

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S
THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
1936
EXTENDED STORYTELLING PLATFORM



PLATFORM GUIDE

Welcome to *The Merchant of Venice 1936* Extended Storytelling Platform.

About the Platform

This Digital Platform offers audiences an immersion into the world of the play. It gives an insight into the historical context of the production, exploring The Battle of Cable Street and British fascism in the 30s; an introduction to Shakespeare and discoveries of *The Merchant of Venice*; and exclusive behind-the-scenes content into the process of theatre-making. The platform also features five immersive trials and a series of challenges.

About the Production

Watford Palace Theatre presents a ground-breaking production of Shakespeare's classic, *The Merchant of Venice*, directed by Artistic Director and Chief Executive, Brigid Larmour, and starring Tracy-Ann Oberman as Shylock.

It is London in 1936 – fascism is sweeping across Europe, and Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists is threatening to march through the Jewish East End. Shylock (Tracy-Ann Oberman – *Eastenders*, *Doctor Who*, *Friday Night Dinner*) is a survivor of anti-Semitic pogroms in Russia. A widow, she runs a small business from her dark and cramped terraced house in Cable Street, hoping to give daughter Jessica a better future. When aristocratic anti-semite Antonio desperately needs a loan, he makes a dangerous bargain with this woman he has spat on in the street. Will Shylock, bitter from a life plagued by racism and abuse, take her revenge? A vivid evocation of our history, and a warning for our times.

How to Use the Platform



The Platform is an open-world experience. This means that users can explore different areas of the online world freely and as they choose. Simply click on the graphics on the screen to be taken to a different location, and then either press the 'Back to London' icon on each page to return to home or click the back button in the browser. For users who prefer more structure, there are five immersive trials

available in *The Old Bailey* area of the platform which guide the user around the open-world. The platform is best experienced on a computer, laptop or tablet. A lite version is available for mobile users.

SITE-MAP

Homepage: Landing page with introductory text and posters and newspaper headlines from 1936 when the production is set. Once you've read the text click 'Enter' to enter the virtual world.

Central London: This is the main area of the virtual world. A top-down illustrated map of 1930s London with six interactive areas: The Ritz (Play), Cable Street (Historical Context), Portia's House (Production), The Old Bailey (Trials), The River (Challenge), and an Information Point. This is accompanied by music from the production composed by Erran Baron Cohen. To mute the music, click the speaker button in tab in the browser. To visit one of the six areas, simply click on the graphic icon on screen.

- 1. The Ritz (Play):** This area is home to the British aristocrats – Antonio and friends – and features content on William Shakespeare's play, *The Merchant of Venice*. It's made up of 6 interactive icons. Click on the text to interact with each icon or click 'Back to London' in the bottom right to return home. The 6 icons are as follows:
 - **Plot - Bookcase:** This features an abridged plot, narrated by actor Raymond Coulthard who plays Antonio in this production.
 - **Characters - Portrait:** This features information on all the characters in the play. You can find out more information about the actors via Portia's House and who they represent in this production via Cable Street. Simply click on an actor's headshot to find out more information.
 - **Language - Grand Piano:** This explores a key scene performed by Tracy-Ann Oberman (Shylock) and Raymond Coulthard (Antonio) which was workshopped at the Royal Shakespeare Company. On the piano itself, there is an audio button which plays a track for The Ritz composed by Erran Baron Cohen.
 - **Themes - Fireplace:** Director Brigid Larmour writes about six key themes in the play. Click on a theme to read about it, and click the back arrow at the top right to return to main theme page.
 - **Setting – Chandelier:** This looks at the setting for *The Merchant of Venice* and in particular how it fits into this production.
 - **William Shakespeare:** This features a short introduction to the play's writer, William Shakespeare, narrated by actor Priyank Morjaria who plays Lorenzo in this production.
- 2. Cable Street (Historical Context):** This area is home to Shylock, Jessica and their acquaintances. It features content on The Battle of Cable Street / British Fascism and it's made up of 8 interactive icons:

- **People - Shylock's House:** This features information on who the characters represent in this production. You can find out more information about the characters in the play via The Ritz and more about the actors via Portia's House. Simply click on an actor's headshot to find out more information.
- **Gallery – Dressmaker:** This features archived and present day images of The Battle of Cable Street and Cable Street. Use the arrow to scroll through the images, and click on the images to enlarge them and find out further information.
- **Videos – House:** This features archived footage of The Battle of Cable Street in 1936 and a fascist march from Millbank to Bermondsey in 1936. Click on the videos to play them. To enlarge the videos click on the small square in the bottom right of the video.
- **Audio – House:** This features an audio-only interview with actor Tracy-Ann Oberman (Shylock) discussing her family history surrounding The Battle of Cable Street. Press the play arrow to start the interview.
- **Themes – Grocer:** This features a film with director Brigid Larmour and actor Tracy-Ann Oberman discussing key themes from the production. Press the video to play and press the small square in the bottom right of the video to enlarge it.
- **Timeline – House:** This features an interactive timeline, following the events of The Battle of Cable Street in 1936. Click on each circle icon on the timeline to navigate it. This also features a glossary of terms, references and a map.
- **Articles – House:** This includes articles from 1936 reporting on The Battle of Cable Street. Use the arrows to scroll through the articles and click on an article to enlarge it.
- **Testimonies - Baker:** This features video and written testimonies relating to The Battle of Cable Street. Click on a video to play, and click on the small box in the bottom right of a video to enlarge it. The written testimonies will open in a separate tab as PDFs.

3. Portia's House (Production): This area is home to Portia and Nerissa. It features behind-the-scenes content, giving insight into processes involved in making the show. It features 7 interactive icons:

- **Music – Robin:** This features a web-interview with composer Erran Baron Cohen, discussing his journey into becoming a composer and his processes for composing the music for this production. Below the music icon is a play button with music written for Portia's House.
- **Technical – Vegetable Patch:** This features videos with the Company Stage Manager and Head of Wardrobe at Watford Palace Theatre, exploring the processes involved in the technical side of theatre. Click on a video to play, and click on the small box in the bottom right of the video to enlarge.

- **Design – Flowers:** This features a web-interview with designer Liz Cooke, discussing her journey into becoming a designer and her processes for designing the set and costumes for this production.
 - **Direction – Wheel Barrow:** This features videos with director Brigid Larmour, exploring the direction processes for this production and her pathway into becoming a director. Click on a video to play, and click on the small box in the bottom right of the video to enlarge.
 - **Photos – Bench:** This features behind-the-scenes photos. Use the arrow to scroll through the images and click on an image to enlarge.
 - **Cast – Portia & Nerissa:** This features information on the actors in the production. You can find out more about the characters via The Ritz and who they represent via Cable Street. Simply click on an actor’s headshot to find out more information.
 - **Activities – Dog:** This features a video of Brigid Larmour introducing three activities from the rehearsal room. Click on a video to play, and click on the small box in the bottom right of the video to enlarge.
- 4. The Old Bailey (Trials):** The courtroom features 5 interactive trials to guide users around the virtual world and encourage them to engage with the content. The trials are introduced by an introduction video with Hannah Morrish, the actor playing Portia. Each trial features three questions. Answer the questions to receive a ducat with a unique code. Collect all five ducats and enter this number into the ‘Finish’ box to watch a congratulations video from Hannah Morrish and receive your certificate. There is also a bonus trial for anyone seeing the production in-person. There are hints and clues available throughout.
- 5. The River (Challenge):** This area gives the user chance to reflect and vote on key themes in the production: Antisemitism, Gender and Activism. It features videos with Jessica Dennis, the actor playing Mary, who asks a series of questions. The user can then vote on these questions and debate this further.
- 6. Information Point:** The information point contains useful information to help the user navigate the platform. This includes a Platform Guide (This); a Help-Desk where users can submit questions; a Guest Book where users can leave comments; an Education Pack to help teachers facilitate activities in the classroom using the digital platform; casket quizzes to be used as light assessments; and credits.

For further support please email admin@merchant1936.co.uk