

Two Medieval French Farces

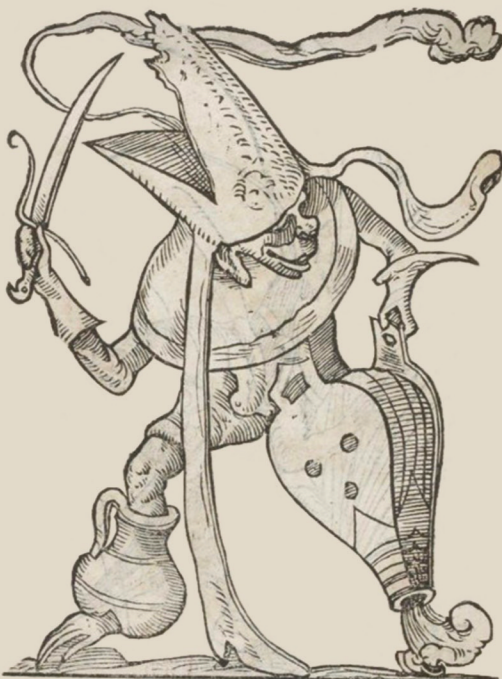
a reading

About This Project

France has a rich tradition of medieval farces, comedy that's broad and bawdy, slapstick and often just *slapping*. It's loud and lively, and in its secularity, completely different from anything that has survived in the UK. We wanted to give some of these plays a whirl on this side of the Channel, and see if people found them as entertaining as we did. But because we wanted above all to lean into the *fun* they offer, we thought: Wouldn't a night out at the pub, maybe with some friends, with a play to read and play with, be an easy way to just *enjoy* theatre? Nothing to memorise, no moves to master, just pure *acting*. And how often does an audience get to get up close with drama in that kind of native state, without bells and whistles? We can all take a moment to just revel in the clever, witty, silly, and absurd ideas these plays' authors gave us. And amazingly, we found two plays that are all of those things but also relatable. Who doesn't like a good lawyer joke, and who is unaware that, six hundred years later, the Battle of the Sexes rages on? *Master Pierre Pathelin* and *The Washtub* are a bridge between the Middle Ages and us... but it doesn't feel like a terribly long one.

About *Pierre Pathelin*

Dated to the late fifteenth century, *Master Pierre Pathelin* is probably the most famous of all French farces- but not especially familiar in the UK. Although not lacking in visual comedy, it's an outlier among farces because physical slapstick is downplayed in favour of witty characters and situations. Pierre claims he's a lawyer (his wife Guillemette isn't so sure), but everyone agrees he's a capital cheat! With his wife's help, he hatches an elaborate scheme to get cloth from Guillaume, the clothier, without paying for it. But Guillaume in turn is cheating his shepherd, Thibault Aignelet, who has himself stolen some sheep from the herd. When Guillaume hauls Aignelet into court and Pierre serves as the defence, hilarity and much confusion ensue... and you may be surprised by who wins the game, and how!



About *The Washtub*

Marital farce makes up a significant percentage of the medieval French farces. Many of them cross the line between slapstick and violence, but *The Washtub* is simply entertaining. Jacquinot and Jacquinette are still settling in to married life, and like many couples, they can't agree on who is responsible for which elements of the household chores. Jacquinette, with the backup of her opinionated mother, convinces her husband that they should draw up a contract listing all of his responsibilities. But Jacquinot may have the chance to get some of his own back: when his wife falls into the enormous washtub where she's doing laundry, he realises that a loophole in their agreement could give him the upper hand.

Our Team

Director..... Laura-Elizabeth Rice

Script Translation & Editing..... Laura-Elizabeth Rice & Katharine Handel

Stage Manager..... Ian S. Murphy

HIDDEN Theatre..... Nathan Bargate, Ian S. Murphy, Laura-Elizabeth Rice

Special thanks to: Maggie Anderton & the Black Swann Inn, our families for their infinite support and tolerance, and especially THE ACTORS who came out to play and show their talents in this endeavour!

About HIDDEN Theatre

HIDDEN was formed in 2010 as an outgrowth of the York Mystery Plays. We debuted in London with a production of medieval nativity plays for the British Museum. The current HIDDEN team met during the production of "The Baptism" in 2014's Mystery Plays, and have subsequently brought historic drama to both York and Bristol. After a hiatus, we're thrilled to be back to bringing out drama from and about the past!

You can find out more about our future plans and our company at hiddentheatre.com, as well as lots more information about the plays you've seen tonight!

