

# GRATIANO

Do you play the Villain?



★★★★★ British Theatre Guide

★★★★★ Barefoot Review

★★★★★ ThreeWeeks

★★★★★ Edinburgh Guide

★★★★★ The Adelaide Advertiser

★★★★★ Broadway Baby

Any enquiries, questions on shows and interests in booking, please contact:

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[www.gristtheatre.co.uk](http://www.gristtheatre.co.uk)

# Gratiano

*Do you ever think you played the villain...?*

In what some critics have called a masterful performance, performer and playwright **Ross Ericson** transports us back to 1950's Italy where Bassanio has been murdered and he, Gratiano, is suspect. Forced to revisit his fascist past Gratiano recounts his part in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, where he was just a minor character, just the plucky comic relief. He never thought that he played the villain – so can he find redemption?

By setting his version of *The Merchant of Venice* in Mussolini's Italy Ericson explores the **politics of hate** in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and questions the true nature of Shakespeare's characters. In this highly charged piece Ross uses humour to examine just how politicians can use **democracy** to turn a people against themselves, and by doing so throws a disturbing light on the world today.

This thought-provoking new play from the team behind *The Unknown Soldier* was workshopped at Edinburgh Fringe 2016, where it received four and five star reviews and was chosen to be performed at the York International Shakespeare Festival 2017.



**Gratiano** was one of the first Shakespearean roles playwright/performer **Ross Ericson** played, back somewhere near the dawn of time, and saw the beginning of a life-long fascination with ambiguity he found in the text of one of Shakespeare's most famous plays. It has been said to be as gritty and moving as Ericson's World War One play *The Unknown Soldier*, which officially sold out its run at Edfringe 2016, and the critically acclaimed *Casualties*, for which he was nominated for an Off West End Award.



*Gratiano*, *The Unknown Soldier* and *Casualties* play-texts have all been published by Methuen Drama, Bloomsbury.

## Press Reviews



*'It's a masterful performance, a smart spectacle and a further testament to Ericson's growing magnificence as a modern playwright and performer.'*

– **British Theatre Guide**



*'There is a much greater tragedy on the Gratiano's horizon than a pound of flesh, and this deeply moving play proves, once again, that Ericson is a force to be reckoned with.'*

– **Edinburgh Guide**



*'Don't miss this one, it's well worth it.'*

– **The Barefoot Review, Adelaide**



*'Sophisticated, satisfying production with bravura acting deserving of full audiences'*

– **The Adelaide Advertiser**



*'Ericson's elegant fable reaches out beyond today's xenophobes and ultra-nationalists and speaks with integrity while we laugh our socks off.'* – **Glam Adelaide**



*'Absolutely magnificent... [Ericson] is one of the most convincing actors I've ever seen... The production definitely leaves one with much food for thought.'*

– **Broadway Baby**



*'So often I've seen Shakespeare adaptations try too hard to fit a square peg in a round hole; this show is not one of them. Ericson, with his physically imposing, impassioned performance, has delivered a truly intelligent idea and an insightful show that will leave you thinking for days.'*

– **Fringe Guru**



*'What makes this show refreshingly different from the innumerable adaptations of Shakespeare plays, told from a minor character's perspective, is its political engagement.'*

– **ThreeWeeks**



*'A passionate cry against racism and xenophobia in every country, in every century; it speaks to us very clearly today.'*

– **FringeReview**

## Audience Review

*Gripping... Well worth seeing!!* - **Nicole Duhamel**

*Gratiano kept us thoroughly entertained with a wry look behind the scenes at the characters from *The Merchant of Venice* from his point of view.* - **Christine McDerment**

*Superb! We were seriously impressed, both by the writing and the performance. Very perceptive politically in a way Shakespeare would have been proud of, and expressed lucidly and vividly. Very powerful - I wish I could see it again.* - **Liz Brandow**

*This play, and [Ericson's] performance, is a treasure and wonderful commentary on "*The Merchant of Venice*" and should be seen by everyone interested in Shakespeare - particularly students of the original play seeking greater insights.* - **Andrew Tippman**

*An excellent marriage of two themes, *Facist Wartime Italy* and the *Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice*... See this play and learn how close murder is to you.* - **Robin Bold**

*This is a challenging thoughtful and most stimulating play.* - **Grahame Hunter**



*'It's clear that Ross Ericson is a compelling actor and writer who delivers four-star work... He uses the premise that 20 years after the *Merchant of Venice*, this minor character [Gratiano] is a suspect in Bassanio's death; it's a dark exploration of thuggish prejudice told in the setting of Mussolini's Italy but referencing forward to Brexit Britain.'*

Article in **The Scotsman**, Aug 2016



# Show Package Information

<b>Gratiano</b>	
Genre:	Drama, solo show
Themes:	Shakespeare, <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> , WW2, Mussolini, Racism, Fascism, politicians, democracy
Running time:	1 hr
Post-show Discussion:	Available
Suitable for:	Adults, Students & 16+
Insurance:	Full public liability cover
Marketing:	Press and marketing, A3 and A4 posters, DL flyers will be provided
<b>Price Options:</b>	
Box Office split:	70%/30% in company's favour
Buy-in:	£500 for 1 performance; Fee negotiable for more than 2 bookings
<b>Technical Requirements</b>	
Min performance area:	3m x 2m
Layout:	Theatre: thrust, prosc etc.
Set:	Flexible, depending on venue/space, will include free-standing props: Chair, 3 crates, (a hanging window – optional)
Lighting:	Stage divided into left and right: Bar side: Spotlight, bluish sepia wash, bar sign (practical), ripple machine (practical) Interrogation room side: general wash, Spotlight, coolie hanging light (practical)
Sounds:	Sound on laptop, just need minijack connection into desk.
Blackout needed:	Yes
Get in & set up:	3 hr
Get out:	45min
Company:	1 actor & 1 stage manager
Parking:	1 car/ van
Hospitality:	If available – for two people



## Company Members



### Actor & Playwright: **Ross Ericson**

Ross has been acting since the mid 1990s and has appeared in productions of Othello, Teechers, Macbeth, A Man for All Seasons, and The Little Shop of Horrors and, more recently, as Lennie in Of Mice and Men (Lighthouse, Poole), a Corner man/Bailiff in Sucker Punch (Royal Court, London), Ben in The Dumb Waiter (The Mill Theatre, Guildford), Number 4 in Fewer Emergencies (The Print Room, London), Pembroke/Austria in King John (Union Theatre, London), Ned in Parlour Song (Cockpit Theatre, London), Jake in 27 Wagons Full of Cotton (Riverside Studios, London) and The Stage Manager in Our Town (Apollo Theatre Company, Touring).

Among his writing credits are a stage adaptation of Henry Fielding's Tom Jones – which has been optioned by LA Theatre Works in California – Punchline, Life, The Autumn of Han and the critically acclaimed, and OffWestend Awards nominated, Casualties, which is published by Methuen Drama.



### Producer & Show Operator: **Michelle Yim**

Michelle is a British-East-Asian actor/producer and has worked on small and medium sized productions for Grist to the Mill that culminated with the premier of the critically acclaimed 'Casualties' in Park Theatre's opening season. She is also one of the founders of **Red Dragonfly Productions**, which strives to bring stories from the East and Far East to a British and European audience. Working in collaboration with Grist to the Mill Productions, the team has started on a three year programme to bring three classic Chinese stories to the British stage. The first production 'The Autumn of Han' 2014-2015 and 'DiaoChan: The Rise of a Courtesan' 2015-2016 toured all over the UK.

[www.reddragonflyproductions.co.uk](http://www.reddragonflyproductions.co.uk)



**Grist to the Mill** was founded in 2012 with a specific aim to bring new writing to the world's stages. Resident writer **Ross Ericson** has had noted success with his critically acclaimed adaptation of Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* and his play *Casualties*, which was nominated for Best New Play at the OffWestend Awards and published by Methuen. Grist also co-produced *The Autumn of Han* and *DiaoChan* with Red Dragonfly. 5 stars *The Unknown Soldier* **sold-out** it's run at Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2016 and is also published by Methuen Bloomsbury. The company is based in The New Forest, Hampshire.

[www.gristtheatre.co.uk](http://www.gristtheatre.co.uk)



'If you don't ever want to see another WW1 play, then you want to see \*this\*. Superb!'

★★★★★ **FringeGuru on *The Unknown Soldier***

'An unmissable and thought-provoking play that has so much relevance in today's society'

★★★★★ **Edinburgh Festival Mag on *The Unknown Soldier***

'Powered by a magnificent solo performance from Ross Ericson'

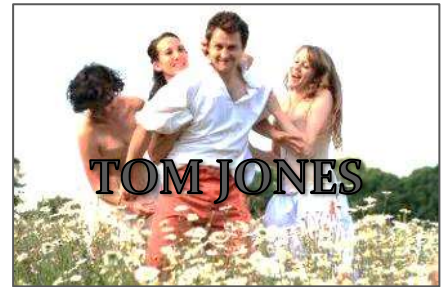
★★★★★ **ThreeWeeks on *The Unknown Soldier***

'It's not about glory or futility, it's about the loyalty forged between friends'

★★★★★ **The Scotsman on *The Unknown Soldier***

'The quality of the adaptation and the wit of the cast ensure that... it makes for a thoroughly entertaining evening'

★★★★★ **The Public Reviews on *Tom Jones***



'*Casualties* is perfectly executed... and will easily leave you reeling.'

★★★★★ **What's on Stage on *Casualties***

'A play of extremely high standard both in writing, direction and performance.'

★★★★★ **LiveTheatre.co on *Casualties***

'Wonderful piece of work... would have gladly gone back for more'

★★★★★ **One Stop Arts on *Casualties***

'Be prepared to be harrowed, to be moved to tears and to fall in love with the characters'

★★★★★ **Remotegoat on *Casualties***



Casualties 2013 at Park Theatre, Photo by Simon Annand

# Gratino Show Copy

## **60 words**

Bassanio has been murdered and, under suspicion, Gratiano is forced to revisit his Fascist past. He was never the hero – just a minor character, the plucky comic relief – but he never thought he played the villain. In a highly charged sequel to *William Shakespeare's 'The Merchant of Venice'* we explore the politics of prejudice in Mussolini's Italy.

## **100 Words**

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## **Links:**

Website: <http://www.gristtheatre.co.uk/gratiano>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/gristtothemill/>

Twitter: @gristtheatre #gratiano



# Gratiano Press Release

**Grist To The Mill Productions**

*Presents*

## **Gratiano**

A Provocative New Sequel To The Merchant of Venice

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★★★★ 1/2 The Adelaide Advertiser

**Web:** [www.gristtheatre.co.uk](http://www.gristtheatre.co.uk) **Twitter:** @gristtheatre **Facebook:** /gristtothemill

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### LISTING INFORMATION

**Venue:**

**Dates/Time:**

**Running Time:** 60mins

**Tickets:**

**Bookings:**

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## Contact Details

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