

## **MUCEDORUS**

A co-production presented by Poculi Ludique Societas and the Centre for  
Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies

*This production is dedicated, with love and respect, to the memory of  
Luella Massey*

### Cast

<i>King of Aragon/Rumbelo/Anselmo</i>	<b>Nazli Akhtari</b>
<i>Mouse, The Clown</i>	<b>Neil Babcock</b>
<i>Mucedorus</i>	<b>Adam Chan</b>
<i>Segasto</i>	<b>Shak Haq</b>
<i>Bremo/Tremelio/Envy</i>	<b>Mike Kirby</b>
<i>Amadine</i>	<b>Ashley Olah</b>
<i>Comedy/Old Woman/Collen (Messenger)</i>	<b>Polly Phokeev</b>

Director	Justin Blum
Producer/Costume Designer	Linda Phillips
Movement Director	Gabrielle Houle
Fight Director	Casey Hudeki
Technical Director	Paul Stoesser
Production/Lighting Design	Brad Fraser and Bianca Hossain
Properties Design	Gil Garratt
Stage Manager	Lisa Matsumoto
Assistant Stage Manager	Christine Mazumdar
Poster Design	Louis Duarte
Production Crew	Teo Balcu, Bianca Hossain, Spencer Schunk, Christopher Sutherland, Jessica Thorp, Lisa Matsumoto

The Company extends special thanks to: Seika Boye, Noam Lior, Isabel Stowell-Kaplan, Prof. Stephen Johnson, J. Kelly Nestruck, Alon Nashman, and Gailit Rodan

### DIRECTORS NOTE

I hope that, like me, you'll be glad once you have made the acquaintance of Prince Mucedorus of Valencia, Amadine the King's daughter of Aragon, and especially the redoubtable Segasto and his sidekick Mouse the clown. Before you do, though, spare a moment to reflect on the likelihood that, unless you are a scholar of early modern English drama (and possibly even if you are), these are probably not characters with whom you've been acquainted before. This is strange because this play was one of the most popular of the late 16th and early 17th centuries: it was performed at court in 1610 by the King's Men and possibly added to by their resident playwright William Shakespeare, and printed in at least 12 separate surviving quarto editions before 1642. By comparison no play of Shakespeare's survives in more than 8 pre-Civil War quartos, and only the blockbuster hit *The Spanish Tragedy* survives in as many editions from the same period. After the Restoration and even during the closure of the theaters *Mucedorus* remained alive in the English dramatic repertoire, especially for provincial and traveling players; it is last heard of as a fairground entertainment in Shropshire in the early 19th century before vanishing from both the repertoire and the canon of English drama.

Knowing this history raises two related questions: what made the play so popular for so long in the first place? And how could what may well have been the most printed English comedy of Shakespeare's lifetime vanish so completely into the swirling mists of theatre history as to be almost unknown today? From the vantage point of my day job as a historian of 19th century theatre I can propose answers to the second question first: in the 1820s a series of sensational crimes reported by the newly emerging national press captured the English imagination, and dramatizations of the Radlett and the Red Barn murders became the new staples of exactly the kinds of provincial and semi-legitimate theaters where *Mucedorus* lingered longest; at the same time the kind of fantastical characterizations and structures that form the spine of *Mucedorus* were increasingly the province of pantomime and harlequinade, which emphasized visual spectacle and mechanical effects in a way foreign to early-Elizabethan dramaturgy. If I've succeeded at all in my nocturnal occupation as a theatre artist then the first question will find some answer in the work of the extraordinary and diverse group of actors you're about to see perform the play. I've asked them to imagine themselves as one of those late touring companies, performing *Mucedorus* under materially impoverished circumstances from a script pared back to the very

essentials. The talent and the energy they bring to this task brings out the thrill of “firm, unfeigned love” newly discovered, the unmitigated fun of a clown and his master (but which one is which?) who exist for nothing other than to amuse audiences on stage and off, and other theatrical pleasures that were never gone even if we had forgotten them.

-Justin Blum



Poculi Ludique Societas

The mission of Poculi Ludique Societas (“The Cup and Game Society”) is to rediscover the theatrical traditions of the Middle Ages and Renaissance through textual research and dramatic experimentation, and to bring those traditions to life for contemporary audiences of all ages.

We invite you to our next production, ***A Medieval Christmas: Such Splendid Sight Was Never Seen***, featuring shadow puppets, Victorian flourishes, a mercurial King Herod, brawling shepherds and a whiny Joseph. Performances are December 13–14 at St. Thomas’s Anglican Church, 383 Huron Street. Please see [www.plspls.ca](http://www.plspls.ca) or call 416-978-5096 for more information.

The Workcentre of Jerzy Grotowski and Thomas Richards & The Centre for Drama, Theatre and Performance Studies

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<http://nostosencounters.wordpress.com> or <http://dramacentre.utoronto.ca>

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*November 21<sup>st</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>, 2013*

