

A Pound of Flesh

What if Portia never came to Venice?

The Merchant of Venice reimagined

*"The oft-told tale begins with money ventured 'gainst a bond of flesh.
But hold! See now a new path taken, tragedy appears
and with sad death marks consequence of greed."*

After a three year gap, Edinburgh-based Arbery Theatre returns to the stage at this year's Fringe with a new look at another classic tale. Last seen bringing Petronius ribald *The Satyricon* to life ("hugely effective and at times very funny indeed" *All-Edinburgh Theatre*) the company offers Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* as a tragedy.

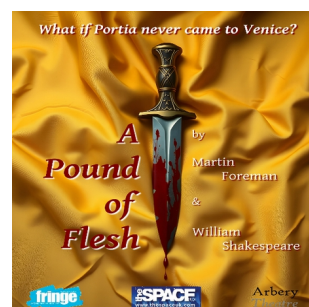
In the original play Antonio is saved from death when Portia persuades the court that Shylock may have the merchant's pound of flesh but only if no blood is spilt. But what if Portia never reached Venice? What other events might unfold?

Martin Foreman's intense fifty-minute play focuses on the four leading characters: Antonio, troubled by his deep longing for Bassanio ("*The pow'rful love I bear him o'erwhelms and harsh confounds me.*"); Bassanio, coming to terms with his own greed ("*Had you but known my crooked heart before it saw your face, my face had ne'er seen yours.*"); Shylock - a woman in this version - retaining her righteous anger ("*Christians' scorn is but to spite the glass that shows their face.*"); and Portia frustrated by fate ("*With heavy heart, unhappy pen and solemn ink I write from Padua.*"). Tragedy is inevitable, but what form it takes is uncertain until the end.

All five actors are Edinburgh-born or -based. Gabriel Bird (Antonio) is appearing in EGTG's *Incognito* at the end of April, Danielle Farrow (Shylock) has brought Shakespeare to life in many different venues; Ollie Hiemann was Jack in *Jack and the Beanstalk* in Portobello Town Hall last December and Michael Robert-Brown (the Doge and other parts) has often appeared on stage and in film around the city. For Millie Deere (Portia) this will be her first performance in Scotland.

A Pound of Flesh combines Shakespeare's words and new writing that echoes the Bard's rhythm and imagery. In addition to creating the play, Martin Foreman directs, in one of the Fringe's most popular venues in the heart of the Scottish capital. Foreman's previous plays include comedies, dystopias and other takes on classic stories. He most recently directed J B Priestley's *Dangerous Corner* in October 2024.

Venue	theSpace on the Mile (Venue 39)		
Dates	1, 2 August (previews)	20.20 (50 mins)	£8 (£6)
	3 - 9, 11 - 16, 18 - 23 August	20.20 (50 mins)	£12 (£10)
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arberytheatre.uk/a-pound-of-flesh

for links to cast biographies, images and other information

Information about Arbery Theatre's other Fringe production, **Transfers**, will be available late April/early May