

'Two Dromios, one in semblance'

Bruce Mackinnon, Dromio of Syracuse, and Felix Hayes, Dromio of Ephesus, talk about the process of playing a twin and the difficulties of doubling.

What would you say are the defining characteristics of your Dromio? How is he different to his brother?

BRUCE: This is a highly dangerous world for both, but far more so for my Dromio. He is on foreign soil and if he is caught without the right papers he will be executed along with his master. Both Dromios exist to serve their masters and it is in those highly abusive relationships where you find the biggest differences. Both Dromios run scared, literally, however my Dromio is running for his life from the authorities, but worse still from this created world of goblins and witches and, of course, the very real Nell! This in turn brings him and his master closer and allows for moments of friendly banter and genuine warmth and love, if only in an attempt to quell one another's fear. They have been travelling together for some seven years and I expect this is their survival mechanism. My Dromio would also never stand up to his master in the way the Ephesian Dromio does later on in the play. Felix's Dromio definitely has more balls, whilst my Dromio, in a foreign world, is suffering a nervous breakdown of gigantic proportion.

FELIX: Dromio of Ephesus has a less brotherly relationship with his Antipholus than his twin. He is definitely the servant to the master – he is beaten more often, never praised, and is part of a household – rather than a personal manservant or friend like the Syracusan Dromio. These things make him more jumpy, alert to blows and insolent. He knows exactly where the line is and enjoys crossing it, even when he knows his cheek will lead to a beating. I think his tongue runs a bit faster than his brain sometimes – I have no idea why they cast me! Also, Dromio of Ephesus looks more like me than Dromio of Syracuse, who looks quite a lot like Bruce.

Dromio of Syracuse knows about his past – how do you think that affects his behaviour compared to his brother?

BRUCE: The knowledge of the other twins is the reason why Antipholus of Syracuse has been travelling for the last seven years and my Dromio with him, serving his master and his obsession to find the drop in the ocean. I have always felt it is my Dromio's servitude to Antipholus that keeps him going, not any shared passion for reconciliation with his twin. My Dromio constantly wants to get the hell out of there! His first line on seeing his brother is not one of warmth, 'I am Dromio. Command him away!' But on closer examination the scene becomes one of wonder and intrigue, particularly for Dromio of Ephesus, who is essentially seeing himself. They are the same, not only in looks, but more crucially in their roles as servants. And it fast becomes a moving moment of genuine brotherly love.

The Dromios close the play – off they walk, side by side – the two drops of water have found one another. How do you think this new-found relationship will affect their lives?

BRUCE: It's such a beautiful moment in the play when they agree to exit the stage the way they entered the world, not one before the other. I always feel that their lives will be better for knowing each other from this moment on. They will still always be servants and will still always be beaten, as is their life, but by knowing each other they can share their woes and tales of servitude, which must surely be a good thing?

FELIX: The Dromios ending perhaps confirms their place in the world – not at the top, but not alone at the bottom either.

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