Merchant of Venice*” in order to explore the chronological development both artistically and administratively of the Festival.

The impact of externalities such as the political climate, economic climate, cultural expansion throughout the past 50 years, have had a great impact on the formation of a Canadian theatre style. *The Merchant of Venice* is unique in the fact that it fuels anti-Semitic controversy every time that it is produced. This is clearly indicative of how anti-Semitic sensitivities in a post-Holocaust audience have influenced artistic interpretations of the play. By comparing the seven productions, it will be clearly evident how artistic development either mirrors or conflicts the mores and anxieties of society at any given time.

The development of acting companies and how Canada has established a strong talent base, particularly in classical training will also be discussed. The role that Stratford has played in nurturing this talent and creating a Canadian star-system is relevant not only to the Festival, but to the growth of theatre in Canada as a whole.

Canadian classical theatre is of the highest calibre, and this thesis will explore the journey of the artist, of the audience, and of the works of Shakespeare through the Canadian cultural mosaic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Graham Roebuck, for his insights, useful criticism and enthusiasm throughout this project. His own particular interest in the Stratford Festival led to many informative and rewarding discussions during my research. I would also like to thank Dr. Helen Ostovich and Dr. Anthony Brennan for sharing their interest in theatre and helpful criticism. I thank Jane Edmonds and Ellen Charendoff of the Stratford Festival Archives for their assistance during my Stratford research. Their help was immeasurable and their knowledge of 'details' invaluable. My thanks to Michael McGinn, Assistant Director of *The Merchant of Venice* this season for taking time out of rehearsals for a wonderfully lengthy interview. I thank Dr. Samuel Ajzenstat for his critical and enlightening opinions about the play.

I would like to thank my parents, Myroslav and Lada Sitnik for their continuing encouragement in all my academic endeavours.

My greatest amount of gratitude goes to my best friend, Allan Wardell and my two wonderful children, Zane and Alannah. Their endless support, patience and understanding have made this work possible. Thank you.

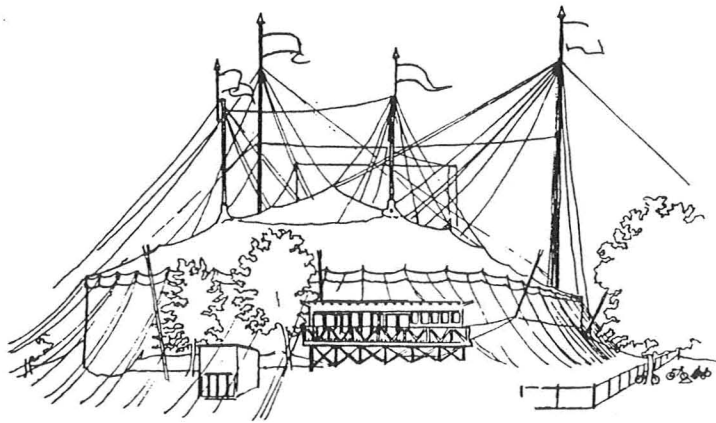
Table of Contents

Introduction	
<i>Stratford-upon-Avon, England, Meets Stratford, Ontario</i>	1
Chapter One	
1955~~"Tell me where is Fancy Bred".....	7
Chapter Two	
1970~~ <i>Jean Gascon and MV Create A Turning Of The Tide</i>	16
Chapter Three	
1976~~"Why, look you how you storm".....	26
Chapter Four	
1984~~ <i>The Hirsch Regime Overshadows Lamos's MV</i>	38
Chapter Five	
1989~~ <i>The Jew Need Not Turn Christian</i>	48
Chapter Six	
1996~~ <i>Confronting The Holocaust And The Winds Of Change</i>	62
Chapter Seven	
2001~~ <i>The Coming Of Age Of An Audience</i>	80
Conclusion	
<i>The Classical Shakespearean Tradition In Canada</i>	99
Bibliography	102

List of Illustrations

<i>Figure 1. Sketch of Stratford Festival Tent, 1953</i>	viii
<i>Figure 2. A letter of an early patron</i>	6A
<i>Figure 3. Costume design for Portia, 1955</i> ~~designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch.....	9A
<i>Figure 4. Costume design for Jessica, 1955</i> ~~designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch.....	11A
<i>Figure 5. Costume design for Bassanio, 1955</i> ~~designer Tanya Moiseiwitsch.....	13A
<i>Figure 6. Sketch of Festival Stage, circa 1961</i>	15A
<i>Figure 7. Costume design for Bassanio, 1984</i> ~~designer Christina Poddubiuk.....	44A
<i>Figure 8. Costume design for Shylock, 1984</i> ~~designer Christina Poddubiuk.....	46A
<i>Figure 9. Costume design for Jessica, 2001</i> ~~designer Ann Curtis.....	90A

In Memory of Al Waxman



The Tent from the River side showing the Green Room

Introduction

Stratford-upon-Avon, England, meets Stratford, Ontario

In 1596, William Shakespeare wrote a relatively short comedy, *The Merchant of Venice*, and over time it has become a standard piece in any performance canon and is dutifully studied across the globe. The development of Shakespeare on the Canadian stage is clearly evident in the treatment of this one play over the past 49 years at the Stratford Festival in Stratford, Ontario. By examining the changes in the seven Stratford productions, I will illustrate how Shakespeare has been “Canadianized” and now lies firmly imbedded in our cultural milieu.

The impetus for tackling this project was the *absence* of any extended and in-depth study about such an important cultural landmark. Although much has been written about the Festival, relatively little has been written about the handling, interpretation, challenge and success of performing Shakespeare’s genius in a Canadian venue. *MV* has been staged rather frequently at Stratford considering the perpetual hue and cry to abandon it; resulting in a politically controversial play that seems to have the qualities of a phoenix. Consequently, every production poses the same fundamental question: how should Shylock be portrayed? The changes that have taken place in the interpretation of the characters in this play over the past 49 seasons are significant and show a shift in

Canadian cultural mores. It must also be taken into consideration that the conception of the Stratford Festival occurred in a post-Holocaust era and it is still a living memory for many, painfully sensitive to the darker undertones of the play. The question of anti-Semitism is the main re-occurring hurdle that a modern Canadian production needs to confront. Social and political considerations are further complicated by the tensions arising from the strongly British character of the early productions, and the box-office draw of high-profile actors and directors, set against the need for Canadian stewardship and the development of Canadian talent.

By examining the birth and development of the Stratford Festival, it is evident that the early production of *MV* in the third season in 1955 was from a completely British point of view. It was not until 1970 that *MV* would be performed again, this time under the Canadian direction of Jean Gascon. By this time the Canadianization process of Shakespearean interpretation coupled with a strong Canadian talent base was already well under way. By examining the changes and the shifts in focus in subsequent productions, conclusions may be established concerning how we have changed politically and socially as a nation and how Canadian Shakespearean theatre has secured a firm place on the international stage.

In doing my preliminary research for *MV*, I took a trip to Stratford in February, 2001. Unlike what many theatre-goers experience, I was immersed into a quiet, rural Southern Ontario town. There were no tourists, rehearsals had not yet

begun, restaurants were empty and all the shops were closed on Sundays! As I walked by the lovely, frozen Avon, I saw a group of boys playing hockey in the park, in the shadow of the Festival Theatre. As I looked at this interesting juxtaposition, I remembered an interesting analogy of Tom Patterson's: "Stratford-upon-Avon, England, may be synonymous with Shakespeare, but Stratford, Ontario, was synonymous with hockey" (Patterson, 14). I thought how we had grown culturally and that in a few months these same boys would be sitting in the very same Festival Theatre on a class trip; enjoying or enduring a student matinee of perhaps even *MV*. I wondered how they would understand the play, how would the anti-Semitic issues be addressed and how would Canadians react to these issues this time? Every production sparks both fury and praise simultaneously and what would the reactions be this year on opening night?

To properly establish *MV* in the history of Canadian theatre, it is necessary to take a brief journey back in time to the 1930s, when a young teenager had a germ of an idea to revive the dying town of Stratford, Ontario. The young Tom Patterson had a dream:

Another idea, my own, was to create a Shakespearean Festival. After all, I argued, we had a city named Stratford, on a river named Avon... We even had a bronze head of the great dramatist by the Canadian sculptor Cleeve Horne... Why not a Festival? And, what better place than in Stratford, Ontario?

(Patterson, 26)

It is ironic that this young visionary knew *nothing* about theatre and had never even seen a play. At this time, most Stratfordians were in the same 'cultural'

shoes as Patterson, but through hard work and enthusiasm to embrace great drama, they helped a country to nurture it and excel on the Shakespearean stage.

As a country, Canada had a minimal repertoire of theatre and most was focused in Toronto and its environs. One of the largest single influences on Stratford from the Canadian theatre community was Dora Mavor Moore. She had nurtured theatre for years and ran a company and school, The New Play Society, in Toronto. Her passion for theatre and realization that a Stratford Festival could create a cultural explosion, led her to point Patterson in Tyrone Guthrie's direction. Very simply, if a Festival was going to succeed, she believed one needed the best Shakespearean director to launch it (Sperdakos, 197). By the spring of 1952, Patterson had already generated immense interest from the Stratford community and raised some funds, but still had no company. Moore's correspondence along with Patterson's overseas call was enough to stir Guthrie's interest in a Canadian festival. He was also exploring the possibilities of staging an Elizabethan-style thrust stage, something not done in England and the opportunity to have complete artistic control and a free hand in the planning and physical construction of a stage fit perfectly with his own plans.

Guthrie arrived in July, 1952 and became completely engrossed in the venture. Only one short year later, the opening of the Stratford Festival would make Canadian theatre history: "On the night of July 13, 1953, the first classical acting ensemble in North America was born" (Bryden, 36). Guthrie also realized that for the Festival to initially succeed it had to be of the highest calibre;

otherwise it would not be taken seriously. He formed an Artistic 'Power Team' for this very purpose: himself as Artistic Director, the brilliant Tanya Moiseiwitsch as Designer and the indefatigable Cecil Clarke as Production Manager. To ensure the plays had top billing, he cast Alec Guinness and Irene Worth as the main leads. At this time, this elite coterie was indeed necessary to not only raise the substantial funding, a projected \$150,000.00 that eventually turned into \$262,000.00, but to garner national and international publicity and induce sales. However, Guthrie also realized that if the Festival was to continue and become a mainstay in Canadian theatre, it had to be ultimately by and for Canadians. There were large-scale auditions held in Montreal and Toronto and this resulted in the rest of the cast being mostly made up of Canadians, along with two amateur actors from Stratford as extras as well. The beginnings of a strong Canadian talent base for a classical national theatre was under construction: "he and his imported helpers, he [Guthrie] declared, would only be catalysts, helping to crystallize a *Canadian* classical theatre" (Bryden, 36).

Many of the actors in these early performances went on to become international 'stars': William Hutt, Douglas Rain, Amelia Hall, William Needles, Lloyd Bochner, Timothy Findley, Donald Harron, et.al. Some eventually became a driving force of the Festival and other young actors in the subsequent formative years helped launch their careers at Stratford: Frances Hyland, Christopher Plummer, Donald Davis, Len Cariou, and Martha Henry, to name but a few. Under Guthrie's meticulous and energetic guidance this came to pass and on July

13, 1953, the Stratford Festival of Canada was heralded in the *New York Times*, the press corps being composed of: “representatives of the press from all the principal eastern Canadian cities and several cities in the United States.”¹ Now there was no looking back and Stratford would continue to grow from 68,000 patrons in its first season to an astounding 140,000 patrons by only its fourth year (Bryden, 72). It was not until 1980 that artistic instability, boardroom politics and a rising deficit would threaten its very existence. Through sheer tenacity and the help of many muses, it survived, and is now making plans for a celebratory 50th season in 2002.

The word ‘politics’ however, is crucial when discussing the development of a Canadian tradition at Stratford. Unlike other new theatres, Stratford became a ‘national’ icon almost immediately, with all the off-stage problems that go along with the responsibility of a national ‘institution’. It therefore did not have the same freedom to experiment or be controversial as some other theatres could. It has set a standard of artistic excellence, but at times had to fight extremely hard to maintain artistic integrity.

¹ Brooks Atkinson. “*At the Theatre.*” New York Times. July 14, 1953.

ALEX MCKINNON
1815 LA SALLE BOULEVARD
PORT HURON, MICHIGAN

January 4, 1953

Office of the Mayor
Stratford, Ontario
Canada.

Dear Sir:

After reading a news dispatch from London, England in the newspaper "The Christian Science Monitor" I am writing your office with the hope of receiving further information.

The dispatch told of your city holding its first Shakespearean festival this coming year.

Would you be so kind as to inform this interested American just when the festival will be held and how to go about getting tickets.

If your office does not have the information perhaps you could give the name of someone who might know.

Sincerely yours

Alex McKinnon

P. S. Self addressed envelope is enclosed.

Chapter One

1955~"Tell me where is Fancy Bred"

(*MV*, III, ii, 63)

By its third season in 1955, the Stratford Festival was an established success and the Festival Board had its first inclinations to build a permanent structure. It was officially sanctioned in 1956 and would come to fruition for the 1957 season. It was already evident at this early stage that regardless of the praise Stratford was getting in Canada, United States and abroad, only financial stability and profit would ensure the necessary local support and guarantee its continuance. To secure positive perception, articles concerning financial stability were published in many newspapers contributing to the adage that fiscal success is synonymous with artistic success: "The 1955 Stratford Shakespearean Festival went into rehearsal yesterday with no financial worries whatever...with six weeks to go, 13 performances have been sold out completely."² In reality, nothing could be further from the truth, but a happy Festival Board *does* ensure greater artistic freedom.

This formula was to become Stratford's unwritten motto and would cause controversy and praise, even up to the present day. The basic premise of this formula is the belief that a 'star-system' must be in place, regardless of the abundance of talent, but stressing that it is just as important to nurture Canadian talent and content at the same time. There must always be a drawing-card to

guarantee at least one *financially successful hit*: “it is generally felt that a box-office name is a wise insurance and that one star with an all-Canadian cast...is actually a remarkable achievement.”³

The 1955 production of *MV* was to make headway as far as nurturing and supporting Canadian talent and Frederick Valk (Shylock) was to be the only actor not only in *MV*, but in the entire Festival company who was not Canadian. The abundance of so many gifted Canadian actors was not as instantaneous as may have been initially perceived. There were many fine actors, but they were either scattered across regional and summer stock theatres in Canada, or overseas for classical training. The establishment of a de facto national theatre in Canada helped to channel and entice these actors into one venue, which effectively became *the* desired place to work in the summer season. It provided high-calibre and high-profile work for established actors and a wonderful training and learning opportunity for young actors. The repertory system along with large casts provided roles for every level of talent, an opportunity unparalleled in any other theatre in Canada. Consequently, the Stratford Festival by the 1960s was to be the largest employer of stage actors in Canada.

The 1955 season saw the establishment of a structured theatre training facility: “thirty young actors, walk-ons for the season, attended training sessions almost daily...with classes in voice...stage movement and fencing...and lectures” (Pettigrew, Stratford, vol. 1, 112). Ironically, this training and desire for greater

² Lloyd Lockhart. “*Festival Festive Cash Worry Over.*” Toronto Daily Star. May 17, 1955.

artistic expression was provided by British mentors forming an interesting dichotomy; a rapid expansion of a Canadian theatrical culture, by and for Canadians, and nurtured by *outside* British forces. The artistic directorship, particularly after Guthrie's departure, was to do battle with the Festival Board over this concept for the next twenty years, reaching a fever pitch under the tenure of Robin Phillips in the 1970s.

The situation became more complex when British and American actors moved permanently to Canada and developed flourishing careers. Actors such as William Needles, Douglas Campbell, Martha Henry, and John Neville had an immense impact on the expansion of Canadian theatre. Regardless of their background, they established deep theatrical roots in Canada and metamorphosed into 'Canadian' actors. They developed with the theatre and were not only actors, but also a Canadian directorship and audience. There was an emerging cultural awareness and exploration of ideologies that crossed ethnic boundaries and a 'national' identity, however ambiguous, was being deeply sought after.

According to academic Margaret Groome, this cultural awakening was of a completely manipulative nature. The Stratford Festival became synonymous with Canadian cultural maturity, thereby delivering prescribed and preferred cultural values. She describes the Festival as "a specific institutional apparatus", which guaranteed discourse to be "constructed, contained, circulated and maintained" (Groome, 141). Although the earliest productions may be observed to bear a

³ Staff Columnist. "Festival Will Stick to Shakespeare in '55". The Daily Star. 13 November, 1954.

PORTIA



traditional or conservative British point of view and therefore qualify Groome's argument, subsequent seasons provided much more risk-taking. Experimental theatre and controversial material were making a strong stand and were to be indicative of the many tangents the Festival would eventually explore. Unfortunately, experimentation has drawbacks and theatrical pieces were often censured for their content. The Festival was trying to develop an international profile of Canadian culture, stressing the fact that the interpretation Stratford delivered had sensitivity and therefore fulfilled a moral obligation to its audience. This had tremendous effect on every *MV* produced as the volatile element of audience and media censure threatened every show.

In the 1955 season, *MV* was heralded as the Stratford triumph, surpassing both *Julius Caesar* and *Oedipus Rex*. The Christian/Jewish tensions of *MV* itself, always stir incessant controversy and the initial production at Stratford was no exception. The first protests against this play appeared in November, 1954, when the season was announced. It was initiated by the Canadian Jewish Congress but quelled, for the most part, by Guthrie's assertions that this was not an anti-Semitic play and his production would establish that fact. He stressed his understanding of Jewish concerns towards anti-Semitism and continually defended his position until the play's very opening: "In the light of the recent terrible events in central Europe, it is all too understandable that Jews everywhere should be intensely sensitive."⁴ However, Guthrie was more than aware that controversial reviews

⁴ Tyrone Guthrie quoted by Philip Slomovitz. "Purely Commentary". Jewish News. 24 June, 1955.

would follow and in the 1955 Festival Programme he specifically wrote an explanation of the play for the audience.

He stressed that the theme of *MV* was the contrast between mercy and justice. He also stated that Shylock and Antonio represented Venetian Renaissance attitudes and how the Christians themselves did not fulfill the expectations that they demanded of Shylock. The ironies of the play were explained and therefore he argued that it was virtually narrow-minded to treat this play as anti-Semitic, because then the focus would be on Shylock only and would not take into account the behaviour of the other characters. He concluded his arguments in this way: "In my opinion it is wrong and as foolish to regard this as an anti-Semitic play as it would be to regard *Richard III* as an attack upon the British monarchy" (Guthrie, 1955 Festival Programme, 2). Guthrie's efforts proved futile in the face of the Holocaust images repeatedly included in articles of protest. There was concern that the play perpetrated hate in peaceful times. Canada, by association was considered peaceful, but still young. It was always anxious about being manipulated by foreign attitudes *and* prejudices, itself longing for international status and equality with the dominant forces.

In addition to Guthrie's claims, there was also the large Jewish contingent prevalent in the Festival company itself that would be referred to in the media. Not only was the beloved Tanya Moiseiwitsch Jewish, but also many of the *MV* cast: Frederick Valk (Shylock), Charlotte Schragar (Jessica), Lorne Greene (Morocco), William Shatner (Gratiano), and Lloyd Bochner (Salanio), (Pettigrew,



JESSICA

Stratford, vol. 1, 107). The focus of Valk's Jewishness became central in defense of *MV*; he was not only a Czech Jew, but he fled to England in 1939 to escape the Nazi regime, emphasizing that he knew first hand the effects of the Holocaust and yet did not have any political anxieties about the play. His understanding of Shylock was to treat him for what he was: a Renaissance figure, a Levantine Jew, and a man acquiring wealth through the only legal means [usury] allowed him at the time. Venice, it must also be remembered, was a slave-holding city and the Christians had unshakable control. These factors had to be considered when examining the animosities between the Christians and aliens—any aliens.

Valk was very outspoken towards protestors: "I deplore that people are beset with prejudices of all sorts and can't bring themselves to wipe their eyes and read and think" (Valk quoted in Pettigrew, Stratford, vol. 1, 107). The praise for the quality of *MV* and the sensitive treatment that Guthrie imposed came to no avail as a continuous stream of articles regarded it as a blatantly anti-Semitic play: "the play remains one of the vilest anti-Semitic productions on record...it has no place in modern society...it is pure unadulterated anti-Semitism."⁵ This was equally as passionately echoed in Canadian papers: "Shylock will hence forth be their [the audience] mirage of the Jewish people—a mirage that Hitler and Goebbels implanted...[it] should never have been produced."⁶ This linkage of *MV* to the Holocaust and the atrocities of WWII were now to plague the production of this play throughout all the subsequent productions of it at the Stratford Festival. It

⁵ Philip Slomovitz. "Play's Revival a Depressing Experience." The Jewish News. 8 July, 1955.

would be a very long time, if ever, that this play could be put on in Canada without political backlash.

By examining the script itself, Guthrie's intentions of producing it with sensitivity became evident. The script as a whole does not have many lines cut and those that are do not greatly impact upon the play. The two major editorial choices that Guthrie *did* make however, greatly slant the racial bias to emphasize the anti-Gentile undercurrents. The first editorial change occurs in Act III, v, which removes much of the brash humour and broad sexual suggestions between Launcelot Gobbo and Jessica. Launcelot's suggestion that she wish herself a bastard (and therefore not Jewish), could prove both racially and morally offensive. His vitriolic remarks regarding Jewish converts (a serious religious anxiety in Shakespeare's time), and the raising of the 'price of pork', could be fuelling already dangerous controversial fires as well and, therefore, this scene was *completely cut*. The 'Trial Scene' contains a distinct choice to write-in Tubal's presence and has him carry and then give the scales to Shylock. In effect, Tubal's presence acted as an aid to Shylock and created a balance between Shylock and Antonio; they now both had friends present to support them. This was necessary due to the overpowering visual impact of the 'might of Venice' through the costuming of the Magnificoes. They were all dressed in red robes, visually reducing Shylock to an insignificant figure in the course of the Venetian legal system. The conversion of Shylock was treated in a manner that highlighted

⁶ Sam Lipshitz. "Another Look at *The Merchant of Venice*." Canadian Tribune. 1 August, 1955.

Sleeves removed
for Trial Scene
+ Cloa
Worn



Antonio's own lack of mercy. Antonio's delivery of his list of demands is interjected with sardonic laughs from himself and his peers, while Shylock retains his composure and dignity throughout.⁷

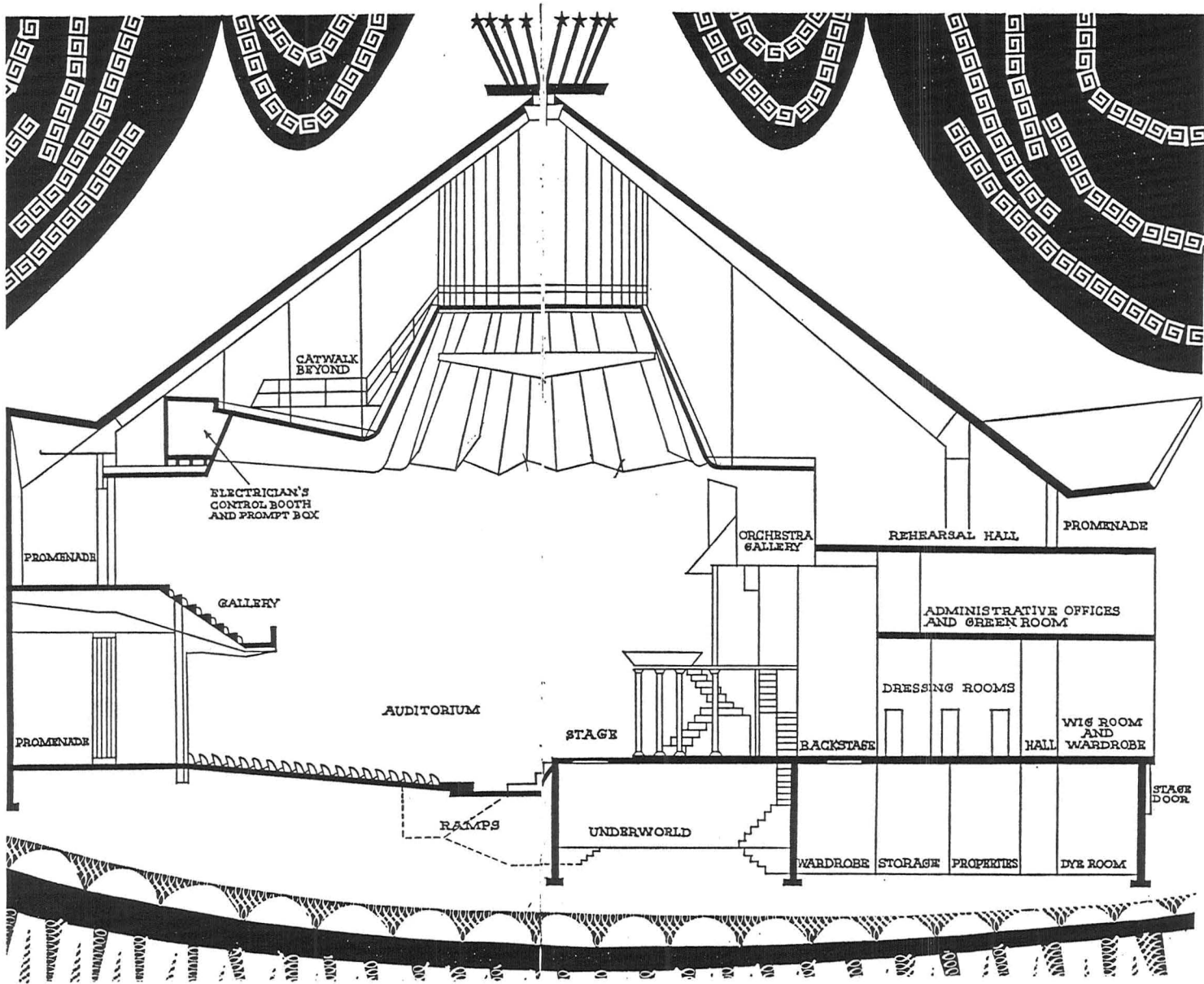
The portrayal of the relationship between both men emphasizes the relish with which the Venetians continue to bait Shylock. The inclusion of a visual conversion by placing a crucifix upon Shylock is not present, although it has been written into several subsequent productions, 1984 and 2001 being two in particular. In a post-mortem of the play, Robertson Davies wrote an extended commentary on the production and stressed that while *MV* did portray both virtue and vice in the human condition, it is still a fiction. Although anti-Semitism was prevalent in Renaissance Venice, Shylock was still not a realistic character: "we cannot accept Shylock as photographically real; he is credited with a power in the play which would have been utterly impossible for any Venetian or Renaissance Jew to yield" (Davies, *Thrice*, 50). The legal loophole that finally condemns Shylock exemplifies the powerlessness of aliens within this society.

Shylock's inevitable ruin accords with Venetian (or English Renaissance) anxieties regarding the financial wealth and possible threat from Jews. Converts however were helpless; they could not deal in usury because they were Christian, but could not have legal status because they were technically still alien. This made them controllable and less threatening. However, Canadians *are not* English and therefore the historical reasoning in 1955 was not acceptable to

⁷ Costume references and stage directions were taken from *MV*, *Stage Manager's Prompt Book*,

many. The argument was that Canada was just building a reputation for cultural maturity and any potential racial bias was thought to undermine this project. The irony occurs in the fact that censorship promotes racial bias because ignorance does ultimately foster intolerance.

The arguments regarding anti-Semitism in *MV* lingered for quite some time and have surrounded every production, in one manner or another, up to the present. Michael Langham followed Guthrie in the position of Artistic Director until 1967 and during his 11 year tenure as Artistic Director, *MV* was never performed. It was not until 1970, under the Artistic Direction (and personal direction) of Jean Gascon that *MV* would come alive on the Festival Stage. By this time, the shape of Canadian theatre had expanded and changed dramatically and Canada was politically enjoying a wave of epic nationalism carried over from the Centennial of 1967. *MV* would next be seen and assessed through the eyes of a generation for whom the war and its horrors were *not* a living memory.



15A

Chapter Two

1970~~Jean Gascon and MV Create A Turning Of The Tide

After the twelve year regime of Michael Langham, Stratford was to give Canadians artistic control. Jean Gascon and John Hirsch both worked as guest directors under Langham and became Executive Artistic Director and Associate Artistic Director, respectively for two seasons; 1968 and 1969. Although they were 'hand-picked' by Langham, they were stellar Canadian directors with reputations at home and abroad. Their successful impact on Canadian theatre made their appointment popular within both theatrical, political and administrative circles.

Nathan Cohen, a long-time drama critic who followed Stratford's development for years, applauded their merits and suggested that they were just the sort of energetic infusion that Stratford needed. He wrote a critical assessment in 1969 and emphasized that the Festival had become too tentative and conservative in its artistic policies. The Festival needed fresh impulses and demanded "uncompromising courage of management and a large clarity of artistic vision" (Cohen, "*Stratford*", 61). He argued that this was the only way Stratford would continue to thrive in a new era and hope Gascon and Hirsch would understand and fulfill their task.

Politically, Canada was on a national wave after Expo 67 and Stratford wholly participated in this patriotic fervour with attendance

records exceeding 400,000 for that year. The 1967 season also saw two landmark Canadian plays, propelled by Hirsch, done as workshop productions: *Colours in the Dark* by Stratfordian James Reaney and *Fortune and Men's Eyes* by John Herbert (directed by Bruno Gerussi and featuring Richard Monette). Monette and Gerussi were representative of an up and coming generation of Canadian actors that would have the opportunity of developing their talent at home and build reputations based on what they did in Canada; not necessarily abroad. The ingenues of the early Stratford years had now become a solid talent base of acclaimed Canadian *classical* talent and Canadian emigres were returning because theatre was growing: "...Stratford set a qualitative standard for the rest of the country."⁸ Canadian actors, by a strange twist of fate, were now having to get used to being treated with apprehension by Broadway producers based on *availability*. Frances Hyland clearly expressed the viewpoint of Broadway several years before: "That's the big problem in hiring Canadians. They all want the summer off for Stratford."⁹ Producers were concerned that hiring Canadians for runs that spanned the spring and summer season would now have to include release options in their contracts. Under the artistic co-directorate of Gascon and Hirsch, this seemed to be the new course of events. There was an increase in

⁸ Donald Davis quoted by Samuel Hirsch. "*Shakespeare in Canada.*" Boston Herald Traveler. 21 June, 1970.

⁹ Frances Hyland quoted by Jack Karr. "*On Stage.*" Toronto Daily Star. 21 September, 1957.

bilingual actors, stressing Canada's bilingual culture, and a unification of English and French talent. In addition, the attitude towards bringing in foreign guest-stars as somehow *mandatory* was dropped. True, guest-stars were still welcome and invited, but it was now a matter of *choice* by the artistic directorate rather than a *necessity*. Collectively, these factors seemed indicative of Stratford's desire to make bold steps in the maturity, quality, and self-sufficiency in classical theatre.

The 1968 season also witnessed a management that was almost exclusively Canadian and William T. Wylie became the new General Manager. Wylie had a substantial amount of administrative experience in Canadian theatre and had worked for such organizations as the Manitoba Theatre Centre, Rainbow Stage, and the Shaw Festival. Over the next two seasons, Hirsch and Gascon would clash over ideologies and Hirsch left amidst internal conflicts. Gascon found himself as sole Artistic Director in 1970; a position he would hold until 1974.

Gascon's appointment in 1970 came on the heels of a unique time in Canadian history. In the 1960s, there had been a tidal wave of cultural identification, self-awareness and an explosion of self-expression in the arts world—particularly in theatre. Gascon had a direct hand in making this happen and an impressive resume. He had been co-founder and Artistic Director of Le Theatre du Nouveau Monde in 1951, a founding director of The National Theatre School in 1960, and a talented actor in

his own right. He was also a native son; born in Montreal, completely bilingual, and successful in both French and English drama. However, the artistic policy under Gascon shifted nonetheless. He introduced more world drama to Stratford, mostly played on the Avon Stage, but also brought in more foreign actors. The company consisted of only 50 actors, smaller than in previous years, but there was an abundance of non-Canadians. Although Gascon firmly believed that there must be a Canadian style for Canadian theatre and held this ideology throughout his tenure at TNM, his dedication to upholding this at Stratford no longer rang true.

The 1970 production of *MV* saw a reversal of the casting choices taken in 1955 under Guthrie. He chose an established foreign actor in Valk to carry the role of Shylock and pitted him against a delicate Canadian actor, Frances Hyland, as Portia. Valk was also a physically large man and his sheer presence took command of the stage. Gascon cast Donald Davis, a very talented and renowned Canadian actor against another delicate Portia, British Maureen O'Brien. Davis was not a physically large man and his size seemed to agree with Gascon's interpretive ideology. Just as in the 1955 playbill, Gascon found it necessary to write specific notes on what *MV* is really about, ostensibly to create a line of defense against any protests surrounding the issue of anti-Semitism. He clearly outlined 'what Shakespeare is saying' and that

Shakespeare is talking about generosity, the over-emphasis on money, and that Shylock is misguided because of his sense of values regarding material wealth.¹⁰ Being well aware of Canadian sensibilities towards anti-Semitism, Gascon included a commentary on *MV* in the 1970 Souvenir Programme by Dr. Abraham Feinberg, Rabbi-Emeritus, Holy Blossom Temple, Toronto. Feinberg discusses the play fairly and supports Gascon's interpretation to direct the issues of prejudice head-on; this being the only way to illustrate that both sides have faults. He stresses the importance of looking at *and* studying the play as a whole and in this manner *MV* "...will probably engender no prejudice worth noting."¹¹ This kind of prescribed interpretation undoubtedly helped to reduce the extent of protest and in retrospect, there were relatively few. Gascon's editorial choices emphasized his preoccupation with *sensitivity* and the additional opportunity of having *MV* play Montreal, Ottawa, and Chicago before opening in Stratford ensured minimal controversy. He would now be afforded the possibility of gauging audience reaction and making any changes en route if necessary. The tour provided Gascon with artistic leverage and guaranteed a politically smooth run.

Ironically, it was to be Gascon's ultra-dignified treatment of Shylock that swung the pendulum of protest in a completely unexpected direction.

¹⁰ Jean Gascon. "Director's Notes." *MV Playbill*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1970.

¹¹ Abraham L. Feinberg. "The Merchant of Venice—A Comment." The 1970 Stratford Festival Souvenir Programme. Stratford Festival Archives, 1970.

Many critics felt that Gascon had over-compensated for the anti-Semitic undercurrents and consequently robbed the production of much of its tension. Herbert Whittaker, a well-respected drama critic and ardent supporter of the Festival, was severe: “[*MV*] has seen better days, when its popularity shamed the prejudices of its audience.”¹² Constance Howitt blamed the lack of tension on the failure of Shylock and Antonio to be sufficiently assertive. She concluded that Gascon and Davis were very apprehensive because they were haunted by the controversy of the 1955 production.¹³ Antonio and Shylock were also described as being played in the same vein: controlled, dignified, well-bred and as a result there was created a sense of interchangeability rather than polar opposition. Consequently, this control greatly lessened the impact of the ‘Trial Scene’ and Portia’s sense of conviction could not help but be lessened as well. Interestingly enough, Gascon wrote specific notes regarding the ‘Quality of Mercy’ speech: “The famous quality of mercy speech which follows should be delivered without pathos of tremelos...she has already decided upon her whole strategy.”¹⁴ Gascon’s editing also greatly subdued the play by the cutting of Jessica’s lines on several occasions.

The first change occurs in III, ii, 282-287, and removes a pointed quote by Jessica regarding Shylock’s discussions of revenge with Tubal

¹² Herbert Whittaker. “*Merchant: out of fashion?*” *The Globe and Mail*. 8 June, 1970.

¹³ Constance Howitt. “*Merchant of Venice Short of Perfection*.” *Guelph Mercury*. 9 June, 1970.

¹⁴ Jean Gascon. *MV, Stage Manager’s Prompt Book*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1970.

and Chus.¹⁵ A major change occurs in III, v, which as in the 1955 production, is *completely cut*. The scene revolves around Launcelot, Jessica and Lorenzo in Belmont. It contains the infamous banter between Launcelot and Jessica about her conversion to Christianity and the increase in ‘the price of pork’ because of the increasing growth in converts. This is dark comedy at its best, but a potential powder-keg for anti-Semitic comments. The Launcelot and Lorenzo jibing revolving around Launcelot’s sexual promiscuity with a Venetian Negro slave is omitted as well. Its removal therefore, negates a lot of slanderous racial and sexual comments that would undercut the intended dignity and good-breeding of the piece. It also removes any dubious opinion of Jessica and emphasizes her complete Christian assimilation and more importantly, stresses her acceptance by the Christian high-society of Belmont.

Gascon’s choices were seen as the new directorial policy at Stratford: low-key, not controversial and good box-office. I wish to argue however, that it is the very question of anti-Semitism in the play that makes all the characters adversarial and complex. The removal of this element robs the actors of ever reaching a climax in the script; there is just not enough dramatic tension to provide one: “The Stratford Festival seems to be suffering from a case of hypersensitivity this year...Jean Gascon has

¹⁵ Notes on script editing taken from *MV, Stage Manager’s Prompt Book*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1970. Lines 282-287 are as follows: “When I was with him I have heard him swear/ To Tubal and to Chus, his countrymen./ That he would rather have Antonio’s flesh/ Than twenty times the value of the sum/ That he did owe him...”

removed most of the spine from the play.”¹⁶ Amid reviews, Berners W. Jackson had a series of discussions revolving around *MV* and the difficulties that Gascon had to encounter. He concluded that Gascon’s choices to deal with human values versus economic values and downplay Shylock’s Jewishness work, but as a result, cannot help diminish the dramatic excitement of the play.¹⁷ Jackson’s academic treatment of Gascon’s choices lent credence and support, but even that was tempered. The conclusion that may be drawn by an examination of this production is quite clear. Regardless of possible controversy, directorial editing cannot remove offense from a potentially offensive play and do it artistic justice. Prejudice of any kind may only be effectively dealt with by staying true to the script and the intentions of the playwright. Although academics still debate about Shakespeare’s ‘real’ intentions, it is safe to conjecture that they were *completely* different from what a 20th century post-Holocaust society can interpret and/or laugh at. By portraying this prejudice blatantly on stage, an audience may be offended, but then one must ask why? The answer is simple: racism still exists or else its portrayal would not be so unnerving. Racism *does* cause hurt and only the honest identification of the problem can heal the wound.

As a premiere Canadian director, Gascon produced a play that suited the Canadian palate at the time and for this he cannot be censured. The

¹⁶ Jacob Siskind. “*Merchant Wilts at Stratford.*” Montreal Gazette. 27 June, 1970.

questions that arise revolve around the climate of an increasingly conservative Stratford in 1970, which was in complete opposition to the desire for experimentation prevalent only a few years before. The dynamics indicate that the Stratford Festival had become big business by this time and its success was based on a rather simple premise: “the ability to produce a high standard of conventional theatre with a wide appeal.”¹⁸

It was in this dignified way that *MV* almost sold out to capacity crowds throughout its entire run that season. Stratford had become a national icon and therefore a different set of rules applied to its operations as opposed to the varied artistic freedoms of other theatres in the country. Gascon knew well the theatrical politics that were at play and had summarized this ideology several years before to a very young Christopher Newton of Theatre Calgary, who happened to be acting in Stratford in the 1968 season: “You cannot have Ken...[then] *you* must make a change. This is a *Big* theatre. You have a *Little* theatre. That’s how things work.”¹⁹ Newton was to direct *Gaslight* at Theatre Calgary the following season with Ken Welsh as the male lead, when Gascon pulled rank, signed Welsh and left Newton’s show in a crisis. William Hutt was very familiar with how theatre politics *worked* as well and offered his

¹⁷ Berners W. Jackson. “*The difficulties of Shylock*.” The Hamilton Spectator. 13 June, 1970.

¹⁸ Victor Polley quoted by Daniel Stoffman. “*Festival’s business side is festive too*.” The Toronto Daily Star. 6 June, 1970.

services to direct *Gaslight* for Newton. This allowed Newton to play Mr. Manningham himself and the show went on to be a critical success in this *little* regional theatre.

While the machinations kept working at Stratford, the 1970s raced on and political intrigue would create a dangerous tug-of-war between foreign and domestic forces: both on stage and in the boardroom. Wylie was a sound businessman, but he would soon realize that his philosophy of theatre was not realistic: “Where there’s a financial argument against an artistic argument, the artistic argument must win.”²⁰ Although this is good in theory, the financial interests and artistic growing pains of the Festival would continue to affect the subsequent production of *MV* in 1976. It was to be directed by Canadian Bill Glassco, the driving force of the Tarragon Theatre, under the Artistic Direction of Robin Phillips.

¹⁹ Christopher Newton. *William Hutt: Masks and Faces*. Keith Garebian, ed. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1995: 96.

²⁰ William T. Wylie quoted by Daniel Stoffman. “*Festival’s business side is festive too.*” *The Toronto Daily Star*. 6 June, 1970.

Chapter Three

1976~~"Why, look you how you storm"

(MV, I, iii, 133)

Robin Phillips's appointment in 1973 as the Artistic Director designate to succeed Jean Gascon was met with both widespread support and controversy. At this time, there was a cultural chauvinism in Canada and 'outsiders' were not welcomed into the arts community. According to Martin Knelman, Stratford's conservatism, both geographically and politically, highlighted its unawareness of what hostilities prevailed towards Phillips in the theatre community across Canada (Knelman, Stratford, 18). Phillips acclimatization with Canada, his acute awareness of the state of Canadian theatre and the necessity for a Canadian identity within it, proved to be key factors in his subsequent success.

Initially, he toured across Canada in 1974 to acquaint himself with Canadian theatres and talent. He also worked alongside Gascon for the 1974 season and familiarized himself with the inner workings of the Festival. Consequently, when he assumed the position as Artistic Director in 1975, he had a clear vision and structured ideas of how he wanted Stratford and Canadian theatre in general to develop. He felt it was essential to have a strong company and to be able to cross-cast between theatres. There was also a necessity for a Young Company to train

primarily Canadian actors in classical theatre and, in addition, he hired Daphne Dare as Head of Design to train and promote Canadian designing talent. Phillips was to become a major driving force in the development of truly Canadian theatre and this in itself became quite a paradox. He was a young British director, initially “unwelcome” and now making Canada home; while quickly establishing a loyal following at Stratford and reviving what was a slowly sagging Festival. The most interesting fact was that he became a rallying force in Canadian theatre and staged new Canadian plays at the Third Stage, as well as inviting Canadian associate directors:

A national theatre will not be created in any one location, to serve one city or one province. It will emerge from a theatre climate that engulfs the entire country, enabling writers, directors and actors to make a statement that is truly Canadian, transcending differences of geography and economics to find the country, and give it voice.²¹

Although he used an imported star-system throughout his regime, his principal leads were largely *Canadian* stars. Even after leaving Stratford, Phillips worked across the country in regional theatres directing, acting and creating new companies.

During these hostilities of the 1970s, Canadian theatre and Stratford were attracting international attention. Actors such as Nicholas Pennell, Douglas Campbell and John Neville had already made Canada ‘home’ and were dedicated to Canadian theatre and excited about the opportunities

Stratford had to offer. Martha Henry, William Needles and Marti Maraden, all three Americans, had already made Canada and Canadian theatre home and were thought of as 'Canadian'. The struggle between nationalists and new recruits in the cause of Canadian theatre was not an easy one to come to terms with and both parties had valid reasons for their involvement. Many theatre people believed that artistic talent should not be based on geographical or racial boundaries. There was also another group that was not personally opposed to Phillips, but was angered by: "the fact that it [the Board] had pointedly neglected to approach the most eligible of all Canadian candidates—John Hirsch" (Pettigrew, Stratford, vol. 2, 47). Hirsch, as well as other rankled nationalists, would be invited to work in Stratford during the 1976 season; an effort to finally gain support from those quarters that were opposed to Phillips's appointment in 1974.

One of Phillips's methods to Canadianize Shakespeare was to eliminate the use of supposed British accents by Canadian actors. He felt this was more of an impediment, particularly for younger actors and made the work more inaccessible; for both actor and audience. By using natural accents, actors could explore the intrinsic poetic rhythms of the verse freely and provide a contemporary sensitivity. This concept was one of the singularly important changes in acting Shakespeare in Canada and by

²¹ Robin Phillips quoted by Staff Writer. "On Actors, Acting and Audiences." Fanfares. 1.9 (1975): 3.

this one stroke, Shakespeare became Canadian to the ear. Audiences found this style of performance created a more intimate connection as well, because the language could be easily understood. Over the past 25 years since this change, the use/non-use of accents is no longer an issue and a new generation of actors now master the inflection and diversity of Shakespeare's verse impeccably.

The most obvious vehicle for a Canadian Shakespearean production in 1976 was *MV*. It was directed by Bill Glassco, who had an impressive reputation as Artistic Director of Tarragon Theatre and ironically, he was one of a group of directors that originally opposed Phillip's appointment in 1974. He had been invited to stage *Kennedy's Children* at the Third Stage during the 1975 season and had achieved great success. The subsequent invitation for Glassco to direct *MV* in 1976: "made him the first native Canadian guest director (as opposed to longtime Stratford insiders...) to do a major featured production on the famous Festival Theatre thrust stage."²² The cast was headed by stalwart Canadians: Hume Cronyn as Shylock, Jackie Burroughs as Portia, Lewis Gordon as Antonio, and Nick Mancuso as Bassanio. Domini Blythe (Jessica) emigrated to Canada in 1972 and is a fixture in Stratford and Shaw up to the present. There were young Canadian actors in servant roles that would prove to have successful careers in Canadian theatre: Jan Kudelka, who

²² Margaret Daly. "Director takes on a new challenge." Toronto Star. 5 June, 1976.

would also become a successful playwright and Peter Hutt, who would become a mainstay at Stratford and a brilliant Antonio 25 years later.

The Artistic Director's notes in the 1976 Festival Programme were full of passion and praise for Canadian theatre and how our growing pains are now reaping a bounty: "To challenge the theatre community, to stick our necks out, to risk failure, is not easy for this organization; indeed it is not easy for *Canada* to challenge itself but we are learning."²³ Unfortunately, this risk of failure is what Glassco's *MV* was to endure. It was generally panned by almost all reviews and even those that were kind, did so by singling out individual performances. Even the Stratford Beacon Herald had difficulty promoting *MV* and its review was more of a descriptive nature rather than critical, summarizing that: "the difficulty is that this is not a realistic play."²⁴ Although Glassco had to bear the responsibility as director, there were many contributing factors that were out of his control.

The paramount problem was working on the famous thrust stage itself, to which both in size and shape Glassco was completely unaccustomed. It was known to be treacherous for many guest directors and had even given Langham and Phillips problems on occasion (Pettigrew, Stratford, vol. II, 90) In addition, there were leading actors

²³ Robin Phillips. 1976 Festival Programme, 1.

²⁴ Doug Bale quoted by James Nelson. "*Everyone in merchant roles rather hateful critic finds.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. 9 June, 1976.

(primarily Burroughs and Mancuso) that simply did not have confidence in Glassco and this made the rehearsal process extremely difficult at best. Phillips's stringent policy was never to intervene on *any* guest director's behalf unless personally asked by the director himself. He felt that this was an important artistic and directorial ethic and having suffered intervention by Peter Hall at RSC, Phillips was adamant in his position. The extended rehearsal time of up to 3 months, sharing rehearsal time and space with other directors (as is the nature of repertory), were all new hurdles for Glassco. Collectively, these problems behind the scenes would transpire vividly into a perceived mediocrity on stage. Reviewers both in Canada and United States deemed this as Glassco's inexperience in classical theatre: "Glassco, it would appear, has been intimidated by Shakespear"²⁵ and "Glassco's direction seems to suffer from insecurity...making his first attempt at the Festival stage."²⁶ This overabundance of criticism of Glassco was somewhat unjust considering all the externalities, but generally his vision, interpretation and staging of the play were also in question.

The play was set in the mid-1800s and there was a sense of opulence throughout. Everyone was well-tailored and even Shylock wore a very rich gaberdine. Although Festival productions were often done out of 'period', the response to *MV* updated in this fashion was not popular. The

²⁵ Maureen Peterson. "*Cronyn betrays Shylock.*" Ottawa Journal. 9 June, 1976.

reason for this is not clear, but perhaps it was due to the juxtaposition of Victorian Venice to an Oriental Belmont. Particularly during Morocco's scenes, Portia's servants wore 'oriental-style' robes that did not suit Portia's Victorian full skirt. This visually created a disjointed mise-en-scene and criticism of the production stressed Glassco's: "confused and aimless direction."²⁷ Glassco outlined his approach to the play in an interview: "The main thing I've tried to do with it is make it like a fairytale and at the same time make the audience believe in it."²⁸ His editorial choices of the script to ensure this fairy-tale, however, emphasized the disjunction between the romance story and the Shylock story.²⁹

He *completely* restructured Act II and therefore lessened the interaction between the worlds of Venice and Belmont. To best illustrate Glassco's changes, I have listed the running order of the scenes:

Act II, ii	Grouping 1	Act II, iii	Grouping 2
Act II, vii		Act II, iv	
		Act II, v	
followed by 2		Act II, vi	
		Act II, viii	
		Act II, ix	

In this manner, it advanced the Morocco scene II, vii, playing it very close to his introduction. The second sequence grouped all the Venice scenes

²⁶ David V. Graham. "*Cronyn is spiny Shylock.*" *Flint Journal*. 15 June, 1976.

²⁷ Myron Galloway. "*Merchant of Venice fizzles.*" *Montreal Star*. 9 June, 1976.

²⁸ Bill Glassco quoted by Harry van Vugt. "*Cronyn commands Merchant.*" *Windsor Star*. 9 June, 1976.

and 'Jewish plot' together. The drastic editing that followed in Act III, continued to create polar opposites between the two locales instead of any integration. This subsequent segment has the famous "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech of III, i. The only other elements of the 'Jewish plot' are in III, iii, and III, v, which are re-structured and cut. The running order is as follows:

Act III, iii moves directly into Act III, v
Act III, v, runs lines 1-24/lines 25-87 (end of scene) are cut

This structure pairs together two small Jewish scenes that show extreme polarization between Jews: III, iii, has Shylock refusing Antonio's final plea and the latter's removal by the Jailor, whereas III, v, shows the Christian convert Jessica lovingly paired with Lorenzo. The crucial cut of lines 25-87, effectively removes any and all derogatory Jewish and sexual references made between Launcelot and Lorenzo. This pairing is followed by III, iv which continues in the opulent Belmont with the addition of Portia and her complete train, followed by the intermission. This leaves the baser matters of Venice removed from the audience and dazzles them with a romanticized, positive and idyllic environment to linger over.

Another important aspect of *MV* which has not yet been discussed in this chapter is the ever-present issue of anti-Semitism. Due to the non-descript reception of the play, the issue of anti-Semitism was hardly

²⁹ All following editing references taken from "*MV*, Stage Manager's Prompt Book. Stratford Festival Archives, 1976.

addressed. The question did not appear in most reviews and when it did appear, it was characteristically viewed in one of several ways. Overwhelmingly, the play was not anti-Semitic because Shylock was too 'pathetic', the reading was too 'superficial', or the reading was 'a standard text-book interpretation'. The allegations of anti-Semitism were not as prevalent either due to the fact that 'everyone was hateful', it was not 'favourable for Jews or Christians', and mostly because since the Holocaust, it is impossible for us as a 20th century audience not to feel at least slightly uneasy. However, even the protests were tempered because Shylock's performance was always kept within very conscious limits and main dimensions, therefore failing to create heightened dramatic tension. Cronyn's anxiety over Glassco's cautious direction also added to what many reviewers considered was a stilted performance. One of the kinder reviews wrote of Cronyn as bringing: "...to the role considerable humanity, helping soften the offensiveness of the play's innate racism."³⁰ The most significant lesson that can be learned from this *MV* is the fear of controversy.

Just as in the 1970 production, the conscious desire to be inoffensive has run risks of being dramatically bland. The text of *MV* itself exudes mercantile and racial prejudices and it is the exploration, not fear of these issues that brings dramatic height and depth to the work. By confronting

³⁰ Victor Stanton. "A fairy-tale production of Merchant of Venice." Kitchener-Waterloo Record.

the possibility of anti-Semitism, we are not necessarily exploring Shakespeare's point of view, but our own sensibilities, frustrations and fears. Particularly, since the Holocaust, these issues need to be addressed and education provided.

The outcome of the production, as well as the end of the season, offered several startling conclusions. Firstly, it suggested an inexperience, once again of Canadian directors in classical theatre. This hurdle would become a contentious issue and have to be borne and overcome *again and again*, particularly in the search for an Artistic Director to succeed Phillips in 1981. Glassco's misdirection of *MV* helped to indirectly fuel Phillips's personal success as Artistic Director and director of box-office 'hits'. In addition, his success at the box-office reached over half a million in annual ticket sales in 1976 (Knelman, Stratford, 44). Regardless of the fact that this was accomplished in part by imported 'stars' such as Maggie Smith, his success was unparalleled and the quality and standard of his productions was first-rate. Phillips was to gain a contract extension and greater single-handed control over the Festival, which although successful under his personal regime, proved to be disastrous after his resignation.

The Board's failure to thoroughly and fairly conduct a search for an Artistic Director almost destroyed the Festival. While publicly establishing a co-Directorate of respected theatre professionals, Robert

Hicks (Board President) was privately trying to contract John Dexter in England. This duplicity exploded in a nationalistic furor when the co-Directorate were callously 'fired' and John Dexter's appointment immediately announced. It became an insult to Canadian theatre professionals and the nationalist issues assumed incredible proportions. The magnitude of the ensuing repercussions the Board could not have imagined. The intensity of lobbying from all venues of the arts world, particularly Canadian Actors' Equity, resulted in the refusal of a work permit for the British Dexter by Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Employment and Immigration). Axworthy could see that the Board had been manipulative and had circumvented any serious search for an Artistic Director for over a year. They had been duplicitous in their intentions with everyone involved, even amongst themselves, and therefore this crisis was of their own making.

The 1981 season and the Festival itself was now in jeopardy and the only solution for the Board was to hire immediately and at any cost, a Canadian Artistic Director, accept an inevitable financial loss, and try to put an end to this fiasco. The most unfortunate victims were those of the co-Directorate, Dexter and other artists as well, because they were collectively manipulated and pitted against each other by the ineptitude of the Board. Although it was corporate mismanagement at its worst, it was inexcusable for how it violated artistic reputations and jeopardized

relationships between theatre professionals and colleagues, both in Canada and internationally. After much political and artistic dueling, John Hirsch became Artistic Director in 1981.

The next *MV* would be staged in 1984 with John Neville as Shylock and directed by Mark Lamos. Hirsch's personal ideology involved portraying the dark side of human behaviour in many plays and always looking for the unpleasant first. The culmination of this trend after several seasons, plus an accrued deficit, would overshadow the 1984 season. Before the run of *MV* was even over, Neville would be appointed Artistic Director designate, succeeding Hirsch in 1986. Similarly, several problems that Glassco experienced manifesting in hindered performances would once again surface in this production. The impact of this was a lack of controversy *on* stage, while much was happening *off* stage. In spite of Lamos's focused interpretation, *MV* tended to placate more than disturb. *MV* was once again to be plagued by Canadian theatrical politics, even while excelling in the availability of talent.

Chapter Four

1984--The Hirsch Regime Overshadows Lamos's MV

Deficit, boardroom politics, and artistic demands are usually the first words that are associated with John Hirsch's regime as Artistic Director from 1981-1985. Hirsch himself observed: "When I came here in 1981, I found an institution in the middle of a nervous breakdown."³¹ The chaos that followed Phillips's departure in 1980, the subsequent creation and almost immediate dismissal of the 'Gang of Four',³² the inevitability of a deficit for the 1981 season, proved to be too many wounds for even Hirsch to heal. Hirsch's commitment to Canadian theatre was unquestionable: "He believes that all institutions should be headed by someone 'of the country', who knows the history, the culture and has the general feel."³³ Hirsch emigrated to Winnipeg in 1947 as a boy and being an orphan, grew up in a 'Canadian' family within the multi-cultural rubric of Manitoba. He attended University of Manitoba and founded regional theatre there after graduation. He had a strong passion for Canada and theatre and

³¹ John Hirsch. "Hail and Farewell." *Fanfares*. 19.3 (October 1985).

³² The Gang of Four was an Artistic co-Directorate established to head the Festival following Phillips. They were Martha Henry, Urjo Kareta, Pam Brighton, and Peter Moss. The unprofessional and unethical methods by which the Board dismissed them caused immense hostility towards the Board from the Company and severe censure from the theatrical community as a whole.

³³ Ann Young. "Hirsch on Stratford." *Ottawa Citizen*. 2 March, 1984.

regardless of any subsequent errors in judgement he might have made, his intentions were always focused on his commitment to both.

However, he also believed in getting the best talent available to ensure high standards at Stratford, and therefore, supported the importation of foreign actors and guest directors. To keep progressive, he saw the necessity for a Young company in order to provide adequate training in voice, movement and classical theatre. Regardless of the clarity of his vision, somewhere along the road of re-construction, Stratford began to experience a divisive shift in focus. Many more European dramas were done as a whole with an array of playwrights: Moliere, Brecht, Shaw, Rattigan, Coward, and Beckett. In addition, by 1984, the Avon Stage became almost exclusively a Gilbert & Sullivan house:

1981—*H.M.S. Pinafore*
 1982—*The Mikado*
 1983—*The Mikado*
 1984—*The Mikado, The Gondoliers, Iolanthe*
 1985—*The Pirates of Penzance*

Consequently, as clearly evident from the 1984 Souvenir Programme, what used to be a listing of *one* Festival Acting Company was now distinctly and neatly categorized as five: The Festival Stage, The Avon Stage (Musical), The Avon Stage (Drama), The Third Stage (The Festival Company), and The Third Stage (The Young Company).³⁴ These

³⁴ *The Merchant of Venice*. Stratford Festival Souvenir Programme, 1984.

distinctions, between drama and musical, destroyed the possibility of cross-casting between *all* shows and in reality formed two *artistic* companies under one *corporate* umbrella. A sense of unity was virtually impossible and the G & S productions came to be regarded as merely entertaining box-office drawing cards for bus tours. *The Mikado* in the 1982 season broke box-office records with a 96.4% attendance record (Pettigrew, Stratford, vol. II, 254). This condescending attitude towards the G & S shows was grossly unfair, as the leading musical actors were of the highest calibre in their own field. It is indicative, however, of the tensions that were rampant during the Hirsch years.

By the ushering in of the 1984 season, Stratford had become a place of confusion and frustration. There were still artistic rifts, hasty re-organization, hirings and firings plus continual complaints about money or the lack of it. Instead of being a flagship theatre and setting the classical theatre standard for North America, it became an example for how *not* to run a theatre. The acting company itself was promising in spots, but lacked balance overall. There were key senior members that had been with the Festival for many years and/or were new additions with international stature, in addition to a new influx of talented young actors.

Several of these talented young actors, such as Seana McKenna, Colm Feore, and Lucy Peacock would become mainstays of Stratford up to the present. There were acting dynasties being created with the

Campbells: Douglas and sons Benedict and Torquil were all acting in *Love's Labour's Lost* in the 1984 season. Benedict Campbell has developed into a mainstay of Stratford while his father Douglas continues to be one of the elder statesmen of the Festival. There were also the Hutts; William and his nephew Peter. They were conspicuously absent in this 1984 season, but returned to be mainstays to the present, while William Hutt *remains* the embodiment of a true Canadian 'star' and a fine classical actor with a deft handling of verse. Brian Bedford was to share his disappointment in the obvious absence of several of the veterans because of the travesty of 1980: "Stratford is not the same without Martha [Henry] and Maggie [Smith] and Bill Hutt. There's a big gap there" (Garebian, Well-Bred Muse, 40).

Regardless of some definite positive growth in Canadian theatre, a weak link was the absence of actors in the middle range. There were Patricia Connolly, Richard Monette, Domini Blythe, to name a few, but overall this area was lacking depth. The large casts of a Shakespearean play demanded seasoned actors for the middle range. Anthony Brennan commented specifically on the imbalance and lack of depth of the talent base in his 1983 season review: "the absence of veteran or even mildly experienced actors in the middle range parts created a sense of thinness."³⁵ Furthermore, with a secondary company hired for the musicals, the salary

³⁵

Anthony Brennan. "Stratford Festival—1983." Ta Panta. 1.1 (1983): 35.

budget was already at its peak. To spread it further by increasing its strength of classical actors for the large Shakespearean productions was just not feasible.

Into this molotov cocktail came Mark Lamos, one of the brightest young American directors at the time, as guest director of *MV* for the 1984 season. Lamos had worked under Langham as an actor at the Guthrie and brought some of Langham's knowledge of working on a thrust stage with him. Although this would aid him somewhat in creating circular blocking, particularly for the 'Trial Scene', his inexperience on such a difficult stage would become evident throughout the production.³⁶ The responsibility for staging such a complex play as a major Festival production on the infamous potential destroyer of careers, the thrust stage, was again put into the hands of a young guest director. Although initially Lamos seemed to have a strong vision of the play and exceptional talent in the leads, John Neville as Shylock and Domini Blythe as Portia, the production would end up with mixed reviews.

Lamos began with a very focused and conceptual approach for his production. He meticulously outlined his intentions in the 'Director's Notes' of the Souvenir Programme and explained how his interpretation was clearly defined in the play. He began by stating that the play was being set in the 18th century during Shrovetide and therefore a pre-Lenten

Venetian Carnival atmosphere was a natural course of events. He historically anchored this with reference to a first *recorded* performance on Shrove Sunday (February 10, 1605) at the Court of James I. Although this was accurate, he dismissed the fact that the production first played in 1595/1596 with great success at Shakespeare's Globe; a fact which would put a wrinkle in his structured approach. Consequently, being set during Shrovetide, the religious holiday atmosphere had the same thematic mixture as the play. Both combined merry and even riotous behaviour preceding Lent followed by self-scrutiny, penance and absolution during Lent, which was evident in the 'Trial Scene'. He stressed that this play was a scrutiny of Christians' standards versus their real actions and therefore was not anti-Semitic. Shylock was not glossed over and was portrayed nastily and honestly, because he was actually parodying the intolerance and hypocrisy of Puritans, who to a large extent were marginalized at this time.

As in every previous production, it is duly noted that the play's original meaning and its ironic perspective is obscured since the 1940s by the Holocaust. Lamos stressed that this narrower perspective could not be helped, but he hoped to reveal the satirical way that all of the characters are scrutinized, both positively and negatively: "*The Merchant of Venice* will always fascinate, disturb, and satisfy. Our inabilities to grasp all of its

³⁶ Blocking directions taken from *MV, Stage Manager's Prompt Book*. Stratford Festival Archives,

complexities reminds us of our humanity.”³⁷ The result of Lamos’s meticulously detailed production was very structured and controlled. It played up the comedy of Shylock in the first half and tempered his ruthlessness. Therefore, in the ‘Trial Scene’ he must make a complete emotional shift to reach the dramatic climax during his conversion.³⁸ This was recognized in a review by Mark Czarnecki: “Because Lamos has avoided passion...he sabotages the play’s dramatic tension and insights.”³⁹ Neville’s performance itself was regarded as splendid in its execution, but often shapeless in its structure and this was attributed directly to Lamos’s directorial vision.

His directorial choices for editing and costume design focused heavily on the opulence of Venetian Christian society and subsequently the assimilation of those whose wealth is quite substantial. On the whole, there was minor editing of the text and the cuts were not disruptive to the piece. The only crucial editorial change occurred in III, v, 33-50, a scene that seems to be traditionally tampered with.⁴⁰ These lines remove the exchange between Launcelot and Lorenzo regarding Launcelot’s sexual exploits with a Venetian Negro slave, once again removing the exploitative images of Venetian owners towards their ‘goods’. The sexual

1984.

³⁷ Mark Lamos. *The Merchant of Venice*. Stratford Festival Edition, 1985. 3.

³⁸ Personal notes from the videotape of *MV*—1984. Stratford Festival Archives.

³⁹ Mark Czarnecki. “*Theatre Review*.” *Maclean’s*, 3 September, 1984.

⁴⁰ Editing notes taken from *MV*, *Stage Manager’s Prompt Book*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1984.



Shakespeare
"The Merchant
of Venice"
Stofford 1784

C. Fiedlerbrink

coarseness of this dialogue could also be potentially offensive and therefore its removal negates many dark undertones of the scene.

Visually, the play was stunning with costumes of rich satins, silk, and gold brocade. Shylock was exotic in appearance and reflected opulence as well by wearing richly coloured gaberdines and a large gold sash, fur hat, and fur-trimmed coat. He also wore a knee-length tunic with trousers as opposed to the traditional floor length tunic.⁴¹ This visually made the production: “gentle...pastel hued...[but otherwise] an unexceptional evening.”⁴² Another striking shift in costume design was that of Jessica and particularly Tubal.

Jessica’s transformation into a Venetian lady is complete in a shimmering pink satin and silk gown. It is complemented with bows, lace and a delicate ruff and heightened by a Venetian hair-style and pink satin shoes, visually making her blend in perfectly with the other ladies of Belmont. Tubal is even more striking in his contrast to Shylock. Tubal is clad in the same manner as the Venetians in a satin vest, brocade coat, white powder-puff wig and walking stick.⁴³ He does not look *at all* like one of Shylock’s ‘tribe’. In addition, Shylock wears a large and coloured yarmulke that is prominently displayed. Tubal, however, wears a small gold yarmulke that cannot be seen from the front and therefore, further

⁴¹ Costume notes from *MV, Wardrobe Bible*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1984.

⁴² Lyle Slack. “*Merchant Makes Modern Sense*.” *Hamilton Spectator*. 11 August, 1984.

⁴³ Costume notes from *MV, Wardrobe Bible*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1984.

disguises his immediate identification as an 'alien'. This stresses an assimilation process that Tubal has undergone, visually at least, by choice. The juxtaposition of this to Shylock's forced conversion, as well as a process of assimilation is problematic and never confronted or explained.

As a whole, the production was seen as cleansed of "the anti-Semitic overtones which have enshrouded it...in what is a skillfully economic performance [by Neville]."⁴⁴ The anti-Semitic controversies were few and subdued and initially the production seemed to be a politically correct success. Unfortunately, even this tempered *MV* could not escape the political intrigues that were going on between Hirsch and the Festival administration. The season's disappointing attendance records were exceptionally low (in Drama), while the musicals sold well. *MV* led the pack at 70% attendance and this poor showing could not help but dampen the morale of the actors and had a negative impact on the company as a whole.

It was October 9, 1984 that was to prove an explosive moment in the question of anti-Semitism and would help establish a definite precedent for Canadian politics to influence choices of material in Canadian theatre. It was a student matinee performance of *MV*, which was also attended by 60 Jewish boys from the Yeshivat Bnei Akiva School or Chaim in Downsview, Ontario. During the performance, some students threw

46A



Shylock
John Neville
The Merchant
of Venice
Stratford, 1954

C. Peddubuck

pennies at John Neville and apparently, as indicated in a letter from Brenda Freedman, threw pennies, candy and gum at the 60 Jewish students who were conspicuous because of their yarmulkes.⁴⁵ This was apparently encouraged by the anti-Semitic overtones in the play and left the Jewish boys understandably 'traumatized'. Neville himself was apparently so distraught that he refused to take a curtain call.

This unfortunate incident would have tremendous political backlash for the type of theatre that Stratford would be expected to perform. As a national icon, the Festival was invoked as having a responsibility to its audience and must be acutely aware of ethnic sensitivities. Thus, the Canadianization of Shakespeare would now depend heavily on contemporary political correctness, at least in the near future.

In the years that followed, 1986 saw the Waterloo County School Board ban *MV* from its curriculum. Stratford would re-stage *MV* in 1989 with Michael Langham directing and Brian Bedford as Shylock. Neville was Artistic Director at this time and the experience of 1984 could not help but be a vivid memory. Consequently, the 1989 production was to lean heavily on an anti-Christian interpretation with a compelling and victimized Shylock and *major* directorial cuts and additions to the script.

⁴⁴ Jane Wilson. "Successful Stratford debut: Director Mark Lamos gives *Merchant of Venice* new life." Kitchener-Waterloo Record. 11 August, 1984.

⁴⁵ Personal letter from Brenda Freedman, English Department, Yeshivat Bnei Akiva written to John Hirsch, October 15, 1984.

Chapter Five

1989~~The Jew Need Not Turn Christian

John Neville's tenure as Artistic Director began in 1986 on a note of joyful anticipation from both the Board and the acting company. Hirsch had greatly fallen out of favour and alienated many by the end of his tenure and Neville was held, rightly or wrongly, as a saving grace. A landed immigrant, a proud Canadian and passionately dedicated to the growth and pursuit of high standards in Canadian theatre since the 1970s, he had exemplary credentials. Firstly, he was a stellar classical actor in England with an international reputation. Upon his arrival in Canada, he was Artistic Director of both The Citadel Theatre and The Neptune Theatre and with his business acumen, had successfully put both of the financially crumbling theatres well into the black by the end of his term. He was an actor in the Stratford company in the 1983 and 1984 seasons and directed the Young Company in 1985. A tribute to his charm was his being able to work simultaneously for 'two masters'; Hirsch at Stratford and Phillips at The Grand in the 1983-1984 seasons. He was part of Phillips's company that was comprised of the upper echelons of Canadian

theatre talent, many with international reputations, with the infusion of the brightest young actors on the stage at the time.⁴⁶

However, by the end of 1989, Neville's last season as Artistic Director, he was criticized from some quarters regarding his economic policies dominating over artistic integrity. Neville realized how important community support was to the continued success of the festival. The economic growth of Stratford through employment and tourism would help secure this support and therefore the community would be less critical of the Festival as a whole. Neville himself was very active in all community events and bridged a gap that had developed during the Hirsch years, between the Festival and those that built it. From its inception, the Festival belonged to the town and this possessive pride is still evident in many Stratfordians. In an economic analysis in 1989 of the 1988 fiscal year, the average expenditure of a patron was almost \$100.00 (based on transportation, meals, accommodation, etc. but *excluding* ticket prices).⁴⁷ This money went directly into the local economy and it was this economic growth that would continue to keep the Festival in the black. One source of contention was the transfer of a major musical production from the Avon Stage to the Festival Stage for purely financial reasons: "If people

⁴⁶ Robin Phillips's company at The Grand Theatre for the 1983-1984 season boasted the best in classical theatre and garnered an invitation to the Edinburgh Festival. They were: William Hutt, John Neville, Martha Henry, Barry MacGregor, Carole Shelley, Susan Wright, Brent Carver, Sheila McCarthy and Donna Goodhand to name a few.

⁴⁷ Statistics taken from "*An Economic Analysis of the Stratford Festival, 1989*", by Jane Edmonds, Marketing Department. Courtesy of the Stratford Festival Archives.

criticize me about putting a musical on the main stage...I had to do something. [I] have contributed to getting rid of a 4.5 million dollar deficit...I'm not ashamed of my decision."⁴⁸ Although this may have been necessary at the time, it was also helpful in breaking the trend at the Avon of being a G & S showcase and thus opened it up to more plays.

The strong footing of a Young Company at the Third Stage (renamed the Tom Patterson Theatre in 1991), provided 3 venues for a repertory company to work in—a fact which was only rivaled by the Shaw Festival in Niagara-on-the-Lake at the time. Neville was also successful in bringing back William Hutt, Robin Phillips and Jean Gascon, as well as attempting to heal some old wounds in 1986, but by 1989 new wounds had surfaced. Douglas Campbell, a friend and colleague of Neville's since the 1950s, did not agree with the heavy emphasis on musicals: "It reflects the fact that the economic arguments, not artistic ones, have come to dominate the festival."⁴⁹ Coincidentally, Campbell was not offered a part in the 1989 season, along with Susan Coyne and Nancy Palk. Susan Wright was also one of a number of lead actors that felt some anxieties over the artistic integrity of the productions as a whole, a tone that was evident throughout the Festival company. She was not offered a role in the 1989 season and left to work at Shaw, but not without expressing her disappointment and

⁴⁸ John Neville quoted by Wallace Sterling. "An Interview with John Neville." Shakespeare Bulletin. November/December, 1989. 25.

⁴⁹ Douglas Campbell quoted by John Bemrose. "A summer triumph." Maclean's. 10 July, 1989.

the fact that she felt “very hurt” by Neville’s actions.⁵⁰ William Hutt was offered only very small roles and decided to work at Shaw instead, while Colm Feore and Robin Phillips opted out as well.

In spite of this, Stratford boasted an impressive acting company with great depth. The most striking element was that most of the company were Canadian actors or naturalized Canadians. For many, working on the thrust stage was part of their early training and their comfort and ease of movement was evident in production. The high calibre handling of the verse was indicative of a successful training environment for young actors, while the long repertory season of 6 months provided the opportunity of honing skills. There was now less apprehensiveness about bringing in ‘foreign’ actors or directors because there was an array of solid Canadian talent. As well, many top-level directors and actors had already worked at Stratford at some point and were glad to come ‘home’ again. This was nowhere more evident than in the 1989 production of *MV*.

MV was to be directed by Michael Langham and to have Brian Bedford (after a 4-year absence) play Shylock. Neville was anxious to have them back to the festival and they [Langham and Bedford] were doing *MV* in Washington, D.C. at this time. They would re-mount the production in Stratford but with an entirely new cast and a re-thinking of the text. The meticulous planning that went into minimizing any

⁵⁰ Susan Wright quoted by John Bemrose. “*A summer triumph.*” Maclean’s. 10 July, 1989.

predictable controversy (again) over *MV*, proved to be insufficient and the play received mixed reactions.

Well before *MV* was even thought of for the 1989 season, the Waterloo County Board of Education made headlines with the banning of *MV* from the school curriculum. On July 10, 1986 a motion was initially passed (10 approved/8 opposed), to ban *MV* from intermediate grades on the premise that students did not have the maturity to deal with the racial problems in the play. The opposition contended that this was not up to politicians (ie. school trustees) to decide, but up to educators and that the Provincial Board should pass such a crucial ruling. Consequently, both parties agreed to let the Province decide and subsequently passed a motion to ban the play completely until a ruling was passed; another fine example that politicians should not attempt to dabble in education.⁵¹ In February 1989, the Durham County Board of Education passed its own ruling stating that *MV* would only be taught in senior grades (11 & 12). It would now keep company with Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*, which also needed 'an understanding towards issues'. In addition, Brock High School in Durham County cancelled their class trip to see *MV* because School Board officials (not educators) decided it was "not suitable."⁵² It was becoming very evident that theatrical policy had to succumb to public

⁵¹ Information taken from Minutes of Meeting of the Waterloo County Board of Education, re: Merchant of Venice Discussion. File #1032-000. 10 July, 1986.

⁵² Mark Stewart. "Play 'unsuitable' for students, board cancels Stratford trip." The Oshawa Times. 4 April, 1989.

scrutiny. As early as February 1989, even before rehearsals began, Neville had started a study series focusing on *MV* and the importance of studying it and understanding it: “Plays are a reflection of society and a way of combating its ills.”⁵³ The Education Department at the Stratford Festival prepared instructional material for teachers planning class trips to the play and overall, the emphasis was on the education of students. In this manner, potentially offensive material could be dealt with in an intelligent and sensitive manner, with a special emphasis on assisting young students in coping with disturbing racial issues.

Langham’s production was to shift the focus away from Shylock and therefore reduce the emphasis of anti-Semitism: “[Bedford and Langham] don’t consider it anti-Semitic. Neither does current artistic director John Neville.”⁵⁴ His [Langham’s] intent was to focus on human flaws and the quality of mercy. He was interested in the love relationships and placed more emphasis on the deep love and homosexual desires of Antonio towards Bassanio. The cast was led by stellar actors: Brian Bedford (Shylock), Seana McKenna (Portia), Nicholas Pennell (Antonio), and Geraint Wyn-Davies (Bassanio). Unfortunately, the acting talents of this fine cast were generally overshadowed by one reason; the reaction to Langham’s directorial choices in editing the material—period: “[this is]

⁵³ John Neville quoted by Beth Beech. “Neville defends *Merchant of Venice* at Stratford study series.” *The Gazette* (Montreal). 24 February, 1989.

⁵⁴ Jamie Portman. “Stratford facing controversy over *Merchant of Venice*.” *The Calgary Herald*. 16 May, 1989.

particularly instructive in illustrating one fairly obvious point...Shakespeare's scripts have to be cut...to make room for the director's vision."⁵⁵ McGee went on to review and dub the season "The Year of the *Cut*." This critical reference was to Langham's cut of what became known as 'those nine little words': "that, for this favour,/He presently become a Christian" (*MV*, IV, i, 383-385). In addition to the omission of the conversion scene, the 'pork scene', III, v, was also *completely* cut. It appears that Langham was sensitive to any racial slurs involving race or colour, due to the additional cut of II, vii, 79, when Portia is speaking of Morocco.⁵⁶ Although Langham initially made these cuts at The Folger in Washington, D.C., the fact remained that he chose to retain them for the new production in Stratford.

To add to the skepticism about Langham's editing, speculation arose surrounding the Canadian Jewish Congress's influence regarding the revisions. Although the CJC was vocal in their apprehension of the play, they never suggested censorship, but stressed the importance of educating the audience about the play's racial tensions—whether through the classroom or through a lecture series. This seems more than understandable considering the CJC's concern over anti-Semitism. However, the inference that Stratford buckled under external pressure by

⁵⁵ C.E. McGee. "Shakespeare in Canada: the Stratford Season, 1989." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 41.1 (Spring 1990): 114.

⁵⁶ This line is spoken by a relieved Portia in reference to Morocco losing the lottery and her hand. She states: "Let all of his *complexion* choose me so."

particular ethnic/religious groups caused apprehension towards Canadian theatre, mainly that Stratford no longer bore sole artistic control: "It's absolutely appalling...the festival has managed to blight their artistic integrity. This is Shakespeare, you can't just trim and cut because someone might not like what he's saying."⁵⁷ Derangue was a longtime theatre critic and this kind of reception was indicative of the opinion many had on taking such textual liberty with work. This opinion was even supported by Michal Schonberg, a former literary manager at Stratford before Elliot Hayes. Hayes also happened to be assistant director of this production and was *very* outspoken about its directorial choices in many newspaper interviews. This was the first time an assistant director had such media exposure in the defence of a show.

Ironically, *MV* received mixed reviews ranging from great protest to great praise. The protest, strangely enough, came from the Jewish Press which stated: "One is almost tempted to say, Langham deliberately avoided racism inherent in the play...But his ideas of Shylock did not seem very convincing."⁵⁸ The consensus amongst the critics was that no amount of deleting could reduce the offensive nature of this play, especially for post-Holocaust audiences. Instead of adding more sensitivity, it became even *more* anti-Semitic because racial issues were

⁵⁷ Jonathan Derangue (*Manchester Guardian*) quoted by W. Richard Reynolds. "Stratford's 'Merchant' stirs up a tempest." *Stratford Beacon Herald*. 10 July, 1989.

⁵⁸ Michael Ajzenstadt. "Looking at Stratford's 'Merchant'." *Jewish Bulletin*. 29 June, 1989.

ignored rather than openly confronted. The omission of the forced conversion actually made Antonio appear more merciful, because he only asked for a portion of Shylock's money. Consequently, Shylock is not completely devastated or humiliated and therefore just shuffles off stage and goes home. The exit proves to be exceptionally weak—the dramatic climax is simply not there. Other criticism resulted from Langham's physical staging choices, that of costuming and additional blocking that exists *nowhere* in the text.⁵⁹

The costuming was of Edwardian England for all the characters except Shylock and Jessica before her conversion. The men wore smart suits and silk top hats, while Shylock wore exotic flowing robes. Even though his clothing exuded a certain measure of wealth, he had scraggily long hair and a shaggy and matted beard. His extreme physical appearance seemed out of step with the rest of the cast. Jessica was also in 'harem-type' pants and a yarmulke before her elopement and this looked rather Oriental for 19th century Venice as well as being traditionally incorrect: "Michael Langham has Jessica wearing a yarmulke, ostensibly to identify her relationship to Shylock. Pious Jewish women have worn forms of headgear in the past but yarmulkes—never!"⁶⁰ This kind of emphasis by Langham to make strong statements through physical

⁵⁹ Subsequent Blocking notes taken from *MV, Stage Manager's prompt Book*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1989.

Subsequent Costume notes taken from *MV, Wardrobe Bible*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1989.

impressions added a disjointed quality between characters as they did not seem to occupy the same time and space.

The stage business that was added completely victimized Shylock, but at the same time emphasized social violence towards Jews rather than disdain for their usurious practices: “The tormenting of Shylock by a gang of cudgel-bearing kids...was a strong statement partly because the boys were so obviously a directorial supplement.”⁶¹ This blocking occurs in III, i, where Shylock enters and sees Salerio and Solanio. He is chased on by a group of young boys with sticks that have physically abused him and continue to laugh at him and taunt him. As a result, Shylock is enraged and delivers the passionate “Hath not a Jew eyes” speech to a young boy that he grabs by the scruff of the neck and holds throughout. Instead of this being a logical argument with adults, it is delivered with a desperate rage to a (now frightened) child. It completely destroys the impassioned plea and logic that this most poignant of speeches emphasizes. Langham’s other additions are meant to scorn Christians as well, but in effect they turn the religious carnival atmosphere into bedlam.

The balcony scene in II, vi, has Lorenzo’s friends stealing from the caskets that Jessica gives to Lorenzo. Although they *may* be tempted to steal from a Jew, this wealth now belongs to Lorenzo and it is highly

⁶⁰ Arnold Ages. “*Merchant of Venice at Stratford.*” National Jewish Post & Opinion. (Indianapolis) 21 June, 1989.

⁶¹ Michael J. Sidnell. “*Representing Theatre: Stratford’s 1989 Season.*” Journal of Canadian Studies. 24.4 (Winter 1989-1990): 150.

unlikely that they would steal from their friend. In addition, after Jessica and Lorenzo flee, masquers come by and raid the house, which appears to be a superfluous undercutting of the Christians. The last bit of interpolated stage business, was the addition of a black slave that Shylock led across the courtroom in the 'Trial Scene' to emphasize that the Venetians are a slave-holding society. Their values are based on mercantilism and commodification: "In this production the ill-treated Jew seemed part and parcel of various social structures by which people are empowered and oppressed."⁶² However, by showing *various* social ills, the issue of anti-Semitism, the most contentious issue in a modern production, was not dealt with specifically and therefore remained problematic.

In the other critical realm, Langham received positive views for this sensitivity towards post-Holocaust concerns, putting emphasis rather on the themes of love, mercy and money. Langham's intent was to illustrate how little control people actually had over their own lives. In reality, people were governed by externalities and individual choice was merely a reaction to these pressures: "Money in all its mercurial forms permeates the play. Everything, even the law itself, is in the grip of commerce."⁶³ This thematic direction, therefore, tended to place all the characters on an

⁶² C.E. McGee. "Shakespeare in Canada: The Stratford Season, 1989." *Shakespeare Quarterly*. 41.1 (Spring 1990): 116.

⁶³ Terry Doran. "Brilliant 'Merchant' is a study of our time." *Buffalo News*. 1 June, 1989.

equal playing field with the external element of wealth and its subsequent privileges, being victorious. It is obvious from the text that this is not so; Shylock is always the 'other'.

In support of the added staging with the boys, came a review that applauded Bedford for addressing the "Hath not a Jew eyes" speech to a child, which illustrated how: "in the most, simple direct way Shakespeare pleads for understanding."⁶⁴ Shakespeare's intent is almost impossible to know, but if Rothwell's statement is true, then why was such a scene addition necessary to bring this message out of the script? One answer to this question came from John Haycock of the Windsor Star, stating that Langham is following a new custom of removing offensive material.

Langham's directorial skills cannot be questioned, as he is simply one of the best classical directors of the 20th century. His directorial choices, however, and the textural liberties taken with the script, emphasize the level of discomfort surrounding issues of racism, particularly anti-Semitism experienced in modern times as well. This production reveals the fear that this type of racial prejudice still exists: "it does reveal our guilty, uneasy feeling that anti-Semitic words given to 16th century Venetians by Shakespeare could be and sometimes are spoken by 20th century Canadians."⁶⁵ Langham used full choirs in the Belmont

⁶⁴ Greg Rothwell. "Stratford audience gives Merchant a standing ovation." Daily Sentinel Review. (Woodstock) 1 June, 1989.

⁶⁵ Robert Fulford. "Shylock lives on our prejudices." The Financial Times of Canada. 28 August, 1989.

scenes to create a harmonious vision of life. This loving atmosphere, however, does not exist in 'real' life and there are not always harmonious endings to many issues, even in day to day life. The removal of contentious material from the script will not remove contentious attitudes in society.

The message that this production ultimately sent, was that art does *not* have to imitate life and classical theatre can be manipulated to suit modern tastes quite admirably. A work of literature is malleable, this is true, but when does it no longer identify the author, but rather the director? The post-mortem of this season left mixed opinions of this production without any real resolve. The calibre of talent was unparalleled, but often the actors were overshadowed by the political debating over directorial choices. This misplaced focus could be seen in all reviews and was indicative of how Canadian theatre was more dedicated to modern sensibility rather than to the truths found in the text.

The production to be staged in 1996 with Marti Maraden directing and Douglas Rain as Shylock would be a complete reversal of interpretation. It would confront the anti-Semitic issues and show racism for the destructive and hurtful force it can be—both then and now. It would highlight the goodness of both Jews and Christians, yet at the same time, illustrate the darker and vengeful dimensions of the human psyche when prejudice is sanctioned. These dimensions then manifest themselves

in extremely destructive ways towards all humanity. Maraden's production does not leave anyone, even partially, unscathed. This portrayal of *MV* with another stellar cast would be the highlight of the 1996 season and garner kudos for its honesty and integrity.

Chapter Six

1996--Confronting The Holocaust And The Winds Of Change

We've set the play in 1933, the year that Mussolini and Hitler first met. I'm interested in that climate of incipient, insidious anti-Semitism, before it has fully blossomed in all its horror, when we still can—and should—recognize and stop it.⁶⁶

Before 1996, many changes had taken place artistically at Stratford, resulting in *MV* being ushered in with a bold integrity and honesty. John Neville had finished his tenure at the end of 1989 and there was a smooth transition into David William's term in 1990. William had worked at Stratford some years before and was a close friend and colleague of Neville's. He was well-respected and admired and while he did not make radical changes in the Festival structure as a whole, he fully realized the importance of developing Canadian theatre and talent and was instrumental in staging plays by Canadian playwrights. This had become neglected at Stratford and William presented productions by Michel Tremblay, Sharon Pollock, John Murrell, and Elliot Hayes. His conviction was to present theatre honestly and with integrity, not balk at controversy and above all at the threatening externalities:

Recession, declining literacy, Political Correctness
all shake spectral fists. Of these, Political Correctness
seems to me much the most sinister...It [the Festival]
should resist, repel, and survive this symptom of
mediocrity.⁶⁷

He held the Festival in deepest regard and in 1993, which was his fourth and last season, expressed to the entire company and particularly Richard Monette, who would be taking the helm as Artistic Director in 1994, his sincerest wishes.

Monette's appointment as Artistic Director signaled a new era for the Festival and his career encapsulated the growth of Canadian theatre in both the depth of talent and international stature it had achieved. Monette came to Stratford in the late 1960s as a young actor and had spent much of his career there as well as working extensively across Canada. In a sense, he was a product of the great training that Stratford could provide. Along with Monette, there were other young actors that had come to Stratford in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were now, after 20 years, the new generation of 'veterans' of the Festival.

One actor in particular that 'grew up' with Monette at Stratford was Marti Maraden. She came to Canada in 1968 from California and joined the Stratford company in the early 1970s, playing many ingenues for the next several years. Canada became home and she worked extensively in theatres across the country as an actor, director, teacher, and Artistic

66

Marti Maraden (Director). *Merchant of Venice* Souvenir Programme, 1996.

Director (Theatre New Brunswick and Manitoba Theatre Centre). She also spent several notable seasons at The Shaw Festival. At this time, Stratford was not comfortable with *MV* and the previous two productions in 1984 and 1989 had been problematic. Monette expressed at a 1994 public forum that he himself did not favour the play and was disturbed by it when he played Antonio in Lamos's 1984 production.⁶⁸ However, time changes many things and the 1996 production of *MV* was a change in directorship itself.

Maraden was the only woman at that time that was an *established* director at Stratford with 9 previous festival productions to her credit.⁶⁹ Maraden was very aggressively lobbying to mount *MV* and had a very clear vision of how she interpreted the play. She believed that the ugliness of the play could not and should not be softened, but treated honestly and confronted. It was only in this way that the issues of anti-Semitism could be tackled. Her approach was that there were no 'monsters', but only ordinary people, that were not wholly good or wholly bad. The problems arose when things went too far, thus making the seeds of evil surface in everyone. Maraden approached the Board members, some being Jewish, with her concepts: "I received their full and unqualified support."⁷⁰ The

⁶⁷ David William. "Exit stage right." *Fanfares*. Autumn 1993.

⁶⁸ Richard Monette quoted by Mark Leiren-Young. "I am a Jew—Shakespeare and his censors." *Vancouver Sun*. 7 September, 1996.

⁶⁹ John Bemrose. "A bold Merchant soars at Stratford." *Maclean's*. 17 June, 1996.

⁷⁰ Marti Maraden quoted by Jamie Portman. "Stratford Festival tackles controversial play." *London Free Press*. 31 May, 1996.

Board had approved it and the first hurdle had been overcome. Being well-acquainted with the controversy that haunted every previous production, Maraden then consulted the Canadian Jewish Congress and with their assistance, put together a comprehensive educational package for teachers and students who would be coming to see the play. The message that the CJC had expressed for some time was that education and understanding must go hand in hand with the production, especially for students. Bernie Farber of the CJC, was the most outspoken about and clear on this issue of not censoring the play: “We’ll always be uncomfortable with the play because the words hurt and sting...We prefer to use it as a vehicle to teach about intolerance.”⁷¹ The culmination of this was the approval and support of the CJC. There would also be pre-show and post-show discussions, as well as a public lecture by Harold Bloom.

The production itself was to physically be of a different nature, playing for the first time on the Avon Stage rather than the Festival Stage. It was also updated to Italy in the 1930s when Fascism and anti-Semitism were on a rise, a prelude to WWII and the Holocaust. Much of the controversy regarding *MV* concerns the impossibility of disengaging images of the Holocaust for 20th century audiences from the anti-Semitism inherent in the play. A contemporary audience would immediately acknowledge the atrocities that resulted from racial prejudice:

⁷¹ Bernie Farber quoted by Bill Gladstone. “*Sensitive production still ‘hurts and stings’.*” Jewish

“Art...offers a window on history. It allows us to witness—to empathize with and learn from—the suffering, humiliation and sorrow that is inflicted.”⁷² It would also make it accessible to the sensitivities of modern society. No production can definitely state Shakespeare’s intent or how it was *really* played for an Elizabethan audience, but their reaction to the racial tensions however, would unequivocally have been different. The important message, by modernizing this production, was to see how a contemporary audience deals with racial tensions and solves racial problems; issues that truly are ‘for all time’.

The production was the highlight of the 1996 season and received praise from all quarters: “Remarkable...Her [Maraden’s] approach to the play is gutsy and unflinching.”⁷³ The production, as Maraden herself expressed on many occasions, was full of anti-Semitism, but her approach turned the play into a disturbing yet brilliant portrayal of the dark corners of racism and confronted this head-on. The most significant review that panned the production came oddly from Keith Garebian, who had written two books on William Hutt and interviewed a host of Festival actors in the past. He was so critical of *every* aspect of this ‘feeble attempt’ of a production (set, costumes, interpretation, individual performances, superficial treatment of text, etc.), that it verged on excessive criticism. It

Chronicle. 6 September, 1996.

⁷² Robert Reid. “*Play delivers powerful message.*” Kitchener-Waterloo Record. 31 May, 1996.

⁷³ Terry Doran. “*At Stratford, an unflinching, unnerving production of ‘Merchant’.*” Buffalo News. 4 June, 1996.

so disregarded the production, (2 paragraphs in an 11 page essay) that as a critical assessment it could almost have been disregarded in itself. He made many judgements, but did not explain or substantiate any of his views to make them completely credible—a lot of *what* was wrong, but not a lot of *why* he thought so.⁷⁴ Interestingly enough, Arnold Ages, who was highly critical of the 1989 production, stated he always found *MV* to be problematic: “...until Douglas Rain and this, the most edifying and brilliant rendering of the play since the beginning of the Stratford Festival.”⁷⁵ Rain was heralded as the quintessential Shylock: he had flaws, he could be very cruel, but he was also loving, kind and a good friend to his own kind. Consequently, the Christians were exactly like the Jews in their behaviour, so therefore it was understandable that both groups, each from their own perspective were justifiably provoked into destroying each other for the sake of revenging past wrongs.

Rain found the emotional side of Shylock that was the ‘family man’ and therefore Jessica’s betrayal and subsequent frivolous behaviour in Genoa made him completely, yet predictably irrational. Shylock now sees her as cut off from her family and heritage and Rain drew on some personal observations from when he was growing up in Winnipeg, that expressed Shylock’s feelings:

⁷⁴ Keith Garebian. “*Retheatricalizing Theatre: The 1996 Shaw and Stratford Festivals.*” Journal of Canadian Studies, 31.4 (Winter 1996-1997): 164-175.

⁷⁵ Arnold Ages. “*This Shylock doth bleed: The Merchant of Venice finally overcomes its anti-Semitism.*” The Jewish Bulletin, 5 July, 1996.

...in the Jewish neighbourhood in North Winnipeg in the '40s, if there was a cross-over marriage between a Jewish girl and a Christian boy, or vice versa, the blinds were drawn and the house was draped in black as if there had been a death in the family.⁷⁶

These traditional mores were seen in a Canadian society only 60 years ago. It can be clearly understood how Shylock, 400 years ago, would have felt these same feelings so intensely as to seek revenge for his lost daughter. He stresses that importance of Jessica's position in the family in the 'Trial Scene': "You take my house, when you do take the prop [Jessica]/That doth sustain my house" (IV, i, 371-372). The fact that he was a widower and Jessica was his only family, would have compounded this rage: "This patience is impeccable, his vengeance implacable."⁷⁷ The revenge is not masked or condoned, but the dynamics of how it can get to such a fever pitch are explained. A small snippet of a scene was written in and was completely silent, yet spoke volumes, the stage business illustrating the rising tensions of racism that would eventually lead to the Holocaust. At one point, Tubal walks onstage to the piazza where the café has been set up. As the waiters see him approach, they quickly put up all the chairs, thus refusing him admittance, while two Brownshirts are sitting at a corner table with their coffee and smirking. It emphasized why

⁷⁶ Douglas Rain quoted by Pat Quigley, Festival Education Liaison. "Douglas Rain finds Shylock's redeeming qualities." Stratford Beacon Herald. April, 1996.

⁷⁷ Robert Cushman. "From what complex well does Shylock's vitality spring." The Globe and Mail. 27 July, 1996.

Antonio thought his treatment of Shylock (cursing, spitting, etc.) was perfectly acceptable—it was the social norm.⁷⁸

The cast of *MV* was largely Canadian and showed the development of Canadian talent. There were longtime veterans of the Festival: Douglas Rain (Shylock), William Needles (Duke of Venice), Ronald Hewgill (Antonio) and Douglas Chamberlain (Old Gobbo). The middle range actors that had previously worked at Stratford were: Susan Coyne (Portia), Wayne Best (Gratiano), Michelle Fisk (Nerissa), Robert King (Tubal), Gene Mackay (Launcelot Gobbo) and Marion Day (Jessica). There were also several young actors making their Festival debut and staying on with the company: Claire Jullien (Portia's Waiting Woman), Sarah Dodd (Portia's Waiting Woman), and Xuan Fraser (Morocco's Attendant). This combination of talent led to wonderful ensemble acting and a sense of unity throughout the production. Maraden's editing of the script also maintained an even flow and as a whole, there was little cutting down. Every production drops lines, but Maraden's choices were largely in the courtier scenes. The dropping of several of Morocco's lines from his abundant gushing oratory did not diminish his ridiculousness or create any disjunction. Deletions also occur in the scene between Launcelot and Old Gobbo, but the 'blind joke' is still a success and there remains enough physical humour to enhance the broader comedic elements of the piece.

⁷⁸

References taken from personal notes from *MV Videotape*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

The significant cuts occur in Act III, the scenes that are almost traditionally changed. The editing of Jessica's lines in Act III, ii, 283-287, removes the references of Shylock's discussions with Tubal and Chus. This omits any additional slander of Shylock that would have been provided by his daughter. It also serves a secondary purpose, in that it indirectly illuminates Jessica's position within the 'Belmont Set'. She speaks only 2 lines that are almost an ignored interjection and is silent for the rest of the scene. Physically, the blocking moves her to the side of the stage so she is a peripheral figure. This is indicative of how she will ultimately feel at the end of the play, essentially not an intrinsic part of any world.⁷⁹

The next editorial shift occurs in III with this sequence:

Act III, iii
 Act III, v, lines 1-24/lines 25-87 (end of scene) are cut
 Act III, iv followed by intermission

This is the only restructuring of the play and surprisingly it is unobtrusive and works well. The juxtaposition of III, iii, and III, v, illustrates the desperation of Antonio and Shylock's inflexibility versus Jessica's conversion, which is questioned by a skeptical Launcelot. The latter part of the scene is cut as a rule, omitting the broad sexual overtones regarding Venetian promiscuity. As III, iv, follows this, the first half of the production ends once again with the glamorous Portia and her train. It

⁷⁹ Personal notes from *MV Videotape*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

manipulates the audience by removing them from the harshness of Venice during intermission and thus leaves the events suspended on a high note. The play resumes with the 'Trial Scene' and a bitter reality, which dramatically works very well.

Maraden's visual concept was of a sterile, mercantile and masculine setting for Venice as opposed to a pastoral, idyllic and feminine Belmont. Phillip Silver knew the Avon Stage well and designed a striking set. It was a series of moving panels, very plain and claustrophobic that were moved to create different linear dimensions for the various street scenes in Venice: the cafes, the piazza, the ghettos of Italy in the 1930s. In contrast, these walls were removed to create an open and airy atmosphere for Belmont. The backdrop was of a beautiful countryside that was complete with a lake and 'framed' by porticos and trellises.⁸⁰

The costume design also provided immediate identification with the characters and thematic intent of the production. All the men, including Shylock and Tubal, were dressed almost identically in blacks, browns, and greys; smart business suits, overcoats, and fedoras.⁸¹ This particular portrayal of Shylock emphasized a certain paradox; he was inherently like every other businessman in Venice, but 'othered' because of his religion and race. In the first rialto scene with Bassanio and Antonio, he also

⁸⁰ Set references taken from personal notes from *MV Videotape*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

⁸¹ Costume notes taken from *MV Wardrobe Bible*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

wears a fedora so he cannot be instantly distinguished by a yarmulke,⁸² again stressing their sameness. These similarities emphasized the hypocrisy of the Christian businessmen. An interesting twist was the choice of a substantially older Antonio than is usually preferred. Maraden's Antonio was much older than Bassanio and equal to Shylock in years and physical features; similar in height, physical stature, grey hair, moustache (Shylock also had a closely and neatly cropped beard), and immaculately dressed.⁸³ Collectively, this created the understanding that Antonio and Shylock had known each other for *many* years and had developed a mutually deep hatred and grudge towards one another. The fact that they were both astute businessmen allowed them to understand, however unpleasant it may be, that in the Venetian commercial structure they must co-exist. This parallel identity also works well in the 'Trial Scene' as Portia asks: "Which is the merchant here? And which is the Jew?" (IV, i, 170), the only identifying detail is Shylock's yarmulke.

The 'Trial Scene' is also the focus of modern audiences due to the forced conversion of Shylock to Christianity. The dramatic climax is naturally based on the tone of the trial itself and Maraden's production had this executed with 'efficiency'. It was conducted as a 'black and white' legal issue—just the facts. Portia's no nonsense attitude and lack of compassion exhibited what modern audiences have grown accustomed to

⁸² Costume notes taken from *MV* Wardrobe Bible. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

in the world of commerce and law in this day and age. Rain's methodical Shylock is chilling—a calculating and unshakable will. It takes on the identifiable feeling of a modern courtroom drama where the outcome is to *win*—at any cost. Theories of mercy and justice are foreign in this environment and they become foreign in this Venetian courtroom as well. The 'winner' will obviously be Antonio, and by extension the Venetian power structure and Shylock is not yet devastated at this point. He concedes with dignity because he has lost the game and a legal loophole has turned the course of a very malleable justice. His conversion, however, is the complete humiliation for it threatens his very essence, his spiritual being.

Rain's Shylock suffers this moment with an undisturbed calm. As his conversion takes place and his yarmulke is removed, the cheering from the Christians acts to steel his will. He will not break down in front of these men; if he breaks it will be in private.⁸⁴ This sense of resolve highlights the hypocrisy of the Christians in their understanding of mercy. Shylock's intention to cut Antonio's flesh are very cruel, but the Christians when given the opportunity, strike back just as cruelly. His delivery of "I am content" (IV, i, 389), clearly indicated that Shylock completely understands that the game is over. He has been manipulated and a 'pound of *his* flesh' has been taken by Antonio. He is humiliated, degraded, angry

83

Personal notes from *MV* Videotape. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

but *not* surprised at the outcome. He realizes that the course of events were inevitable, because justice never really could be his in this power structure and it was his revenge and folly to think otherwise. It is in this light that a modern audience can understand the outcome as well—‘you can’t beat the system!’. It is a fine line that is crossed; as an audience we did not want to see Antonio die, but was not the punishment of Shylock too severe?

This question is one that Portia must deal with as she shows both relief and remorse at the outcome. Coyne’s portrayal reflects that Portia saw a part of male Venetian society she had not seen before and perhaps, would not rush to see again.⁸⁵ She saw the ugly side of a social structure that she upholds and fights to preserve; a very interesting paradox indeed.

An extension of Antonio’s added age is the formation of a patriarchal power structure, being that of controlling fathers that are all betrayed on some level. Contrary to the homoerotic emphasis that is placed on the Antonio/Bassanio relationship (very evident in the 1989 production), Maraden’s Antonio is more like a guardian figure. Although any homosexual inferences are left to the audience to decide, Antonio appears more of a mentor. Bassanio’s wedding to Portia and subsequent move to Belmont, leaves Antonio quite alone. He is portrayed as an outsider at

⁸⁴ Personal notes from *MV Videotape*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

Belmont, clearly emphasized by his being alone on stage at the end when everyone else has 'paired off'.

Another controlling father figure, even in death, is that of Portia's father. The invention of the lottery ensures that she will wed a man that he has in essence pre-approved; whether she loves him is of no consequence. Portia's independence is therefore curtailed, but she will manipulate the lottery to ensure that she does not marry against her will, as seen by her reaction to the German, Duke of Saxony:

I pray thee set a deep glass of Rhenish wine
on the *contrary* casket, for if the devil be
within, and that temptation without I know
he will choose it. *I will do anything*
Nerissa ere I will be married to a sponge.

(I, ii, 91-94. My italics)

This also clearly indicates that Portia *knew* what each casket contained and could very easily have 'directed' Bassanio to the correct one if she so chose.

The final and most obvious relationship is of course between Shylock and Jessica. Shylock is portrayed as a man that truly loves his daughter, regardless of how over-protective and over-bearing he may be. There is a sincere love for Jessica in II, v, as he senses foreboding and gives her a heartfelt hug.⁸⁶ She on the other hand is awkward with this closeness, perhaps because she knows in a few hours she will betray her father and

⁸⁶ Personal notes from MV Videotape. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

the decision will be irreversible. She also has not thought about the consequences of her actions, both in the long and the short term in relationship to her father and how much this will devastate him. The remorse will slowly come upon her in brief moments after she arrives in Belmont.

The other visual statements made by male costumes are those of Lorenzo and several 'walk-ons'. Lorenzo was dressed in a white overcoat and white fedora, as a contrast to the smart dark suits of the others. This could be symbolic of the fact that he is the 'Christian' that will save the 'Jew' (Jessica). It also suggests that he is not part of this business class, financially at least, and the want of money is supplied by Jessica's theft of her father's money and jewels, in order to survive. The walk-ons were dressed as Mussolini's Brownshirts and are found in the background of the café scenes. Their silent presence was Maraden's brilliant use of an ominous foreshadowing of the role these men will play in a few years in WWII.

In complete contrast to the male characters and hence to Venice itself were the costumes of the feminine Belmont: "very soft and flowing, in colours and shiny fabrics that reflect the gold, silver and lead of the caskets."⁸⁷ The fabrics are chiffon, organza, and satin which are distinct

⁸⁷ John Pennoyer, Costume Designer. *MV Souvenir Programme*, 1996.

and elegant in loose fitting clothes.⁸⁸ Jessica's Venetian costume was in stark contrast to Portia's and Nerissa's. She wore a close fitting, plain black dress that placed her within the cold and stone environment of the urban ghetto. Consequently, her transformation as Lorenzo's wife was striking; a teal chiffon dress with gold brocade. Her hair was pinned up in Venice, but let down in Belmont for soft flowing curls to match her dress.⁸⁹ Usually, her hair is the opposite way, and it is pinned up in Belmont in the style of Portia and Nerissa. These details in costume help to create an instant identification with job professions, social mores and so forth. As society often forms modern stereotypes (bankers, socialites, 'yuppies', military, lawyers), the audience subconsciously or consciously make these same mental notes when they see the characters on stage. Due to Maraden's meticulous focus on contemporary detail, the audience was able to identify and engage in the thought-provoking issue of anti-Semitism: "It is a reprehensible and shameful chapter in human history. Could we ever have tolerated that behaviour? Or worse, do we tolerate it today?"⁹⁰

This approach focused on the dignity of man and how the human spirit cannot be broken. It did this in a painful, but powerful way. At the end of the production, several characters were actually humbled and

⁸⁸ Personal notes from fabric swatches. *MV Wardrobe Bible*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

⁸⁹ Personal notes from fabric swatches. *MV Wardrobe Bible*. Stratford Festival Archives, 1996.

⁹⁰ Jim Lingerfelt. "The Merchant of Venice examines, exposes bigotry." *Teeswater News*. 3 July, 1996.

recognized the repercussions of their actions as they became isolated and lonely. Shylock had obviously realized the folly of his bitter revenge and although he accepted the outcome with quiet dignity, he was now alone in the world. Ironically, Antonio, who was instrumental in destroying Shylock's spirituality with a forced Christian conversion was isolated himself. He stood alone at the end of the play with the 'good' news of his ships coming to port, but it has cost him the friendship of Bassanio (even though it was through his own choice). He was far from happy and probably even sadder that he was at the onset.

Jessica realized too the instrumental role she played in her father's demise. Although her actions were cruel, she did not fully realize the *extent* of their effect on Shylock's psyche. She is torn between her genuine love for Lorenzo and genuine remorse for her father. She was alone at the end—caught between two worlds and now not accepted in either of them. As she read about Shylock's punishment she was alone on stage with Antonio, who stood several feet away reading as well. There was a brief moment when they looked at each other followed by a recognition of the destructiveness caused by all of the previous events. There was a knowledge that things went too far, the events cannot be justified. They will haunt all the characters forever: "It's a tangible example of the kind of hatred that festered into World War II."⁹¹ The

⁹¹ Stewart Brown. "Rain shines as Shylock." Hamilton Spectator. 3 June, 1996.

haunting memories of historical atrocities are exactly what Maraden delivered to a 20th century audience. The fact that *MV* remains disturbing and painful underlines this fact.

MV had triumphed in its handling of anti-Semitic issues for a contemporary audience. Only five years later, another *MV* would take the 2001 season by storm and once again, successfully deal with the controversial issues of anti-Semitism. It would have a stellar Canadian cast, directed by Richard Monette, Artistic Director. Monette's direction of the play would be at the request of a beloved colleague and friend—Al Waxman, who was to have played Shylock, his favourite part. Waxman's tragic death prevented him from doing the role, but his pre-production research and vision for the play as a whole laid the foundation for another disturbing, provocative and brilliant piece of theatre: "...the established theatres leave Shakespeare to the people who do it best—the acting company at Stratford."⁹²

⁹² Kate Taylor. "The winter of Shakespeare's discontent." The Globe and Mail. 28 September, 1996.

Chapter Seven

2001~~The Coming Of Age Of An Audience

The 2001 season can be seen as a culmination of various aspects of the Stratford Festival and the new direction of classical theatre in Canada. Richard Monette foreshadowed these events in an address following his contract extension as Artistic Director:

My mission is to prepare a new generation of artists
To reach a new generation of audiences, and to explore
The full variety of richness of the theatrical experience.⁹³

The year 1999 was also important for the now ensured continuance of a stable artistic and administrative union. Monette's contract extension until 2004 was indicative of his ability to marry, although sometimes with difficulty, artistic integrity and financial stability. This feat was accomplished for several seasons prior to his contract extension, as he managed to keep the Festival in the 'black', plus stage some exceptional productions. An important element in Monette's success is his longevity at the Festival and his survival through many controversies and regimes. Artistically, he continues as an actor and director and completely understands the need for artistic integrity. Administratively, he is an

⁹³ Richard Monette quoted by Staff Writer. "Stratford renews Monette contract." The Leader Post. (Regina) 9 December, 1999.

astute businessman and generally well-liked, understanding well the machinations of the *corporate* side of the Festival: “You have to make money in order to make art. Otherwise there will *be* no art.”⁹⁴ This is a very difficult juggling act as every Artistic Director of Stratford has discovered and overall, Monette has done admirably.

Another addition was the establishment of a new lecture series, “Table Talk” in 1997, which was an immediate success and still continues. Its format is to invite guest scholars to deliver informal lectures about a certain play before the performance. It illustrates the Festival’s continued interest in offering education in theatre as well as performance for an audience.

The singularly most important milestone in Canadian classical theatre, however, was the founding of the Conservatory for Classical Theatre Training at the Festival in 1998. The CCTT is a seven-week training course (operating through the winter) for a very small group of young actors (at present they are accepting 12 students in a class). Upon completion, they are offered parts in the Festival’s subsequent season. This type of training school was proposed as far back as the 1970s during Phillips’s tenure, but never fully came to fruition. It is now in its third year (the first class started in January, 1999), and it is considered ‘well-established’ and a prime recipient of the Stratford Festival Endowment

⁹⁴ Richard Monette quoted by David Prosser. “*In Richard’s Time.*” *Fanfares*. Spring 2000.

Foundation, as well as garnering overwhelming private donations to ensure its success. Ultimately, what this means, is Stratford is actively developing a strong talent base of classical actors for future generations. There are several aging veterans of the Festival (William Hutt, Douglas Campbell, William Needles who go back to 1953!) and this ensures that there will be new actors who have the potential to mature to the stature of their mentors. This is the only classical training facility of its kind: that of a school being directly integrated with a world renowned theatre company. The Stratford Festival is regarded as one of *the* best English-speaking classical theatres in the world, ranking third only to the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre, and a mecca for young Canadian actors.

In coming full-circle, the 2001 production of *MV* illustrates the use of *Canadian* star-power being used to mount a controversial play, with minimal editing, an honest interpretation and no discussion of censorship even in the air. The success of the 1996 staging was obviously beneficial to this acceptance, but for this *MV*, there was minimal press ‘justifying’ the play before its opening—a welcome change.

The initial collaboration for *MV* began in April, 2000 between Richard Monette and Al Waxman: “The main reason we decided to do *Merchant of Venice* this year was that Al so much wanted to play Shylock. He was passionate about that play and that part...He was full of ideas

about the role and was so much looking forward to working on it.”⁹⁵ Waxman had been receiving great acclaim at Stratford in both the 1999 and 2000 seasons: playing Willy Loman in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* in 1999 and directing a brilliant production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 2000. Waxman’s tragic death in January 2001, was a great loss and he never realized his dream of playing Shylock, but he ensured that *MV* was part of the 2001 season. The necessary criteria that need to be met particularly for this show are: approval of the Board, a good working relationship with CJC, and a Canadian ‘star’ in the role of Shylock to bring clout to the part, not to mention box-office. Waxman satisfied all the artistic, administrative, and racial concerns that were necessary to ensure its artistic and political success. In an interview with Michael McGinn, assistant director of *MV*, the key elements that would ensure the success of *MV* with Waxman as Shylock were as follows: he was a talented and well-respected Canadian star, he was Canadian and Jewish, he was an active member of many Jewish organizations including the CJC and was thought of very highly, and he was an important presence at Stratford.⁹⁶ He had worked closely doing research for *Anne Frank* with his rabbi, Rabbi Elyse Goldstein, and was hard at work researching for *MV* with her assistance as well. The fusion of all these factors meant that the

⁹⁵ Teahan, Kelley, Media Relations Manager. “Artistic Director Richard Monette Expresses Sorrow and Shock over Death of Actor and Director Al Waxman.” Stratford Festival News Release. 18 January, 2001.

production would deal with matters honestly, but show an educated and historical perspective by setting it in the period of the writing, late 16th century Venice, during the height of the Italian Renaissance and a rapidly growing mercantile environment. This concept had already been solidified and advertised, as well as having extensive pre-production research being done. Paul Soles, a fellow Canadian and Jewish actor was asked to take over the role in February. Soles had been a close friend of Waxman's for many years as well.

The historical setting of the production was important in dealing with the issue of anti-Semitism, because it allowed the interpretation not to make excuses. This accuracy showed historical facts, unpleasant as they were, in order to illustrate the deeply rooted anti-Semitism that was prevalent in European society. Obviously it did not disappear or else the Holocaust would not have existed. In this manner, the exploration of the relationship between Shylock and Antonio is an example of a power struggle between two men that are really parallels. They are of equal stature in wealth and mercantile power within their own race, but Antonio obviously has the upper hand because he is part of the controlling social structure. However, the cosmopolitan economic structure of Venice dictates they must co-exist.

⁹⁶ Personal Interview with Michael McGinn, Assistant Director. *MV*, 2001. Stratford Festival. 8 May, 2001.

The play opened with Antonio, Solanio and Salerio having a simple discussion about Antonio's melancholy and business ventures. At this point, all of these characters are likable, inoffensive, and kind to one another. Bassanio's subsequent scene with Antonio indicates a close friendship and Antonio's deep love for Bassanio. The audience saw Antonio as genuinely sincere and sacrificing of his own goods to help a friend. Peter Hutt portrayed Antonio as a man with strength and dignity; secure in his business ventures, his wealth and his important position in Venice. Yet he is also vulnerable and we see the gentle side of the man in his relationship with Bassanio. He was a well-rounded characterization of a typical successful Venetian that is a product of and a pillar of the Venetian social structure.⁹⁷

The establishment of locales that Monette chose for the first 3 scenes of Act I is also important. Antonio was introduced in his study and we see a reflection of his wealth; it is immaculately and tastefully furnished. The simple desk, furniture and props were 'expensive' and had accents of gold and silver. His glasses were crystal and the décor was deep reds and rich brown woods. It was not ostentatious, but clearly indicated a comfortable lifestyle that was to be expected of a man in his position.

⁹⁷ All references for the 2001 production for editing, costume, characterization, set, blocking, etc. are taken from personal notes. These notes were taken from 2 live performances that I attended of *MV*: 8 May, 2001 (Preview and incidentally the first performance) and 11 July, 2001, well into the run.

The following scene brought the audience to Belmont and clearly established the wealth of Portia. Although there was not any structured change to the set, her costume exemplified a woman of taste and wealth. Her rich satin gown was accented tastefully with jewels and her carriage was of a woman that was well-bred, graceful, intelligent and comfortable in her palatial world at Belmont. She ran her household with ease and efficiency and was mistress of her fortune (for now) but not her destiny. The balcony ledge exhibited a bust of her late father, a subtle and ominous reminder that although she was independent *at the moment*, she was part of a patriarchal power structure and had no choice in the direction of her life. The marriage lottery emphasized the contractual element in a love relationship and she and her fortune would become subject to a man her father, in essence, had chosen for her. In this respect, she was also somewhat melancholy, just as Antonio is, which indicated that she too was a product of the Venetian social structure and her behaviour was indicative of her place within this society. As a result, she too was likable and her relationship with Nerissa was one of warmth and illustrated that they are mutual confidantes.

Act I, iii, introduced Shylock in his home and in his study. He was at his desk which was covered with books, ledgers, scales and other props necessary to his livelihood. He was dressed simply in a floor-length gaberdine gown and grey robe and had a young Jew, similarly dressed, as

his assistant. This additional character indicated Shylock's superior position with his society and the young man would be a parallel to the young men that surrounded Antonio. Shylock's costume did not have the gold circle on the vest that he has when he is outside his home. This simple costume detail illustrated that he was 'marked' by Venetian society, but his Jewishness does not make him an alien in his own home.⁹⁸ This became an interesting paradox after the 'Trial Scene' when his gold circle was torn off after his conversion. He was now to be 'marked' by the absence of the circle and the removal of it signified not the freedom within his home, but a spiritual oppression by a Venetian hierarchy.

Shylock's behaviour with Bassanio was polite, even if somewhat taunting. Shylock was amiable and rather enjoyed teasing Bassanio with the fact that Antonio actually, perhaps for the first time, *needed* something from him. He did not have any real contempt for Bassanio personally, as Bassanio was rather directly insignificant to his business ventures; Bassanio was basically a spendthrift young man and probably representative of many handsome young Venetian men. The intriguing factor in this proposition was Antonio's involvement and Shylock's wheels are turning, because he was to encounter an adversary. However,

⁹⁸ Janelle Jenstad. "*Merchant of Venice Notes.*" *MV Playbill, 2001*. Jenstad explains in her notes that historically in Europe at this time Jews were marked by a yellow circle in some countries. This practice was abandoned, but reintroduced under Hitler with the Star of David.

at this point the audience did like Shylock, because there was simply no reason not to.

By choosing to introduce the principal characters, each on their own ground, Monette had effectively introduced them as all likable, ordinary people. This characterization was necessary to make the surfacing of their deeper prejudices that much more disturbing and destructive. The audience was able to follow the downward spiral that Antonio and Shylock were bent upon, while obviously heading on a path of destruction. The entrance of Antonio in I, iii, 34, caused an immediate response in the audience. The silent interaction between Soles and Hutt was unnerving and the tension that they created between Shylock and Antonio was extremely intense. Before one word was spoken, the silence was very brief but seemed to go on for hours, clearly illustrating that these two men have had the deepest contempt for each other. It was a bitterness that had taken a long time to build up to such an extent, and subsequently, when they were provoked beyond tolerance, they would stop at nothing to destroy the other.

The 'bond scene' was shown as a verbal parlay between Antonio and Shylock, with Shylock making sport of Antonio and enjoying it. There was no doubt that Shylock would lend him the money, but he had a chance to make Antonio squirm a little, and considering the abuses he has suffered in the past, he took it although it was really more petty than

malicious. Antonio too was aware that Shylock was toying with him and Hutt built up Antonio to an emotional crescendo in line 125 as he stated that he would continue to 'curse and spit' on him. At this point, Shylock had hit the nerve that he wanted and dropped the game. He mildly and calmly stated that he would lend him the money, and Shylock had won the parlay which made Antonio even more angry. The sealing of the bond over 'a pound of flesh' was done as a joke and understood as such by both men; Shylock stressed to Bassanio that this was just sport, because what would he do with Antonio's flesh anyway? Antonio also played along because he had no fear of forfeit, since all his ships and fortunes would come into port well before the appointed time.

The mild understated portrayal by Paul Soles worked very well, because it showed that Shylock was very used to this kind of treatment and had grown to rise above it in the face of his adversaries. He realized that he cannot change society, but can have personal dignity within it. Soles spoke of this treatment of Shylock as something he could identify with personally, growing up in Toronto in the '30s and '40s, and had to rise above it as well: "We [Soles and Waxman] were accustomed to the same outrage, the anger in Waspish streets. We heard the same insults and taunts."⁹⁹ Soles stressed that this is why this play is so important to perform, because it allowed the examination and discussion of parallel

⁹⁹ Paul Soles quoted by Gary Smith. "*Soles and Dale tell their tales.*" Magazine. 19 May, 2001. 17.

prejudices in Canada today. The fact that Soles was the first Canadian Jewish actor to play Shylock added another subtle dimension to the role. He could understand the sensitivity of anti-Semitic issues in a contemporary audience, because he had experienced them on a personal level and could bring that added emotional understanding to the role.

Monette wrote in additional blocking and characters in Act II, viii, to portray this kind of taunting of Shylock visually. This was a scene between Salerio and Solanio when the speech regarding Shylock's discovery of Jessica's flight, "my ducats, my daughter", was mocked by Solanio. Monette included additional characters, Venetians from different levels of society, as well as foreign traders and a young boy. It had a marketplace atmosphere and showed the brisk commercial and cosmopolitan trade that existed in Venice. Solanio's mocking of Shylock became broad sexual humour and he took two bags of gold and swung them around as Shylock's 'family jewels' while jesting "my ducats", and continued to swing them as Jessica's breasts for "my daughter". This tasteless mockery received much laughter from the characters on stage and it was a visual portrayal of the mockery that had been spoken of previously.

Another disturbing element was the coarse sexual physicalization of Jessica, because at this point she was already Lorenzo's wife. It substantiated the fact that she would not be accepted in this Christian

JESSICA.

①



*

For Act 2. sc 6 breeches
from 2nd costume must
be worn under this for
quick change during scene

Stockings as worn under
breeches

The Merchant of Venice

Stratford Festival. 2001

K.

society, therefore remaining in a peripheral and volatile position. At the end of the scene, the young boy was placed on a short pillar and in a mocking voice got in on the joke by imitating Shylock's "my ducats, my daughter." This was significant because the boy was not malicious in himself, but rather cute and well-behaved. It was unnerving due to the fact that he was a product of Venetian society and had an inherent prejudice towards Jews at such a young age. It was quite possible then, that he could turn into a 'Solanio' in twenty years and thus, perpetuate this racism.

The reviews for this production were mixed and the two areas that were most discussed were the broad comedic elements, many of which were Monette's directorial choices for stage business and Soles's portrayal of Shylock as understated and non-raging. The lovers, Portia and Bassanio, were invariably applauded in all circles. One interpretation of Monette's intent in dealing with the issue of anti-Semitism was to treat the play as "a study of the excesses to which hatred and revenge can drive mankind, regardless of creed or colour."¹⁰⁰ Coulbourn, although praising the dramatic intensity of the 'Jewish plot' did express reservation regarding broad slapstick humour, which he believed lessened the production as a whole. The most questioned comedic performance was that of Morocco, who entered with yards of material for his costume, an

¹⁰⁰ John Coulbourn. "Stratford production pulls its punches in Shylock drama." Toronto Sun.

over-sized scimitar and a snorting/honking laugh. Morocco is outrageous enough, just by the lengthy egotistical oratory that Shakespeare has written for him. The over-embellishment of this character made him appear as a caricature, rather than an eligible suitor. The audience generally thought the slapstick funny, but the humour of his monologues was completely sacrificed to his physical flamboyance.

An unexpected protest arose as a result of some blocking of the Prince of Morocco during the casket scene as well. Morocco, during one of his monologues, had laid prostrate in front of Portia and called out to Allah. This is a major religious insult towards Moslems because they do not prostrate themselves to *anyone* except Allah. To add to this, Morocco fell with such zeal that he bounced his head off the floor in the process. This was not an intentional slur against Moslems, and Monette sincerely apologized for any offense and changed the blocking.¹⁰¹ Morocco now went down on one knee, but his scimitar 'got in the way' for an extra laugh.¹⁰² It is unfortunate that in such a well-handled and strong production, the emphasis on slapstick at times overshadowed the excellent acting performances and ensemble work.

The power in the production lay in the crucial conversion in the 'Trial Scene'. The visual impact of the courtroom was striking, as there was an

30 May, 2001.

¹⁰¹ A formal complaint was made by the Council on American-Islamic Relations after Riad Saloojee, Executive Director was alerted to the staging and saw the production himself.

¹⁰² Blocking comparisons between May 8 and July 11 performances. The complaint was made in June.

array of Magnificoes, all made larger than life in flowing red robes. In addition, there was Antonio surrounded by the congregation of his friends (Bassanio, Gratiano, Solanio, Salerio). Portia and Nerissa, dressed as lawyer and clerk in simple black robes held centre stage. On the balcony sat the Duke of Venice, clad in a golden brocade robe and tall hat, with the omnipotent air of complete authority. Lastly, amongst this scene of the power and might of Venice, stood the lone Shylock. This scene began 'Act III' (the performance was divided into 3 acts instead of the customary 2), and signified Shylock's powerlessness immediately. Regardless of how the scene appeared in Shylock's favour, it was obvious that he could *never* win. Antonio, as a representative of the upper echelons of the Venetian social structure, would have to be saved at any cost, which Portia's manipulation of justice ensured. Portia knew that she must save Antonio for the well being of her marriage as well, and if money would not make Shylock change his mind, then legal manipulation would have to be used. Her reaction to the conversion, however, was interesting as Lucy Peacock expressed a bitter sense of relief when all was past. Antonio had been saved, but Portia's eyes had been opened to a side of male Venetian society she had not seen and the ugliness of it was disturbing.

Hutt's performance as Antonio during the conversion was somewhat spiteful, but was all too understandable. He was just about to lose his life and now he had the opportunity to punish his adversary—his actions were

not merciful, but while they were contemptible, they were very human. Shylock on the other hand was also not likable in this scene, because he had gone to the extreme and was wanting to take a man's life to satisfy a deep revenge not only for past abuses, but more so for his daughter's flight. The final dramatic climax therefore, was between two men that were both pushed to violent extremes and neither emerged unscathed. Shylock's conversion had Antonio place his cross around Shylock's neck and then Shylock's yarmulke and gold circle were ripped off. He suffered this with a quiet dignity, because he would not break in front of this courtroom. As he said, "I am content" (IV, i, 389), it was with a mocking and bitter resignation. He had been dragged into a vicious power struggle and had lost, realizing only too late that he never had a hope of receiving any kind of justice at all. It was this realization that made his silence even more powerful and the Christian vengeance more striking: "Soles and Monette seem to prefer a Munch-like silent scream."¹⁰³ Although Smith does not wholly approve of this characterization in his article, it was dramatically very powerful and portrays Antonio's unmerciful vindictiveness in complete contradiction to Portia's "Quality of Mercy" speech.

The end of the play had Jessica and Antonio alone at parallel corners of the stage (SR and SL), each reading the letters explaining the result of

¹⁰³ Gary Smith. "Shylock: A silent scream." Hamilton Spectator. 30 May, 2001.

their fortunes. They have materially profited at this point, but as they looked at each other, there was a moment of silent recognition that this wealth had come at a high cost. Jessica's flight had indirectly destroyed her father and left her isolated in a Christian world—a world in which she was still called Lorenzo's 'Jewess'. Antonio, on the other hand, was also a lone figure, not belonging in the society of Belmont and losing the friendship and companionship of Bassanio. He would return to Venice wealthy, but lonely. Although he had regained his life, it had been dearly bought and the traumatic effects would not leave him quickly.

McGinn states that the play is essentially about the choices that Shylock and Antonio have to make between good and evil. Each character consequently chooses the evil side until both reach a point of no return:

- a) Antonio chooses to abuse Shylock
- b) Shylock chooses to pursue the bond for a pound of flesh
- c) Shylock chooses to refuse thrice the amount of money in court
- d) Antonio chooses to exert his power and force Shylock to convert

It is clear than, that the balance of power is always shifting between these two men. Whoever has the power at the time, exerts it to avenge himself on the other party. The result is that no side is justified in their revenge.

This balance of power and the smugness of the controlling social centre were the topic of discussion at a public forum on *MV*, led by Pat

Quigley and David Prosser.¹⁰⁴ The focus was to discuss the issues of anti-Semitism and compare the historical portrayal to contemporary attitudes. Prosser highlighted that the direction of this play was always to *show* the issues as opposed to *endorse* the issues, because it was only in this light that we could look at the racism that still exists in our society. Quigley emphasized that censorship did not remove racial bias and this is something they explore in depth when they compile educational packages for students seeing the production.

The educational package that is prepared is called *Stratford for Students*. The students' manual has articles and discussions on several of the shows offered that season that have student matinees.¹⁰⁵ There is also a very comprehensive package prepared exclusively for *MV* that is supplied to teachers as preparatory material for a class trip. The package involves a brief synopsis of the play, a history of *MV* up to the present, and various interpretations of Shylock. It contains articles about the historical placement of Jews in England and Europe as well as prevalent attitudes. There are articles and illustrations from previous Stratford productions as well. There are two additional sections to the teachers' manual: Teaching Strategies and Supplementary Resource Material with essays by leading scholars. Overall, this type of emphasis on education

¹⁰⁴ Pat Quigley is Education Manager for the Stratford Festival and David Prosser is Director of Literary Services. The discussion was part of "*Talking Theatre*", an open forum discussion series hosted by the Festival throughout the season. I personally attended the *MV* discussion at the Tom Patterson Theatre, 12 July, 2001.

upholds the mandate of the Festival's commitment to the education of an audience, particularly a student audience, and creates the opportunity to deal with racial issues on an intellectual instead of purely emotional level.

This shift in emphasis to confront anti-Semitic issues head-on illustrates the audience's willingness to confront them as well. In turn, it influences the directorial intent of the production, but in this case, it has given it the freedom to avoid drastic directorial cutting. Although this method has been held suspect in the past, the evidence at Stratford with *MV* is that it can be done successfully. The minimal editing of crucial anti-Semitic material and the open treatment of the unpleasant actions of all the characters was honest to the text—there are no heroes or heroines: “Richard Monette has made the strongest possible statement about negative attitudes that become endemic within a society.”¹⁰⁶ However, there is still politics at work and because a play is performed *for* an audience at an institution like Stratford, it must take a larger responsibility for its controversial treatment of a play. This season has successfully married artistic integrity (except for a few gaffes) and social responsibility quite well.

The interesting demographic shift was the focus on *other* racial material and by extension, possibly providing a backlash of this for subsequent seasons. The issue of anti-Semitism has been now handled

¹⁰⁵

The journal article for *MV* 2001 season was written by Samuel Ajzenstat, McMaster University.

well and with positive feedback for two productions—a very impressive achievement. The next question is what will be the next political wave to influence acting and editing choices in the future? The Canadianization of *MV* over the years has met the challenges of playing to a 20th century post-Holocaust audience, while delivering an array of styles and interpretations. It is the *next MV* that will now have to deal with a changing racial demographic and confront new contentious material within this most brilliant of plays.

Conclusion

The Classical Shakespearean Tradition In Canada

The examination of *MV* in these seven productions, spanning several generations, reveals the shift from a dependent 'colonial' theatre to one with an inherent Canadian style.

The first obvious change would be the use of staging on a thrust stage, built specifically for Shakespearean plays. Although several British theatres briefly used this type of stage in the 1930s and 1940s, Stratford remains a unique Canadian development in modern theatre architecture and design. It has provided the necessity for changing directorial blocking style and 'traditional' acting style (on a proscenium stage) to suit this venue. The classical actors that have been working at Stratford and particularly the young actors that have trained there, have grown accustomed to the dimensions and the alterations that one must make on this stage.

The handling of Shakespeare's text has also changed, as now actors speak with a 'Canadian' accent and manage the poetical flow of the verse with the ease of their natural speech. Audiences likewise do not expect the traditional delivery of British accents (mostly altered to suit the RADA accent) and it sounds just as natural to the ear.

The most important factor in Canadian classical theatre at Stratford, is the emphasis on political sensitivities with a play such as *MV*. As illustrated by the editorial choices, controversy is always a factor and each director handles it differently; some with success

and others are not so fortunate. The last two productions have illustrated the capability of dealing with political sensitivity to racial issues, while maintaining an honest treatment of the text.

The Canadian classical audience has matured as well due to the extra role that Stratford takes in the form of education. The play is not just an isolated performance, but through a lecture series, student education, etc., becomes a forum for the audience to learn about historical and dramatic elements, text interpretation and hopefully a better understanding of Shakespeare's work as a whole. Ultimately, a better classically educated audience will be able to appreciate the many subtleties in a production that otherwise may have been missed.

The emphasis on tourism in Stratford is also a necessary factor, because an institution of its financial magnitude obviously needs the tourist market. The large number of shows, therefore, helps to accommodate various tastes and offers a large amount of Shakespeare, while broadening the scope with other playwrights. The assessed operating costs for the 2000 season ran at approximately \$36 million (\$22 million went to salaries), while the remainder was strictly for mounting the shows.¹⁰⁷ This kind of financial necessity applies pressure to the successful selling of a show. Consequently, there must be a strong talent base to attract an audience and this can turn into either a pleasant or vicious cycle.

An exciting development for the 2002 season will be the introduction of a Fourth Stage geared specifically for: "new works, for experimental work and for productions of

¹⁰⁷ "Financial Facts". 2000 Stratford Festival Playbill. Stratford Festival Archives, 2000.

rarely produced classical plays.”¹⁰⁸ In addition, extensive renovations will be complete at the Avon Theatre for the 2002 season as well. This expansion of actual theatres is clearly indicative of the fact that there is a broadening of Canadian classical theatre and an increased interest in theatre as a whole, which is very exciting.

The continuing success of the CCTT is evident throughout the company, with students emerging and tackling larger roles in several productions, with 7 CCTT graduates in *MV* alone. This will ensure the development of a classical talent base at Stratford and have a greater number of young actors available to fill the many small roles in Shakespeare’s large cast productions.

A few years ago, Robertson Davies summarized the importance and impact of Stratford and the development of Shakespearean theatre in Canada: “Stratford showed that Canada could produce theatre art on the highest level with resources found inside itself.”¹⁰⁹ The many facets of theatre that have been exposed through *MV*, emphasizes the need for theatre to provoke and teach contemporary audiences about contemporary issues. It is the treatment of these issues through an honest examination of the text that enables us to see how they operate, both positively and negatively, within our own society.

It is rewarding to see Canadian talent challenge Canadian audiences with the poetic impact of well performed Shakespearean theatre, especially at a venue such as the Stratford Festival: “*So shines a good deed in a naughty world.*” (*MV*, V, i, 91)

¹⁰⁸ John Coulbourne. “*Philanthropists and philistines.*” Toronto Sun. 19 August, 2001.

¹⁰⁹ Robertson Davies. “*Stratford: The first 30 years.*” Fanfares. 19.2 (May 1985).

Bibliography

- Ages, Arnold. "*Merchant of Venice at Stratford.*" National Jewish Post. (Indianapolis) 21 June, 1989.
- . "*This Shylock doth bleed.*" Canadian Jewish News. 4 July, 1996.
- . "*Stratford Festival's 'Merchant of Venice'.*" The Jewish Post & News. 5 June, 1996.
- Ajzenstadt, Michael. "*Looking at Shakespeare's Merchant: A Series.*" Jewish Bulletin. 29 June, 1989, 22 June, 1989, 20 July, 1989.
- Ajzenstat, Samuel. "*Contract in The Merchant of Venice.*" Philosophy and Literature. 21. 2 (October 1997): 262-78.
- Akin, David. "*Shylock for out times.*" The Chronicle-Journal. (Stratford) June 1996.
- Allen, Bob. "*Mark Lamos: A man in love with the classics.*" Fanfares. 18.2 (June 1984).
- Atkinson, Brooks. "*At the Theatre.*" New York Times. 14 July, 1953.
- Bale, Douglas. "*Class Trip off due to Merchant.*" London Free Press. 4 April, 1989.
- . "*Stratford makes Merchant of Venice cuts on artistic grounds.*" London Free Press. 19 May, 1989.
- Barnes, Clive. "*Theater: Another look at Merchant.*" New York Times. 10 June, 1970.
- Beacon Herald 2001 Festival Edition. Stratford: Stratford Beacon Herald. Spring 2001.
- Beech, Beth. "*Neville defends Merchant of Venice at Stratford study series.*" The Gazette. (Montreal) 24 February, 1989.

- Beitz, Mike. "*Education, sensitivity keys to controversial play.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. April 1996.
- . "*Marti Maraden confronts dark side of Merchant.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. April 1996.
- . "*Set design guided by emotional response to play.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. April 1996.
- Bemrose, John. "*A summer triumph.*" Maclean's. 10 July, 1989.
- . "*Wrestling with bigotry.*" Maclean's. 17 June, 1996.
- Benson, Eugene and L. W. Connolly. English-Canadian Theatre. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Brennan, Anthony. "*The Stratford Festival – 1983.*" Ta Panta. 1.1 (1983): 35-41.
- "*Brian Bedford is back.*" Fanfares. 23.2 (1989).
- Brown, Stewart. "*It's all Shakespeare's fault.*" Hamilton Spectator. 9 June, 1970.
- . "*Rain shines as a sterling Shylock.*" Hamilton Spectator. 3 June, 1996.
- Bryden, Ronald. ed. Whittaker's Theatricals: A Critic Looks at Stages in Canada and Thereabouts, 1944-1975. Greenbank: Whittaker Project, 1985.
- Butovsky, Mervin. "*Director left Merchant more anti-Semitic, not less.*" The Gazette. (Montreal) 29 May, 1989.
- Callaghan, J. Dorsey. "*Shylock Redeemed By True Artistry.*" Detroit Free Press. 1 July, 1955.
- Carr, Jay. "*Stratford's Merchant is diverting, cautious.*" Detroit News. 9 June, 1976.
- Carroll, Jock. "*Twenty-Two, Talented and Perfect For The Part.*" Weekend. 22 June,

1955.

Carson, Ron. "*Monette Committed to building on Festival's success.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. 13 December, 1999.

Citron, Paula. "*The Merchant of Venice.*" Review.

<http://www.classical96fm.com/review.htm>

Clarke, Irwin and Company Ltd., eds. The Stratford Festival Story, 1953-1957.

Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1958.

Cohen, Nathan. "*Shakespeare at its worst.*" Toronto Star. 9 June, 1970.

---. "*Stratford After Fifteen Years.*" Queen's Quarterly. 75 (1968): 35-61.

Conlogue, Ray. "*Bedford's Masterful Shylock Takes Centre Stage.*" Globe and Mail.

2 June, 1989.

---. "*Merchant may send you home disturbed, angry.*" Globe and Mail. 11 August, 1984.

---. "*Tilting at the shadowy windmills of racism.*" Globe and Mail. 7 June, 2001.

Coulbourn, John. "*Philanthropists and philistines.*" Toronto Sun. 19 August, 2001.

---. "*Rethinking Merchant.*" Toronto Sun. 31 May, 1996.

---. "*Stratford production pulls its punches in Shylock drama.*" Toronto Sun. 30 May, 2001.

Crew, Robert. "*Overall impression of Stratford is one of confusion.*" Toronto Star.

6 December, 1984.

Cushman, Robert. "*At heart he is a true businessman.*" National Post. 30 May, 1999.

---. "*From what complex well does Shylock's vitality spring.*" Globe and Mail.

27 July, 1996.

---. "*Shakespeare as anti-Semite.*" Globe and Mail. 13 April, 1989.

Czarnecki, Mark. "*A drama with bigotry in the balance.*" Maclean's. 3 September, 1984.

---. "*All's well that ends well...for now.*" Maclean's. 29 December, 1980.

---. "*John Neville's Pragmatic Stratford.*" Metropolis. 8 June, 1989.

Daly, Margaret. "*Director Takes on New Challenge.*" Toronto Star. 5 June, 1976.

Davies, Robertson. "*Changing fashions in Shakespearean Productions.*" Stratford Papers on Shakespeare, 1962. Berners W. Jackson, ed. Toronto: W.J. Gage Ltd., 1963. 66-116.

---. "*Stratford the First 30 Years.*" Fanfares. 19.2 (May 1985).

Davies, Robertson, Tyrone Guthrie, Tanya Moiseiwitsch, Boyd Neel. Thrice the Brinded Cat Hath Mew'd. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., Ltd., 1955.

De Vine, Lawrence. "*Stratford's Merchant of Venice, A Seductively Staged Puzzle.*" Detroit Free Press. 10 June, 1970.

Donnelly. "*Shylock no more sympathetic than Shakespeare's.*" The Record. (Sherbrooke) 4 August, 1989.

Doran, Terry. "*Brilliant Merchant is a study of our time.*" Buffalo News. 1 June, 1989.

---. "*Merchant of Venice is Really Hard to Sell to today's audience.*" Buffalo Evening News. 9 June, 1970.

Duke, Marion. "*Fascist Merchant uneven, but Rain's Shylock soaring.*" Listowel Banner. 3 July, 1996.

- Earle, Rose-Marie. "*Opening Stratford Play fails to grip audience.*" Sentinel-Review. (Woodstock) 9 June, 1970.
- Edinborough, Arnold. The Festivals of Canada. Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1981.
- Edmonds, Jane. "*An Economic Analysis of the Stratford Festival, 1989.*" Stratford Festival Archives, 1989.
- Ferguson, G.V. "*Stratford's Festivals Have Canada Purring.*" Post & Times Herald. (Washington, D.C.) 24 July, 1955.
- Ferguson, Joseph. "*Merchant of Venice confronts anti-Semitism.*" Catholic New Times. 25 June, 1989.
- "*Festival Will Stick to Shakespeare.*" Toronto Daily Star. November, 1954.
- Forsyth, James. Tyrone Guthrie. London: Harnish Hamilton Ltd., 1976.
- . "*Cronyn supremely malignant star of Stratford.*" Globe and Mail. 9 June, 1970.
- Fraser, John. "*Festival booms but Phillips wants more than smiling little looks at Shakespeare.*" Globe and Mail. 5 June, 1976.
- Freedman, Brenda. Personal Letter to John Hirsch. 15 October, 1984.
- Fulford, Robert. "*Shylock lives on our prejudices.*" The Financial Times of Canada. 28 August, 1989.
- . "*The backstage star of Stratford.*" Mayfair. June 1955.
- Gaines, Robert A. John Neville Takes Command. Stratford: William Street Press, 1987.
- Gallagher, Noel. "*Actors Shine in Merchant of Venice.*" London Free Press. 29 May, 2001.

- . "*Venetian Venture: Paul Soles, 70, makes his Stratford debut.*" London Free Press.
26 May, 2001.
- Galloway, Myron. "*Merchant of Venice fizzles.*" Montreal Star. 9 June, 1976.
- Ganong, Joan. Backstage at Stratford. Toronto: Longman's Canada Ltd., 1962.
- Garebian, Keith. A Well-Bred Muse: Selected Theatre Writings, 1978-1988. Oakville:
Mosaic Press, 1991.
- . "*Retheatricalizing Theatre: The 1996 Shaw and Stratford Festivals.*" Journal of
Canadian Studies. 31.4 (Winter 1996-1997): 164-175.
- . "*The 1984 Stratford Festival.*" Journal of Canadian Studies. 19.4 (March 1985):
136-142.
- . William Hutt: A Theatre Portrait. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1988.
- . Ed. William Hutt: Masks and Faces. Oakville: Mosaic Press, 1995.
- Gladstone, Bill. "*Sensitive production still 'hurts and stings'.*" Jewish Chronicle.
6 September, 1996.
- Goar, Carol. "*Stratford Has Faithful Friends in Windy City.*" Toronto Star.
14 September, 1996.
- Godfrey, Stephen. "*Stratford Falls Short of Box-office projections.*" Globe and Mail.
31 October, 1984.
- . "*Two designers quit Stratford.*" Globe and Mail. 16 November, 1984.
- Graham, David V. "*Cronyn is spiny Shylock.*" Flint Journal. 15 June, 1976.
- Green, Lynda Mason and Tedde Moore. Standing Naked in the Wings: Anecdotes from
Canadian Actors. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997.

- Groome, Margaret. "*Affirmative Shakespeare at Canada's Stratford Festival.*" Essays in Theatre. 17.2 (May 1999): 139-163.
- Guthrie, Tyrone. A Life in the Theatre. New York: Macmillan Co., 1963.
- . In Various Directions: A View of Theatre. New York: Macmillan Co., 1963.
- . Renown At Stratford. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1953.
- Guthrie, Tyrone, Robertson Davies, Grant Macdonald. Twice Have the Trumpets Sounded. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1954.
- Gwyn, Richard. "*Fund the Arts, they define Canada.*" Toronto Star. 6 April, 1996.
- Hadduick, Margaret. "*Pennell backs director's try to arouse Stratford audience.*" Montreal Gazette. 19 June, 1976.
- Hall, Amelia. Life Before Stratford: The Memoirs of Amelia Hall, Diane Mew, ed. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989.
- Harron, Martha. Don Harron: A Parent Contradiction. Toronto: Collins Publishers, 1988.
- Hays, Elliott. "*Campbells keep acting in family.*" Globe and Mail. 31 March, 1984.
- Hirsch, John. "*Hail and Farewell.*" Fanfares. 19.3 (October 1985).
- Hirsch, Samuel. "*Shakespeare in Canada.*" Boston Herald. 21 June, 1970.
- Howitt, Constance. "*Merchant of Venice short of perfection.*" Guelph Mercury Standard. 9 June, 1970.
- Ibbitson, John. "*Shakespeare drives Stratford's economic engine.*" Ottawa Citizen. 18 June, 1997.
- "*Illogical For Jews To Object To Shylock.*" The Evening Tribune. (Welland) 21 May,

1955.

“*Jean Gascon.*” Fanfares. 22.2 (1988).

“*John Hirsch.*” Fanfares. 14.4 (March 1981).

“*John Neville and the Awesome Responsibilities of the Stratford Festival.*” Fanfares.
(September 1984).

Jones, Kenneth. “*Stratford’s thoughtful Merchant has Shylock to keep you glued.*”
The Detroit News. 1 June, 1996.

Karr, Jack. “*On Stage.*” Toronto Daily Star. 21 September, 1957.

Kelly, Kevin. “*Cronyn’s Shylock Startingly Human.*” Boston Globe. 14 June, 1976.

Kerr, Walter F. “*Shylock at Stratford.*” New York Herald Tribune. 7 August, 1955.

Knelman, Martin. A Stratford Tempest. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982.

---. “*A man for all seasons.*” Saturday Night. (May 1984): 76-77.

Lampard, E.H. “*Glittering Production at Stratford.*” St. Catherine’s Standard. 9 June,
1970.

Langham, Michael. “*An Approach to Staging Shakespeare’s Works.*” Stratford Papers
on Shakespeare, 1961. Berners W. Jackson, ed. Toronto: W.J. Gage Ltd., 1962.
15-37.

Laycock, John. “*Shylock’s back, more powerful than ever.*” Windsor Star. 1 June, 1989.

Leiren-Young, Mark. “*I am a Jew—Shakespeare and his censors.*” Vancouver Sun.
7 September, 1996.

Leitch, Adelaide. Floodtides of Fortune. Stratford: Corporation of the City of Stratford,
1980.

- Lennon, Mary Jane. A Stratford Album: Memoirs of the Festival City. Erin: Boston Mills Press, 1985.
- Lipshitz, Sam. "Another look at the Merchant of Venice." Canadian Tribune. 1 August, 1955.
- Lockhart, Lloyd. "Festival Festive Cash Worry Over." Toronto Daily Star. 17 May, 1955.
- Ludwig, Sidura. "This Merchant tackles anti-Semitism head on." Canadian Jewish News. 11 July, 1996.
- Mastroianni, Tony. "Portia faces life in slow Merchant." The Cleveland Press. 9 June, 1976.
- McGaughna, David. "Stratford's 24th Season." Toronto Star. 5 June, 1976.
- McGee, C.E. "Shakespeare in Canada: The Stratford Season, 1989." Shakespeare Quarterly. 41.1 (Spring 1990): 114-20.
- McGinn, Michael. Personal Interview. 8 May, 2001.
- "Merchant Pro-Semitic Actor Says." Kitchener-Waterloo Record. 21 May, 1955.
- Meitewicz, Henry. "Neville compelling a soft spoken Shylock." Toronto Star. 13 August, 1984.
- Minovitz, Ethan. "Sun editorial on Merchant draws ire." Jewish Western Bulletin. 8 June, 1989.
- "Minutes of Merchant of Venice Discussion: File #1032-000." Waterloo County District School Board. 10 July, 1986.

- Misheloff, Ruth. "*The Merchant of Venice*." Michigan Daily. 26 July, 1955.
- Monsarrat, Nicholas. To Stratford With Love. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1963.
- Nelson, James. "*Everyone in Merchant roles rather hateful, critic finds*." Stratford Beacon Herald. 9 June, 1976.
- . "*Phillips wants more evidence of public support for goals*." Stratford Beacon Herald. 17 June, 1976.
- Newman, Alex. "*An Inspired Act Of Lunacy*." Performing Arts. (Summer 1989): 36-37.
- O'Conner, Donal. "*Merchant of Venice: Stratford Festival Reviews, 2001*." Stratford Beacon Herald. 29 May, 2001.
- . "*Opening week reviews praise Music Man, Merchant of Venice*." Stratford Beacon Herald. 5 June, 1996.
- O'Hearn, Walter. "*Shylock—A menace of a tragic figure?*" Montreal Star. 25 June, 1955.
- . "*Stratford Season Beginning*." Montreal Star. 25 June, 1955.
- O'Neal, Cecil. "*Directing Shakespeare: A conversation with John Hirsch*." Canadian Theatre Review. 54 (Spring 1988): 46-51.
- Ouzonian, Richard. "*Merchant lovers hold heart of play*." Toronto Star. 29 May, 2001.
- Patterson, Tom and Allan Gould. First Stage: The Making of the Stratford Festival. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987.
- Peterson, Maureen. "*Cronyn betrays Shylock*." Ottawa Journal. 9 June, 1976.
- Pettigrew, John and Jamie Portman. Stratford: The First Thirty Years, vol. 1,

1953-1967. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985.

---. Stratford: The First Thirty Years, vol. 2, 1968-1982. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985.

“*Phillips renews Stratford deal for 5 year term.*” Toronto Star. 16 September, 1976.

Phillips, Robin. “*On Actors, Acting and Audiences.*” Fanfares. 9.1 (May 1975).

“*Phillips' role is vital.*” Stratford Beacon Herald. 19 June, 1976.

Portman, Jamie. “*Different Shylock's are emerging as Merchant fights anti-Semitic tag.*” Hamilton Spectator. 4 August, 1984.

---. “*Merchant of Venice sensitive, memorable.*” Ottawa Citizen. 4 June, 1996.

---. “*Neville is popular choice to lead Stratford Festival.*” Hamilton Spectator. 15 September, 1984.

---. “*Neville plans to mend finances.*” Hamilton Spectator. 26 September, 1984.

---. “*Phillips' decision to quit stuns Stratford Festival.*” Hamilton Spectator. 16 June, 1976.

---. “*Stratford facing controversy over Merchant of Venice.*” Sun Times. (Owen Sound) 11 May, 1989.

---. “*Stratford's Merchant of Venice a nondescript production.*” Edmonton Journal. 9 June, 1976.

---. “*Stratford tackles controversial Merchant.*” Hamilton Spectator. 25 May, 1996.

Prosser, David. “*Defining the New World: The Role of Festivals in Canadian Theatre.*”

Maske und Kothurn: Internationale Beiträge zur Theater Wissenschaft. 33.1-2 (Jahrgang 1987): 105-109.

---. "*In Richard's Time.*" Fanfares. (Spring 2000).

Quigley, Pat. "*Douglas Rain finds Shylock's redeeming qualities.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. April, 1996.

---. Ed. "*Stratford for Students.*" Stratford: Stratford Festival of Canada. April, 2001.

---. "*Stratford for Students: Teacher's Manual.*" Stratford: Stratford Festival of Canada. April, 2001.

Raby, Peter, ed. The Stratford Scene. Toronto: Clarke, Irwin and Co., 1968.

Reid, Robert. "*Jewels in the Crown.*" Kitchener-Waterloo Record. 26 May, 2001.

---. "*Play delivers powerful message.*" Kitchener-Waterloo Record. 31 May, 2001.

---. "*The Merchant of Venice stirs up controversy.*" Kitchener-Waterloo Record. May, 1989.

Reynolds, W. Richard. "*Stratford's Merchant stirs up a tempest.*" The Blade. (Toledo) 11 June, 1989.

"*Robin Phillips to succeed Gascon.*" Fanfares. 7.3 (October 1973).

Rothwell, Greg. "*Stratford audience give Merchant standing ovation.*" The Daily Sentinel. (Woodstock) 1 June, 1989.

Samuels, George. "*Guthrie's Shylock Object of Bitter Recrimination.*" Canadian Jewish Weekly. 7 July, 1955.

---. "*The Jew—A stock symbol in Shakespeare's time.*" Canadian Jewish Weekly. 10 July, 1955.

Schaefer, Keith. "*Jewish Congress Satisfied by Festival's Handling of Merchant.*" Stratford Beacon Herald. 18 May, 1989.

---. "Jewish group seeks input on *Merchant of Venice*." Stratford Beacon Herald.

5 April, 1989.

Shakespeare and the Globe. Dir. Paul Shepherd. Films for Humanities and Sciences.

1993.

Shakespeare, William. The Merchant of Venice. Arden Edition. John Russell Brown, Ed. London: Routledge, 1996.

---. The Merchant of Venice. Festival Edition. Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1985.

---. The Riverside Shakespeare. G. Blakemore Evans, ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1974.

Shapiro, James. Shakespeare and the Jews. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996.

Shaw, Grace Lydiatt. Stratford Under Cover. Toronto: N.C. Press Ltd., 1977.

Shea, Albert A., ed. Culture in Canada: A Study of the Findings of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 1949-1951. Toronto: Core Ltd., 1952.

Shylock. Dir. Pierre Lasry. Videocassette. National Film Board of Canada, 1999.

"*Shylock Not Anti-Semitic Jewish Publisher Claims*." London Free Press. 28 June, 1955.

Sidnell, Michael. "*Representing Theatre: Stratford's 1989 Season*." Journal of Canadian Studies. 24.4 (Winter 1989-1990): 148-160.

Siskind, Jacob. "*Merchant wilts at Stratford*." Montreal Gazette. 27 June, 1970.

"*'68 Season Had New Look*." Fanfares. 2.3 (September 1968).

- Slack, Lyle. "Merchant makes modern sense." Hamilton Spectator. 11 August, 1984.
- Slomovitz, Philip. "Play's Revival a Depressing Experience." Jewish News. 8 July, 1955.
- . "The Travesty Created by Shakespeare." Jewish News. 15 July, 1955.
- Smith, Gary. "A silent scream." Hamilton Spectator. 30 May, 2001.
- . "Soles and Dale tell their tales." Magazine. 19 May, 2001.
- Smith, Ken. "Merchant Ranked As Top Stratford Triumph." Hamilton Spectator. 30 June, 1955.
- Sperdakos, Paula. "Acting in Canada in 1965: Frances Hyland, Kate Reid, Martha Henry and John Hirsch's The Cherry Orchard at Stratford." Theatre Research in Canada. 19.1 (Spring 1998): 35-62.
- . Dora Mavor Moore: Pioneer of the Canadian Theatre. Toronto: E.C.W. Press, 1995.
- Staff Writer. "Monette to stay with Festival until end of 2004 season." Stratford Beacon Herald. 9 December, 1999.
- . "1999 record year for Festival." Stratford Beacon Herald. 9 December, 1999.
- Staff Writer. "Stratford Renews Monette contract." The Leader Post. (Regina) 9 December, 1999.
- Stafford, Ellen. Stratford Around and About. Stratford: Fanfare Books, 1972.
- Sterling, Wallace. "An Interview with John Neville." Shakespearean Bulletin. 23 (November/December 1989).
- Stewart, James. "Shylock at Stratford and Delaware Park." Metro Weekend. 3 July,

1996.

Stewart, Mark. "*Play 'unsuitable' for students, board cancels Stratford trip.*" Oshawa Times. 4 April, 1989.

Stone, Phil. "*Footlight Footnotes.*" Jewish Standard. 15 May, 1970.

Stratford Festival Souvenir Programme, 1996. Stratford Festival of Canada, 1996.

Stratford Festival Souvenir Programme, 2001. Stratford Festival of Canada, 2001.

Stuart, Ross. "*Summer Festivals and Theatres.*" Later Stages: Essays in Ontario Theatre from the First World War to the 1970s. Ann Saddlemyer and Richard Plant, ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997.

Swerdfager, Ann. "*A Dream Comes True.*" Fanfares. (Spring 199).

Taylor, Kate. "*Paying for Cheap Laughs.*" Globe and Mail. 30 May, 2001.

---. "*Six obnoxious words: But it was just a joke.*" Globe and Mail. 28 June, 2001.

---. "*The winter of Shakespeare's discontent.*" Globe and Mail. 28 September, 1996.

Teahan, Kelley. "*Artistic Director Richard Monette expresses Sorrow and Shock of Death of Actor and Director Al Waxman.*" Stratford Festival News Release. 18 January, 2001. <http://www.stratfordfestival/2001/beyondthestage/html>

The Merchant of Venice. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Richard Monette. Perf. Paul Soles, Lucy Peacock, Peter Hutt. Festival Theatre, Stratford, Ontario. May 8, 2001 and July 11, 2001.

The Merchant of Venice Playbill. Stratford Festival of Canada. 2001

---. Ibid. 1996.

---. Ibid. 1989.

---. Ibid. 1984.

---. Ibid. 1976.

---. Ibid. 1970.

---. Ibid. 1955.

The Merchant of Venice, Stage Manager's Prompt Book. 1996.

---. Ibid. 1989.

---. Ibid. 1984.

---. Ibid. 1976.

---. Ibid. 1970.

---. Ibid. 1955.

The Merchant of Venice Wardrobe Bible. 1996.

---. Ibid. 1989.

---. Ibid. 1984.

---. Ibid. 1976.

---. Ibid. 1970.

---. Ibid. 1955.

Valk, William. "*Shylock in Canada.*" Fanfares. Spring 1995.

van Vugt, Harry. "*Cronyn commands Merchant.*" Windsor Star. 9 June, 1976.

Verdun, Bob. "*Strong performances leave no doubt about the real message in The Merchant of Venice.*" Elmira Independent. 21 August, 1984.

Wagne, Anton. Ed. Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions. Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1985.

- Wallace, Robert. Producing Marginality: Theatre and Criticism in Canada. Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1990.
- Warren, Roger. "Shakespeare at Stratford, Ontario: The John Hirsch Years." Shakespeare Survey. 39 (1987): 179-190.
- Watt, Douglas. "Came the downer." Detroit News. 10 June, 1976.
- Waxman, Al. That's What I Am. Toronto: Malcolm Lester Books, 1999.
- Whittaker, Herbert. "Are Growing Pains the Problem at Stratford." Globe and Mail. 12 December, 1970.
- . "Can Stratford risk seeking a new kind of recognition." Globe and Mail. 9 June, 1970.
- . "Donald Davis's struggle to find his own Shylock." Globe and Mail. 6 June, 1970.
- . "Guthrie's Merchant IS Shakespeare." Globe and Mail. 30 June, 1955.
- . "Merchant: out of fashion?"
- . "Stratford's top draw Merchant of Venice." Globe and Mail. 22 October, 1970.
- . "Valk of Old Vic Fame—New Stratford Calibre." Globe and Mail. 7 May, 1955.
- Whittaker, Herbert. Whittaker's Theatre: A Critic Looks at Stages in Canada and Thereabouts, 1944-1975.
- . Whittaker's Theatricals. Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1993.
- Young, Ann. "Hirsch on Stratford." Ottawa Citizen. 2 March, 1984.