

Silly Shakespeare for Students



PERICLES

PRINCE OF TYRE

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with help from,

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

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Summary

The original version of *Pericles* is generally regarded as being one of Shakespeare's weakest plays: indeed it was not included in the First Folio of his work as it was thought to be substandard. In his own day, however, the play was one of his most popular in theatres, presumably because there is so much action and so many opportunities for the dramatic.

Pericles, the Prince of Tyre, is in search of a wife. Following a visit to Princess A, our hero flees the island of Antioch because he discovers that Antiochus, the King of the island, is having an incestuous affair with his daughter. Pericles goes back to Tyre, but Antiochus sends an assassin to kill him. On the advice of his Lords, Pericles leaves Tyre in the care of his counsellor, Helicanus, and travels to Tarsus where his food supplies help Governor Cleon and his wife Dionyza prevent a famine. News reaches Pericles that an assassin is on his trail and so he sets sail once again, this time to Pentapolis, however, *en route* his ship is wrecked and he is the only survivor.

After being discovered by some fishermen, Pericles wins a jousting tournament where the prize is Thaisa, the beautiful daughter of King Simonides. They fall in love and Pericles marries her. After so much time away from home Pericles decides to return home. Thaisa is pregnant now, and on the way to Tyre a storm at sea brings about the birth of her child, whom Pericles calls Marina. Thaisa apparently dies in childbirth. The grieving Pericles seals her in a watertight coffin, puts a note inside, and throws the coffin in the sea.

The coffin floats and finally ends up on a beach in Ephesus. The local doctor/mystic Cerimon revives Thaisa. She mistakenly believes that Pericles has been lost at sea and is offered sanctuary in the Temple of Diana. In the meantime, Pericles has visited Tarsus and left Marina and her nanny Lychorida with Cleon and Dionyza who have agreed to raise her with their own daughter Philotene.

There is a fourteen-year gap in the action. Marina's nanny Lychorida has been killed by jealous daughter Philotene and Marina is now a beautiful young woman. Dionyza is also jealous of her and makes up her mind to have her killed. She instructs a servant/therapist Leonine to kill her but before she can Marina is captured by pirates. The servant escapes the pirates by hiding. After the kidnapping, Leonine tells Dionyza that she's killed her and has thrown the body out to sea. Dionyza orders a statue to be built in her honour (in case Pericles comes to visit).

When Pericles visits Tarsus he sees the statue and falls into a pit of despair. In the meantime the pirates have sold Marina to a brothel in Mytilene; however with her intellect and spirit she wins over the island's governor, Lysimachus and she is freed with her honour intact.

Pericles arrives in Mytilene and encounters Marina. They talk without at first knowing who each other is. After their conversation he soon recognises her and there is a joyful reunion. Lysimachus proposes to Marina and she accepts him. Pericles then has a dream in which he is instructed to go to Ephesus. He takes Marina with him. When they arrive, they meet Thaisa, who is now a nun, and the family is happily reunited. The baddies all die!

Playing Style

In this version of *Pericles*, the playing style is much more light-hearted than the original. This version of Shakespeare's 'worst play' lends itself to a clown/grotesque playing style. As such, it makes fun of all the different and sometimes controversial aspects (such as incest and prostitution) of the original. This playing style has its roots in Commedia dell'Arte and can be found most recently through the work of Jacques LeCoq or Fillipe Gualier or Peepolykus. In this particular style, the costumes are brash and props are minimal and created in a rough style (Peter Brook, *The Empty Space. The Reduced Shakespeare Company*).

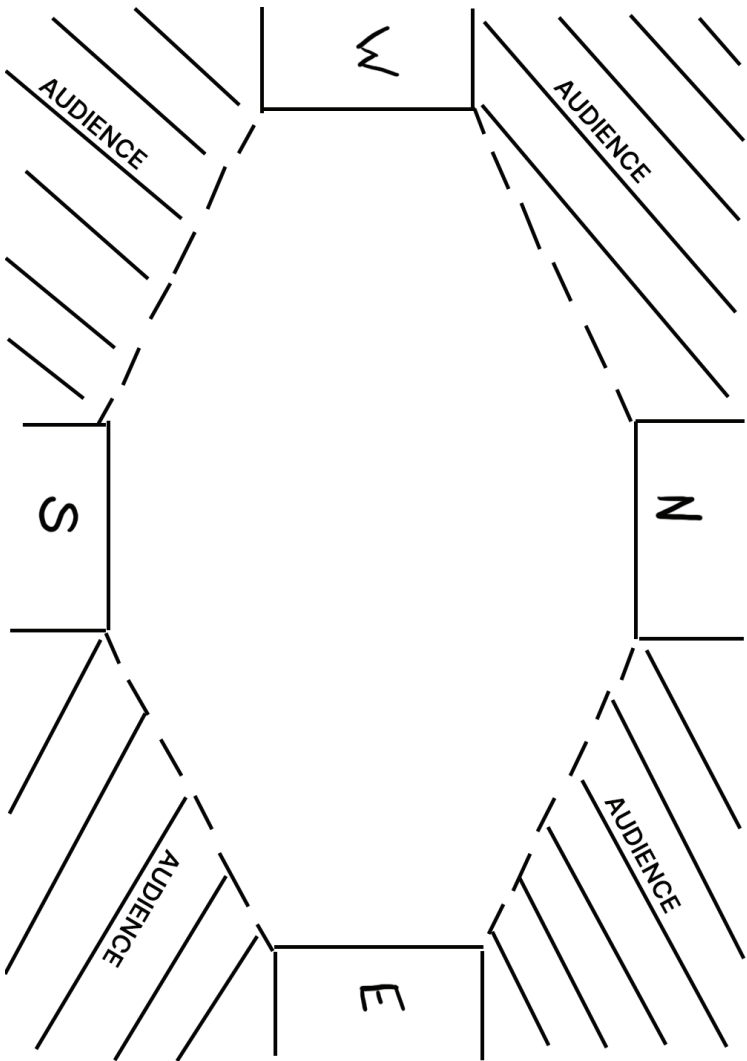
What is also important about this style is that there is no fourth wall, which means the characters will very often talk directly to the audience, thus adding to the sense of fun and intimacy. On some occasions you will find the rhyming scheme helpful to the playing, in which case the actors should just 'stand back', enjoy the words, and help the audience do the same. On other occasions the rhyming scheme will seem stifling and restrictive, in which case do not be afraid to improvise a little, add your own occasional lines, or not emphasise the rhymes so much. Overall this version should be fun to play and watch, it can be produced with a small budget and should be 'over the top' to give you a chance to play with your own ideas of theatricality.

Staging

The staging of this version of the play is challenging but potentially very fun. It can be performed with a cast of 12 or more actors. (All actors in a cast of 12 will play multiple parts except for the actor playing Pericles). The narrator character Gower can be played by a number of actors. In the Final Act, Act V, some quick costume changes may be required for the brief appearances of King Antiochus, Princess A, Cleon, Dionyza, and Philotene if the actors playing them are also playing other roles in the scene.

Because of the quick scenes and the change scene locations I would recommend performing 'in the round' with a minimal set. Four rostra or tables can be placed as mini stages at stations on the edge of the playing circle, in between which four blocks of audience sit. The action takes place in each station and in the middle of the circle and surrounding each station. (N, S, E and W).

In the original production the staging was organised in the following way. The stage directions make reference to this layout to help give an idea of how the action could be organized.



Cast of Characters

ACT I

GOWER:	<i>the narrator</i>
PERICLES:	<i>Prince of Tyre</i>
KING ANTIOCHUS	<i>King of Antioch and father and in incestuous relationship with ...</i>
PRINCESS A	
THALIARD:	<i>Assassin sent from King Antiochus</i>
HELICANUS:	<i>Pericles' trusted advisor from Tyre</i>
LORD 1:	<i>from Tyre</i>
LORD 2:	<i>from Tyre</i>
LORD 3:	<i>from Tyre</i>
LORD 4:	<i>from Tyre</i>
CLEON	<i>Governor of Tarsus</i>
DIONYZA:	<i>Wife to the Governor of Tarsus</i>
MESSENGER:	<i>male, mistaken for a woman</i>

ACT II

PERICLES	
BILL:	<i>A local fisherman from Pentapolis</i>
ANN:	<i>A local fisherwoman from Pentapolis</i>
SARAH:	<i>A local fisherwoman from Pentapolis</i>
COMMENTATOR 1:	<i>an excited TV-style sports commentator from Pentapolis</i>

COMMENTATOR 2:	<i>an excited TV-style sports commentator from Pentapolis</i>
SIR HARRY WHITE:	<i>King Simonides' champion and favourite of Pentapolis</i>
SIMONIDES	<i>King of Pentapolis</i>
THAISA:	<i>King Simonides' daughter</i>

ACT III

BABY MARINA:	<i>Pericles and Thaisa's daughter</i>
LYCHORIDA:	<i>Marina's nanny</i>
SAILOR 1:	<i>One of Pericles' crew on The Glider</i>
SAILOR 2:	<i>One of Pericles' crew on The Glider</i>
CERIMON:	<i>Doctor and healer from Ephesus</i>
CLEON	
DIONYZA	

ACT IV

MARINA	
DIONYZA	
PHILOTENE:	<i>Cleon and Dionyza's daughter</i>
LEONINE:	<i>Servant/therapist</i>
PIRATE 1	
PIRATE 2	
PIRATE 3	
BOULT:	<i>Market trader, seller of young girls</i>
PANDER:	<i>Brothel owner's assistant</i>
BAWD:	<i>Brothel owner</i>
LYSIMACHUS:	<i>Governor of Mytilene</i>
PERICLES	
HELICANUS	
CLEON	
MESSENGER	

ACT V

GOWER

PERICLES

THAISA

MARINA

HELICANUS

KING ANTIOCHUS

PRINCESS A

CLEON

DIONYZA

PHILOTENE

CERIMON

LYSIMACHUS

SAILOR 1

SAILOR 2

DIANA:

Ghost of the Goddess

NUN 1:

*From the Temple of Diana,
Ephesus*

NUN 2:

*From the Temple of Diana,
Ephesus*

Act 1

Prologue

Enter GOWER (This can be one actor centre stage delivering the monologue, or multiple actors each appearing in various locations taking a line or two)

GOWER

You know the plays that Will did write
Macbeth, King Lear, Midsummer's night?
Othello, Hamlet, Much Ado?
Well these are but his favoured few.
Plenty more are seldom seen:
Henry the VIII and Cymbeline¹
But bottom of the all-time list
Of Shakespeare's not-so-greatest hits
The play which always fails to please
The poor, unfortunate Pericles.
But before you stand and leave your seat
I have to say our play's a feat²
Of editing and derring-do³
To bring only the best to you

1—These are titles of plays by Shakespeare.

2—A great achievement

3— Act of bravery

In forty minutes, not one sec more,
Your jaws will be upon the floor.
Your senses will again regale⁴
From having viewed our glorious tale.
So sit back, relax, enjoy the night,
As Pericles comes into sight.

(PERICLES appears on stage)

To Antioch has our hero come
From Tyre, to find a little fun

(PRINCESS A and KING ANTIOCHUS appear at station W)

In the shape of lovely Princess A
But her dad King Antiochus gets to say
Just whom the princess gets to wed
And who shall share her bridal bed.
But daddy and daughter's history is dense
They know each other in the biblical sense.
But from her suitors⁵ they wear a muzzle
And instead he sets them all a puzzle

(Cryptic clues are handed to the audience)

To protect his regal reputation
From all the tabloid speculation
Those who fail to solve the clue
Will lose their head, but those that do
Will turn their heels and take their flight

4—Be happy

5—Men who want to marry a woman

And run from their incestuous⁶ plight.

(PERICLES screams and runs. A messenger appears and delivers a message to KING ANTIOCHUS. He reads it)

ANTIOCHUS

What do you mean: Pericles has fled?
He should be staying here to wed,
My daughter (*stroke*) lover Princess A
She is waiting for her wedding day
And now he'll tell all waifs and strays
About our little incestuous ways.
Thaliard, my faithful knave.⁷

(THALIARD enters)

THALIARD

Beside you Lord, from cradle to grave.

ANTIOCHUS

Just cut your sycophantic wheeze
And go and find Prince Pericles
Cross the sea to his land called Tyre

(Points to station E)

And take his life . . .

6—Sex between family members

7—A servant

THALIARD

... Say no more, squire.⁸

(Exit THALIARD)

PRINCESS A

So we carry on, needless to say,
Keeping it in the family way?

ANTIOCHUS

Don't make me out to be the baddy.
Now come and tell me 'who's your Daddy'?

(Exeunt ANTIOCHUS and PRINCESS A)

8—(Here) a landowner

SCENE I.

Tyre. A room in the palace.

*(PERICLES finishing his report to four LORDS and
HELICANUS who are standing at station E)*

PERICLES

And that is how my journey ended,
Antiochus and his 'Queen' offended.

LORD 1

I wouldn't like to wear your boots.
Antioch is full of brutes.

LORD 2

I'll give you odds of nine to two
That one of them will murder you.

LORD 3

Not only that but landing here
They'll cut us all from ear . . .

*(A mimed 'neck cutting' move is passed down
the line of LORDS)*

LORD 4

. . . To ear.

HELICANUS

Your lust for love and foreign booty
Has undermined your solemn duty.
As long as you stay here on Tyre
We will all be in the line of fire.

PERICLES

Oh Helicanus, of course you're right.
I will board my ship this very night.
And set a course for the isle of Tarsus
To save not mine, but all of our arses!

(PERICLES *'exits' to his boat, station N*)

SCENE II.

Tyre. A small room in the palace.

(Enter THALIARD in a swimsuit, goggles, and rubber ring/or small inflatable dinghy)

THALIARD

Sorry to barge in unannounced,
But your King Pericles must be trounced.⁹

LORD 1

Sorry mate, you're just too late.
Prince Pericles has skipped his fate.

LORD 2

He's on his way to other shores

(THE LORDS mime the following)

With golden sails and silver oars.

THALIARD

That sounds like quite a fancy craft
And I've only got this crappy raft.

LORD 3

He'll lead you on a merry dance.

LORD 4

To kill him now, you have no chance!

THALIARD

When Antiochus hears I failed
To kill your king I'll be impaled.¹⁰
I dreamed a life of future bliss.
I don't deserve a fate like this.

LORD 4

He won't be happy with us either.

HALICANUS

Listen, people, take a breather.
Just tell your king he died at sea
In a monstrous storm he didn't see.
He'll never show up, he's far too scared,
And that way all our lives are spared!

THALIARD

Well if that's ok with all of you,
It sounds like just the thing to do.

LORD 1

Let's not mourn those now departed.

LORD 2

Let's just get this party started.

*(Everyone but PERICLES begins to party and enjoy themselves
and dance offstage)*

10—Killed by something sharp like a stake or a sword