



The Oxford Shakespeare: The Comedy of Errors

William Shakespeare, Volume editor Sir Charles Whitworth



Often under-rated as a mechanical farce, *The Comedy of Errors*, hilarious in its exploitation of mistaken identity, masterly in construction, and brilliant in linguistic invention, is the first of Shakespeares romantic comedies, deeply moving in the reunions and reconciliations of its conclusion. This, the first major edition since 1988, bases itself directly on the 1623 Folio text and provides helpful explanatory notes. The Introduction, appreciative of the plays theatrical success over the centuries, argues that it was specifically written for and performed at the Grays Inn Christmas revels on 28 December 1594, among the first composed by Shakespeare for his new company, the Lord Chamberlains Men. Discussion of the plays origins argues that the immediate source for the frame plot (Egeon and his family) was not Gowers *Confessio Amantis*, is usually assumed, but a recent Elizabethan short novel, Lawrence Twines *Pattern of Painful Adventures*. The main plot is unquestionably based on the Roman dramatist Plautuss *Menaechmi*, here reprinted in its entirety in a modernized version of William Warners translation (1595).

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