

conventions of roman comedy

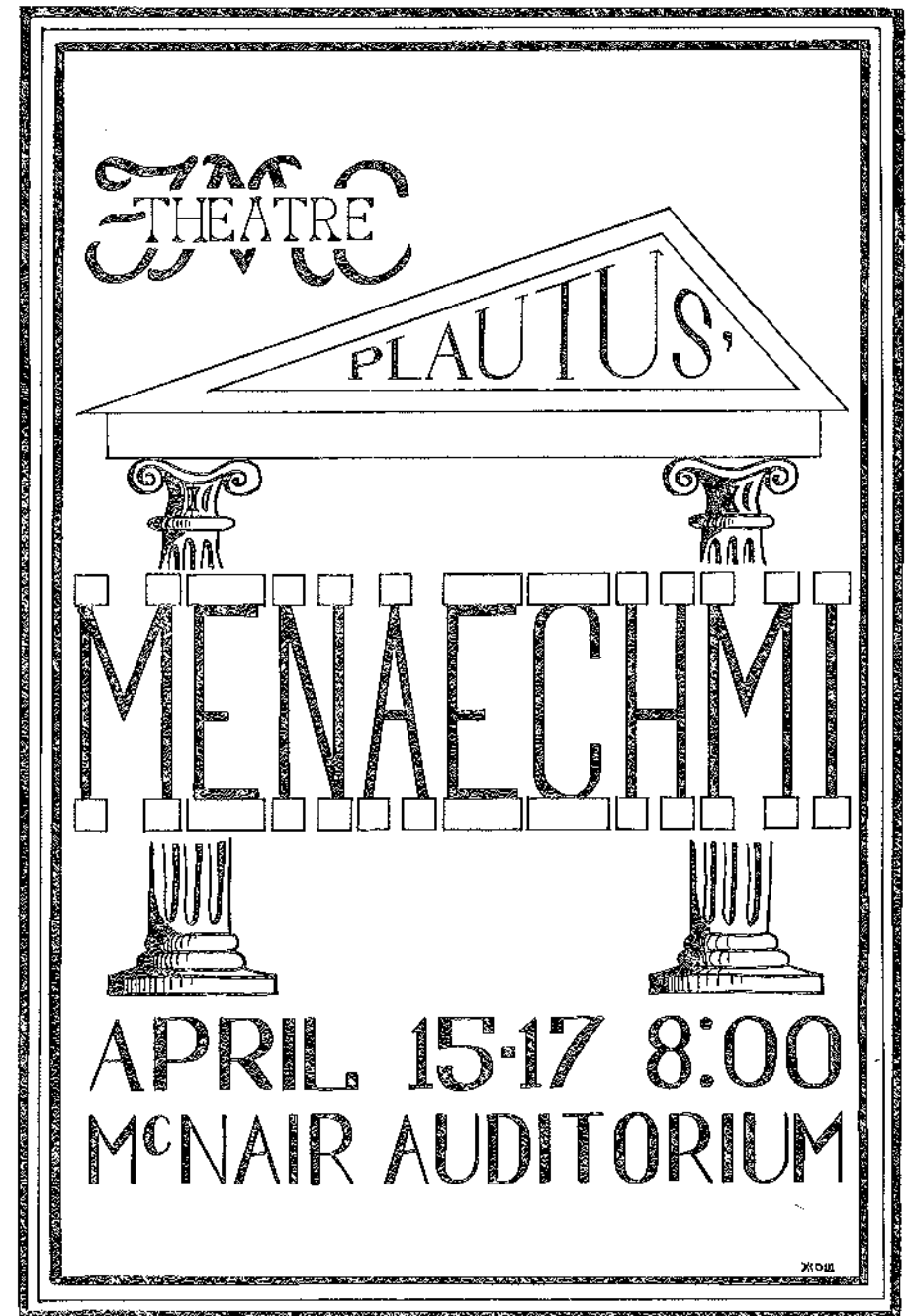
all extant roman comedy is based heavily on greek new comedy. although the author of the greek original for plautus' **MENAECHMI** is not known, there are in existence the titles of some eight greek plays entitled "the twins." many adaptations of plautus' theme continued throughout theatre history with shakespeare's **THE COMEDY OF ERRORS** being the most famous.

some changes naturally accompanied the adaptation from the greek. first, the chorus was abandoned, eliminating the divisions between acts and scenes. secondly, the musical elements associated with the chorus were scattered throughout the plays. in **MENAECHMI**, over half of the dialogue was accompanied by music and many characters had "entering" songs with their first appearance on stage. the plays might be compared to modern musical comedies.

roman comedy, and greek new comedy, does not deal with the political and social problems that the greek old comedy of aristophanes attacked. the plots are based on everyday domestic affairs using misunderstanding as the chief element. plautus uses the mistaken identity of twins in **MENAECHMI** to develop his farcical plot. he, in fact, opens the play with a lengthy prologue precisely outlining the confusing identities surrounding the twins, to prepare the audience for the comic episodes that follow.

roman comedy also relies upon the use of stock characters that fall into well defined types: the practical old man concerned with the welfare of his children, the clever slave, the parasite groveling for handouts, the courtesan, the quack with his technical jargon, impertinent questions, and expensive treatment. **MENAECHMI** has all these characters and adds ones like the nagging, jealous wife. (it should be noted that few respectable women are found in roman comedy.) these characters are all too often poorly developed and appear as one-sided stereotypes rather than fully rounded human beings. many inconsistencies of character are surely to be found upon examination, yet all this escapes the audience caught up in the laughter of the performance.

finally, action within the roman comedies takes place outside, although indoor scenes would often prove more logical. the result is that indoor activity must often be explained to the audience as characters enter. the architectural design of the roman theatres made this type of staging the most practical. such conventions of roman comedy may seem foreign and contrived to modern audiences, but they were all accepted without question by the romans.



platus'

production staff

THE TWIN MENAECHMI

sponge (peniculus)	mike woodall*
menaechmus I	steve hunt*
erotium	amy weaver*
cylindra	connie scovel*
menaechmus II (sosicles)	stuart jones
messenio	david o'neil*
maid	jo ann dettori
wife (of menaechmus I)	cynthia warden*
father	phillip tuck*
doctor	lee roy mc leod
lady	lurma swinney
sailors and slaves	pat sowell*
	manfred illias*
	lee roy mc leod

director	d. s. campbell
assistant director	selwa baroody*
technical director and scenic designer	d. c. sanderson
costume designer	c. a. sanderson
stage manager	rhonda dingle*
lighting control	gary hard*
stage carpenters	gary hard*, steve hunt*
set construction	selwa baroody*, susan early, phyllis mc cullough, gary hard*, steve hunt*, rhonda dingle*
costume construction	debi hard, susan robertson*, c. a. sanderson
publicity	susan poston

THE TWIN MENAECHMI
is produced by special arrangement with

random house, inc.
201 e. 50th st.
new york, n. y. 10022

scene synopsis

the action takes place in a street of epidamnus in front of
the houses of menaechmus I and erotium.

a special thanks to

the original form of THE TWIN MENAECHMI is five acts; however,
because the action is continuous, there will be only one break
with a 10 minute intermission.

jordan furniture

mr. and mrs. j. poindexter

mr. and mrs. d. neilson

the college theatre requests that no photographs be taken
during the performance.

cokes will be on sale in the lobby during the intermission.
please do not bring your drink into the auditorium.

future florence area theatre productions

april 23-may 2
florence little theatre
"1776"
8:00 p.m.

*member of alpha psi omega — national dramatics honorary fraternity