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WHAT IF SHAKESPEARE GOT IT ALL WRONG?

# EVERYTHING THAT NEVER HAPPENED

BY SARAH MANTELL DIRECTED BY JESSICA KUBZANSKY



Sarah Mantell's  
**EVERYTHING THAT NEVER HAPPENED**  
Arrives at Baltimore Center Stage  
Directed by Jessica Kubzansky

## FOR RELEASE

January 30, 2025

## PRESS INQUIRIES

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**Baltimore, MD** – What if Shakespeare got it all wrong? **Baltimore Center Stage** steps into the intersection of *The Merchant of Venice* and Jewish history with Sarah Mantell's ***Everything That Never Happened***. Directed by **Jessica Kubzansky**, the show runs **February 13 through March 9, 2025**.

In Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, a merchant named Antonio defaults on a large loan provided by a Jewish moneylender, Shylock, with seemingly inevitable fatal consequences. The play is best known for Shylock's demand of a "pound of flesh," and ***The Merchant of Venice* has been considered anti-Semitic for decades as scholars, theater artists, and audiences continue to debate the issue.** The Anti-Defamation League points out that "Over four hundred years after *The Merchant of Venice* was first written, the debate rages on about

Shakespeare's intentions regarding the character of Shylock, whether the play is anti-Semitic or a criticism of the Christian anti-Semitism of Shakespeare's time." How are we to take this money-hungry usurer, who tries to claim a pound of another human's flesh in payment of a debt? And what bearing does Shylock's religion have on how he is perceived by the audience?

**Whether you love Shakespeare or detest Shylock** - there is something in *Everything That Never Happened* for you. Jessica and Lorenzo are in love, but to be together they must plan an escape from her father's house, the Venetian Ghetto, and her entire culture. *Everything That Never Happened* is a time-bending story, rich with humor and heartbreak, about disguise, romantic intrigue, and the terrible price we must sometimes pay to be free.

**Playwright Sarah Mantell took issue with *The Merchant of Venice* and many of the stereotypes that it elevates.** Sarah felt that in writing this play, "they were wrestling with Shakespeare in a dirty ditch." Mantell says that the stereotypes in the play have been used as "an excuse to harm an entire ethnicity/religion/culture of people for a very long time. I wanted to write a play that allowed these characters to speak in Jewish voices for the first time. To give them back their history, their humor, their heartbreak."

**Director Jessica Kubzansky says, "I fell in love with Sarah's play the moment I read it! I'm a self-proclaimed 'Shakespeare freak,' but I have always wrestled mightily with the anti-semitism, misogyny, and racism at the heart of *The Merchant of Venice*."** She continued, "I am gobsmacked by the deeper cultural waters Sarah is swimming in, the comment their play is making on our society past and present, on the ancestral memory of othered groups, on privilege and pain and passing."

*"[It] reconsiders 'The Merchant of Venice' through a Jewish perspective. Audacious, imaginative and moving, Mantell's play is an overdue recapitulation that lends an eloquent new voice not only to Shylock, here portrayed with resonant humanism, but to Jessica, whose compulsion to break free of the past comes at a terrible price."*

**- L.A. Times**

*Everything That Never Happened* premiered at Boston Court Pasadena in 2018. Jessica Kubzansky, Artistic Director

*Everything That Never Happened* was developed as part of The Playwrights Realm's Writing Fellowship (Katherine Kovner, Founding Artistic Director | Roberta Pereira, Producing Director)

The cast includes Erika Soto as "Jessica", Nic Picou as "Lorenzo", Leo Marks as "Shylock." and Allison Wick as "Gobbo".

The creative team includes Director Jessica Kubzansky, Assistant Director Dante Fields, Composer and Sound Designer John Nobori, Associate Sound Designer Caitlin Leong, Costume Designer Mel Ng, Scenic Designer Anton Volovsek, Lighting Designer Sim Carpenter, Associate Lighting Designer Tyrell Stanley, Stage Manager Luisa Ann Torres, Assistant Stage Manager Caroline Ragland, and Casting by The Telsey Office, Destiny Lilly, CSA.

### **Ticketing Information**

Single tickets can be purchased at [centerstage.org](http://centerstage.org) or by calling 410.332.0033. Patrons can also visit the box office, located at 700 North Calvert Street.

### **Reviewing Press**

Reviewing press are invited to the final preview, Thursday, February 20th, at 7:30pm, or opening night, Friday, February 21st, at 7:30pm. For press consideration email [RMurphy@centerstage.org](mailto:RMurphy@centerstage.org).

### **Community Night**

BCS' Community Night for this production is February 14th at 6:00pm . The evening will include a Shabbat ceremony, a reading of an excerpt from *The Merchant of Venice* and a conversation with Playwright Sarah Mantell, Director Jessica Kubzansky, and Theater Scholar Dr. Alvin Goldfarb.

### **LGBTQIA+ Affinity Night**

BCS will host an LGBTQIA+ affinity night for the 7:30pm performance on February 15th. The evening will include a post-performance conversation about the play with Playwright Sarah Mantell and other Baltimore LGBTQIA+ artists and activists.

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### **About Baltimore Center Stage**

Designated the State Theater of Maryland in 1978, Baltimore Center Stage provides the highest quality theater and programming for all members of our communities, including youth and families, under the leadership of Artistic Director Stevie Walker-Webb and Managing Director Adam Frank. Baltimore Center Stage ignites conversations and imaginations by producing an eclectic season of professional productions across two mainstages, through engaging community programs, and with inspiring education programs. Everything we do at Baltimore Center Stage is led by our core values—chief among them being Access For All. Our mission is heavily rooted in providing active and open accessibility for everyone, regardless of any and all barriers, to our Mainstage performances, education initiatives, and community programming.