



**Faction of Fools Theatre Company**

**presents**

**William Shakespeare's**  
***The Merchant of Venice***

**What:** *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare

**Who:** Faction of Fools Theatre Company

**Where:** Eastman Studio Theatre – Elstad Annex at Gallaudet University  
800 Florida Ave NE WDC (Free parking! Metro access: Red line. NoMa/Gallaudet)

**When:** Friday, November 18 through Sunday, December 11, 2016  
Friday and Saturday at 8:00pm; Saturday and Sunday at 2:00pm  
Pay-What-You-Can Performance on Thursday, November 17 at 8:00pm  
Special Monday Night Performance on Monday, December 5 at 7:30pm  
*ASL interpreted performances 11/18, 12/2, 12/10 at 8:00pm, and 12/4 at 2:00pm*  
*All performances Open Captioned.*

**Tickets:** Regular: \$25; Students, Seniors, & Military: \$18; Children 12 and under: \$12  
Available at the door, [1-800-838-3006](tel:1-800-838-3006), and online <http://www.factionoffools.org/merchant>  
Appropriate for ages 10 and up.  
Running time is approximately 2 hours with one intermission.

**Publicist:** Rachel Spicknall Mulford, Director of PR: [202-641-0541](tel:202-641-0541) or [pr@factionoffools.org](mailto:pr@factionoffools.org)

**Press Photos:** Available at [www.factionoffools.org/press](http://www.factionoffools.org/press)

**If you tickle us, Do we not laugh?**

**Washington, DC - Faction of Fools Theatre Company** presents **William Shakespeare's *THE MERCHANT OF VENICE***, pairing heightened text with heightened physical comedy in the style of Commedia dell'Arte. One of Shakespeare's most rich and intricate plays is also one of his most controversial, as it explores a burgeoning merchant class and what happens when things get personal. By utilizing masks and physical characterizations from Commedia dell'Arte, Faction of Fools puts the comedy back into the text, allowing the tragic junctures to cut all the more profoundly. Performances run November 18th – December 11th, 2016 in the Eastman Studio Theatre at Gallaudet University.

**FACTION OF FOOLS THEATRE COMPANY** has become known for re-examining Shakespeare's plays — finding comedic roots in the most famous of his tragedies, from the acclaimed *A Commedia Romeo & Juliet* to *Hamleccchino: Clown Prince of Denmark*. In 2014, *Titus Andronicus* was lauded as "sanguineous bliss" by the Washington Post, and DC Theater Scene said "it will be difficult to imagine Titus being played straight ever again." As DC's only Commedia dell'Arte theatre company, Faction of Fools Theatre Company is committed to performing and preserving this Renaissance theatre style by bringing to the stage productions infused with Commedia's best attributes: physical discipline, spontaneous imagination, collaborative energy, and joyous wonder. The Fools are the Helen Hayes Awards recipients of the 2012 John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company.

This Fall, as the global Shakespeare community celebrates the 400th anniversary of his death, Faction of Fools honors the bard through laughter. In an untraditional production of **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**, director Paul Reisman emphasizes the play's original distinction as one of Shakespeare's comedies. By unearthing the humor inherent in the verse, this production seeks to learn more about the text and find a balance in tragedy — without imposing a modern concept on the play. By taking the play all in all, Faction of Fools engages the audience in a new conversation, celebrating the complexity of the piece, and learning about Commedia and Shakespeare along the way.

Faction of Fools' Associate Artistic Director **Paul Reisman** directs. Reisman adapted and directed Faction's *Pinocchio!* (nominated for a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Production, Theatre for Young Audiences), co-adapted their acclaimed *A Commedia Romeo & Juliet*, and has directed and appeared onstage in innumerable Faction of Fools productions since 2011. A graduate of the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Academy for Classical Acting at George Washington University, Reisman is rooted in classical theater performance and scholarship in addition to physical comedy. In Washington, DC he has directed productions at Flying V Theatre and We Happy Few Theatre Company. He has appeared onstage locally and nationally with companies including Shakespeare Theatre Company and the American Shakespeare Center.

**THE MERCHANT OF VENICE** features a versatile cast packed with classical performance and physical comedy expertise. **Vince Eisenson** (Shakespeare Theatre; Chesapeake Shakespeare Company) plays the young Venetian, Bassanio, who with the help of his bumbling friend Gratiano, played by **Daniel Flint** (Faction's *Titus*, *The Mandrake*; Taffety Punk), needs to borrow money so he can woo the beautiful and wealthy Venetian heiress Portia, played by **Natalie Cutcher** (Faction's *Our Town*; WSC Avant Bard). His friend Antonio, played by **Ryan Tumulty** (Rorschach; Constellation), is a thriving merchant and agrees to lend the money but comes up short. Antonio in turn borrows from a Jewish money lender named Shylock, played by **Matthew Pauli** (Faction's *Our Town*, *The Lady Becomes Him*; Big Apple Circus). Meanwhile, Shylock's rebellious daughter Jessica, played by Gallaudet University student **Alexseyia McBride**, elopes with Lorenzo, played by **Ben Lauer** (Brave Spirits Theatre). One event leads to another and after a perfect storm of wrecked ships, cunning disguises, promises of marriage, and a macabre contract demanding a pound of flesh, Portia and her servant Nerissa, played by **Teresa Spencer** (Faction's *Our Town*; Taffety Punk; Constellation) become the unexpected heroes of the day in the most famous courtroom scene in all of Shakespeare.

A seasoned design team carries **THE MERCHANT OF VENICE** back to the Venetian Renaissance, with costumes by **Lynly Saunders** (Faction's *The Miser*, *Pinocchio!*, *The Lady Becomes Him*, *A Commedia Romeo & Juliet*, *The Mandrake*; Washington National Opera), scenery by **Daniel Flint** (Faction's *The Miser*, *Pinocchio!*, *The Lady Becomes Him*, *A Commedia Romeo & Juliet*, *The Mandrake*; Taffety Punk), lighting by **Chris Curtis** (Taffety Punk), original music by composer **Jesse Terrill** (Faction's *Pinocchio!*, *A Commedia Christmas Carol*, *The Lady Becomes Him*, *Hamleccchino*, *A Commedia Romeo & Juliet*, *The Mandrake*), and masks by **Aaron Cromie** (Faction's *Titus Andronicus*, *The Lady Becomes Him*, *Hamleccchino*, *A Commedia Romeo and Juliet*).

For more information, visit <http://www.factionoffools.org/merchant>.