

PROSCENIUM

The Changeling

By Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

The Changeling

Wednesday 1st to Saturday 4th November 2017
Compass Theatre, Ickenham

The Changeling

The Cast *(in order of speaking)*

Alsemero, <i>a nobleman, afterwards married to Beatrice</i>	James Stephen
Jasperino, <i>his friend</i>	Robert Ewen
Servants	Stephen Koranteng, David Hampton, Crystal Anthony
Beatrice-Joanna, <i>daughter to Vermandero</i>	Madeleine Clifford-Roper
De Flores, <i>servant to Vermandero</i>	Charles Anthony
Diaphanta, <i>Beatrice-Joanna's servant</i>	Dani Beckett
Vermandero, <i>nobleman of Alicant</i>	Mark Sutherland
Alonzo de Piracquo, <i>a noble lord, suitor to Beatrice-Joanna</i>	Alan Glover
Tomazo de Piracquo, <i>his brother</i>	Ben Morris
Alibius, <i>a doctor</i>	Crystal Anthony
Isabella, <i>wife to Alibius</i>	Hannah Lester
Directed by	Shirley Wootten
Assisted by	Hannah Lester
Stage Manager	Richard Kessel
Assisted By	Linda Hampson
Costumes team led by	Anne Gerrard
Lighting and Sound Operation	Izzie Cartwright

The play takes place in Alicant, a sea-port
on the east coast of Spain, over a period of ten days

There will be one interval of 20 minutes

Proscenium would like to thank the Purcell School,
Alan Bailey, Jenny Glover and Radlett Musical Theatre Company
for their help in this production

Passion, Love and Lust

Tigers likewise are kept in the stables of the passions, and at times yoked to their chariot; for when passion ceases to go on foot and comes to ride in its chariot, as in celebration of its victory and triumph over reason, then is it cruel, savage and pitiless towards all that withstand or oppose it...

...every passion, in the excess thereof, is like a short madness, and it continue vehement and obstinate, commonly ends in insanity...

...the conception of Desire is always in some unlawful wish, rashly granted before it has been understood and weighed; and as the passion warms, its mother (which is the nature and species of good), not able to endure the heat of it, is destroyed and perishes in the flame...

*Extracts from De Dignitate Et Augmentis Scientiarum (1623),
Francis Bacon*

... A siren song, a fever of the mind,
A maze wherein affection finds no end,
A ranging cloud that runs before the wind,
A substance like the shadow of the sun,
A goal of grief for which the wisest run:
A quenchless fire, a nurse of trembling fear,
A path that leads to peril and mishap,
A true retreat of sorrow and despair,
An idle boy that sleeps in pleasure's lap,
A deep mistrust of that which certain seems,
A hope of that which reason doubtful deems.

False Love, Sir Walter Raleigh

If love is judged by its visible effects it looks more like hatred than friendship.

Maxims, La Rochefoucauld (1665)

Love is a smoke rais'd with the fume of sighs;
Being purg'd, a fire sparkling in lovers' eyes;
Being vex'd, a sea nourished with lovers' tears.
What is it else? A madness most discreet,
A choking gall, and a preserving sweet.

Romeo and Juliet, William Shakespeare (1595)

What should I say? Lust hath confounded all;
The bright gloss of our intellectual
Is foully soiled. The wanton wallowing
In fond delights, and amorous dallying,
Has dusked the fairest spendour of our soul
Nothing now left but carcass, loathsome, foul.

Inamorato Curio, John Marston (1598)

...The fear is equal to the wish...

Sigmund Freud

I know of no play so single-mindedly concerned with sex, not as the pursuit of pleasure but, at best, the visitation of "Love's tame madness". Madness runs through the play like a vein charged with infection. People are...insane in a metaphorical sense: robbed of their reason by sexual passion.

Programme note, National Theatre, Richard Eyre (1988)

Middleton and Rowley

The collaboration between Middleton and Rowley was a close one, extending over several years and producing at least five plays, although both writers also worked on and off with other playwrights of the period.

Thomas Middleton was born in 1580, the son of a bricklayer, and educated at Queen's College Oxford. By 1601 he had begun his career as a dramatist, writing, first for Philip Henslowe and then for boys' companies like the Children of St Paul's, mainly satirical "citizen comedies". Responding to popular taste, the plays of his middle period, largely written for the King's Men, are mostly comedies and the romantic tragi-comedies popularised by Beaumont and Fletcher, while the plays of his later period are darker tragedies and satires. Middleton's major works include *A Trick to Catch the Old One* (1607), *A Mad World My Masters* (1608), *The Roaring Girl* (1608, with Dekker), *A Chaste Maid in Cheapside* (1613), *Women Beware Women* (1621), *A Game at Chess* (1624), and *The Changeling*. Recent scholarship has argued persuasively that Middleton also wrote *The Revenger's Tragedy*, previously credited to Tourneur. Middleton died in 1627.

William Rowley's life and career are less well-documented. Born in 1585, he was an actor with a talent for comedy, leader of the Duke of York's Men and in 1623 a member of the King's Men. He appears to have been the sole author of a few plays, such as *All's Lost by Lust* (1619), but is best known as a collaborator, with Middleton and others. Rowley died in 1626.

Other plays by Middleton and Rowley are *Wit at Several Weapons* (1609), *A Fair Quarrel* (1615), *The Old Law* (1618), *The World Tost at Tennis* (1620), and *The Spanish Gipsy* (1623).

Rowley was said by a near-contemporary to have been "beloved by those great men, Shakespeare, Fletcher and Jonson". In contrast Middleton was allegedly described by the acerbic Jonson as a "base fellow".

The Changeling – Stage History

Although the first recorded performance was in January 1624, at Court, the play licence states that it was to be “acted in 1622 by the Lady Elizabeth’s Servants at the Phoenix”, a private theatre in Drury Lane. It was performed until the plague closed the theatres in 1642, revived at the Restoration and performed fairly regularly until 1668, the last recorded performance being at Court in that year. The play then disappeared until almost the middle of the twentieth century when, like much of the Jacobean repertoire, it was rediscovered and produced mainly by university drama societies. The first professional production was in 1961 at the Royal Court, directed by Tony Richardson. Notable stage performances have included the 1988 National Theatre production starring Miranda Richardson as Beatrice-Joanna. In 2014 Dominic Dromgoole directed the play in the Sam Wanamaker playhouse at the Globe Theatre, recreating the performance with the sole use of candlelight for the performance.

The Jacobean Thriller

Jacobean tragedies were enormously popular. A much-revived play might be seen by more than 1 in 20 of the entire London population. For a largely illiterate nation, they were the thrillers of the time, packed with sex and violence (and often comic sub-plots).

They were nearly always set in Spain or Italy, partly because Protestant England regarded such places as the heart of a hostile, corrupt Catholicism, but often simply to provide exotic locations: another way to bring in the crowds. This device also allowed playwrights to make statements about their own societies that they dared not make openly.

Effects like poisoned pictures, skulls, love-potions, cut-off fingers and hearts, were much used. Stage skills were rapidly improving, and as ways of doing such things more realistically were invented, the greater became

the shock and the greater the audience appeal.

The Jacobean catalogue of savagery is long, with horror piled on horror. The plays are clotted with images of blood and death. It has been suggested that these playwrights were piling on the agony in order to satisfy the jaded palates of their audiences, but this judgement begs the question of why taste should have changed in that direction. It would not be so very strange if the plays and their audiences were to have anticipated the internecine rage of the Civil War to come. There is a parallel in the twentieth century for similar subconscious prophecies. The psychologist Carl Jung noted that many of his patients' dreams in the 1920s and 1930s were full of a horror which he diagnosed as anticipation of the terrible future of Hitler's Germany. Sometimes a nation will choose the theatre to do its collective dreaming.

All The World's a Stage, Ronald Harwood (1984)

Director's Note

For this production of Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* we made the decision to focus entirely on the drama of the main plot.

Although, therefore, the title character (Antonio, who, in the deleted subplot, feigns insanity in order to woo the madhouse owner's chaste wife) makes only a brief appearance in our play, the validity of the title stands. Literary reviewers down the years have taken pains to point out that many of the play's characters are not as they appear to be or undergo transformation under the influence of malign or ungovernable forces; they are changelings all.

Our Next Production

God of Carnage

By Yasmina Reza and Christopher Hampton (Translator)

Two boys have a playground fight, during which one sustains minor injuries. The boys' parents meet to resolve the matter. What begins as a courteous meeting disintegrates badly once the gloves come off and sparks begin to fly. This is a fascinating comedy of manners. Or, as Variety put it "Elegant, acerbic and entertainingly fuelled on pure bile".

Directed by Linda Hampson

31st January to 3rd February 2018
(Matinee on Wednesday, no evening performance)
7:45 pm, Compass Theatre, Ickenham
Box Office : 01895 250 615

About Proscenium

Proscenium was founded in 1924. Since then, the aim of this experienced group has been to present classic and contemporary plays to as wide an audience as possible. Since 1990, performances have taken place at the Harrow Arts Centre and, more recently, at the Compass Theatre, Ickenham.

The company meets three times a week in Harrow for rehearsals, so that four plays are presented in each season. Social, fund raising activities and play readings take place throughout the year.

Secretary : Ben Morris

Chair : David Pearson

Contact us at www.proscenium.org.uk