



**THE
CHANGELING**

THE CHANGELING

Thomas Middleton

Thomas Middleton (1580–1627) was one of that band of playwrights that made the first quarter of the 17th century the greatest age of English drama. The son of a London bricklayer, he was educated at Queen's College, Oxford, but probably left in 1600 without taking a degree, to become a playwright in London. Many of his plays were written in collaboration with other authors, and the exact canon of his work is still disputed. He was however the undoubted sole author of a number of plays. These include some witty and cynical comedies from the early part of his career, which are satires on contemporary London life; a powerful tragedy, *Women beware Women*; and a political satire, *A Game at Chess*, which created an enormous sensation in 1624.

Middleton and Rowley

In *The Changeling* (1622), Middleton collaborated with William Rowley (died 1626), an actor who had a hand in the writing of about fifteen plays, mostly in collaboration with other authors. In at least four plays, Rowley collaborated with Middleton. In *The Changeling*, it is generally believed that Rowley was responsible for the subplot, and also for the opening and closing scenes of the play, while Middleton was responsible for the main plot (except for the first and last scenes). It is probable, however, that their collaboration was a particularly close one, so that Middleton's influence may appear even in scenes written by Rowley.

The Changeling: Main Plot

The main plot of *The Changeling* concerns Beatrice-Joanna, daughter of Vermandero, the Governor of Alicante in Spain. She is betrothed to Alonzo de Piracquo, but before the marriage has taken place she meets and falls in love with Alsemero. To clear the way to a marriage with Alsemero, she arranges for Alonzo to be murdered; as her instrument, she chooses De Flores, a poor and ugly gentleman in her father's household, who is infatuated with her, but for whom she feels an intense revulsion. Too late, she discovers that De Flores' price for the murder is that she shall become his mistress. The rest of the play reveals the way in which she becomes dependent on the villainous De Flores, and really comes to belong to him rather than to Alsemero, until the final revelation of her adultery and of the truth about the murder leads to her death and that of De Flores. Middleton handles the story with intense psychological insight and with clear moral vision. The writing is restrained and low-key with none of the brilliant rhetoric and explosive imagery found in so many Jacobean tragedies. The effects are achieved by situation, by dramatic irony, by the laying bare of motive, by double meanings (often sexual), by recurrent themes and comparisons (such as poison, food, transformation).

Leeds Arts Centre at the Civic Theatre

By Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

The Changeling: Subplot

The subplot is set in a madhouse. Alibius, the doctor who runs it, is jealous of his young wife, Isabella, and keeps her concealed, under the watch of his servant, the clown Lollo. To gain access to her, two gentlemen of Vermandero's household, Antonio and Franciscus, independently disguise themselves as madmen, and are admitted to the madhouse. Isabella, however, rebuffs them both. This subplot, with its clowning and its chorus of fantastic madmen, has often been dismissed as a blot on the play. In many ways, however, it subtly parallels the main plot; but Isabella, unlike Beatrice-Joanna, resists temptation and also shows how a would-be blackmailer should be handled.

Other aspects of the play have been criticised, notably the famous virginity-test episode in Act IV. Nevertheless, *The Changeling* is generally acknowledged to be one of the major Jacobean tragedies, and the great scenes, such as the eclaircissement between Beatrice and De Flores after the murder (Act III scene 4), are among the most memorable pieces of dramatic writing in English.

Changeling

'Changeling' – as a word applied to people – had the following meanings current in the 16th and 17th C.:

1. Someone given to change; a fickle or inconstant person.
2. A person surreptitiously exchanged for another.
3. A child secretly substituted for another in infancy; especially a stupid or ugly child left by fairies in exchange for one stolen.

A subsequent meaning, first recorded in the mid 17th C. but no doubt current in earlier speech, denoted a 'half-witted person' or 'idiot'.

The public may leave the Civic Theatre at the end of the performance by all exit and entrance doors and such doors must at that time be open. All gangways, passages and staircases must be kept entirely free from chairs or any obstruction. The safety curtain must be lowered and raised once immediately before each performance to check that it is in proper working order.

— 4th to 8th December, 1979

— Coming shortly —

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO

a comedy by Beaumarchais

Directed by Margaret Rhodes

5th to 9th February 1980.

followed by:

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

by Kaufman and Hart

Directed by Dennis Stevenson.

22nd to 26th April 1980.

and finally we hope to present:

CANTERBURY TALES

the smash hit musical by Martin Starkie and
Neville Coghill based on Chaucer's famous tales.

24th to 28th June 1980.

Next season our programme will include:

ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

by William Shakespeare.

BOOKINGS

If you would like tickets for any of these shows please ask at the box office during the interval or telephone Leeds 892346.

Tickets can also be obtained from the Tourist Information Bureau at the Leeds Central Lending Library during the month before each show.

THE CHANGELING

by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley

CAST

<i>Alsemero, a Valencian Nobleman</i>	Chris Richmond
<i>Jasperino, his friend</i>	Richard Carlin
<i>Beatrice-Joanna, daughter to Vermandero</i>	Joanna Eaves
<i>Diaphanta, her Waiting-woman</i>	Fiona Stevenson
<i>De Flores, Servant to Vermandero</i>	Robin Polley
<i>Vermandero, Father to Beatrice-Joanna</i>	Len Sheldon
<i>Alonzo de Piracquo, Suitor to Beatrice</i>	Jim Young
<i>Tomazo de Piracquo, his Brother</i>	Tony Nelson
<i>Alibius, a jealous Doctor</i>	George Teale
<i>Lollo, his Man</i>	Graham Alchorne
<i>Pedro, Friend to Antonio</i>	Dennis Stevenson
<i>Antonio, the Changeling</i>	Geoff Mountain
<i>Isabella, Wife to Alibius</i>	Ann Benson
<i>Franciscus, the Counterfeit Madman</i>	Trevor Money
Madhouse Inmates and Servants	

Margaret Artle, Victoria Atkinson, Jean Blundell,
Monica Brown, Robin Clayton, Dennis Stevenson,
Betty Triggs, George Westmoreland.

The action takes place in the Spanish seaport of Alicante.

FOR THE ARTS CENTRE

Stage Manager	Gordon Carlin
Properties	Doreen Parker
Prompt	Joyce King
Sound Recording	Sydney Irving
Sound Operation	David Scott and Gillian Thresh
Front of House	Anita Mountain
Box Office	John Pemberton and Margaret Rhodes
Wardrobe	Margaret Rhodes et al

FOR THE CIVIC THEATRE

Theatre Manager	Fred Mower
Theatre Technicians	Nick Morris, Peter Waddicor

Designed and directed by Malcolm Brown

There will be one interval of twenty minutes during which the theatre bar will be open. Ice cream will be on sale in the auditorium and coffee will be available in the bar.

LEEDS ARTS CENTRE

Leeds Arts Centre was formed in 1945 as an amateur Society to encourage and foster interest in the arts.

The Drama Group mounts five productions – usually including a musical or revue type show – at the Civic Theatre.

The Green Room Group puts on plays and other forms of entertainment in the rehearsal rooms to give members valuable experience of acting and producing before tackling major parts or productions in the Civic Theatre. Season ticket holders are welcome to attend these performances.

The Fine Arts Group meets twice each week throughout the year for drawing, painting and other creative work.

In addition there is a variety of social activities for members, such as theatre visits, outings, parties, etc.

New Members are always welcome so if you are interested in acting, drawing, painting (pictures or scenery), set building, making costumes, helping back stage, front of house or even with publicity and think you might like to join the Centre, or would like more information please write to:

*The Secretary, Leeds Arts Centre,
Stansfeld Chambers, Great George Street,
Leeds 1.*

costume hire

You may not realise that the costumes you have seen tonight and countless others from different periods are available for hire from the Leeds Arts Centre costume collection at reasonable rates.

If you are interested please telephone Leeds 756796 and discuss your requirements with Mrs. Margaret Rhodes, our wardrobe mistress.