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SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE AND BELL SHAKESPEARE PRESENT **MERCY – A PANEL AND A PERFORMANCE INSPIRED BY THE MERCHANT OF VENICE**

Sunday 4 September 2016, Sydney Opera House

SPEAKERS: A.C. GRAYLING / GERMAINE GREER / MICHAEL KIRBY / DENG ADUT
ACTORS: JOHN BELL / BRIAN LIPSON / ANDREA DEMETRIADES / JAMES EVANS / DAMIEN STROUTHOS

Has the quality of mercy been not only strained but lost? Celebrated thinkers and actors join forces for the dynamic panel-and-performance session **Mercy: Justice and the Law vs Compassion**, exploring contemporary issues of justice through debate and drama.

As part of the Opera House's annual **Festival of Dangerous Ideas**, renowned philosopher **A.C. Grayling**, Shakespeare scholar and renowned feminist **Germaine Greer**, lawyer and human rights activist **Michael Kirby** and child soldier-turned-Blacktown lawyer **Deng Adut** will discuss whether our desire for justice leaves us short of realising something better.

Presented in collaboration with **Bell Shakespeare** in Shakespeare's 400th anniversary year, **Mercy** will examine the contemporary relevance of the original courtroom drama with the oft-quoted speech, "The quality of mercy is not strain'd; It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven Upon the place beneath: It is twice blest: It blesseth him that gives and him that takes."

John Bell, and a cast of outstanding Australian actors, under the direction of Bell Shakespeare Artistic Director **Peter Evans**, will bring to life *The Merchant of Venice*, who is rescued from death even as Shylock sharpens the knife to take his pound of flesh. When Shylock refused Portia's eloquent plea for mercy, her legalistic brilliance defeated his quest for vengeance. But we now read this story very differently, conscious that written into it is hatred and denigration of the Jewish moneylender Shylock. As an 'alien' without the legal rights of a Venetian, in the end he loses his child, his faith and his money, to become a tragic figure. Is the play a plea for tolerance? For mercy? Or is it an account of the double victory of the rule of law over compassion?

With accomplished actors and brilliant speakers, **Mercy: Justice and the Law vs Compassion** will illustrate key scenes from the play and consider what the concepts of mercy, justice and compassion mean to us today.

Full FODI speaker list and more information available online: www.sydneyoperahouse.com/fodi

Images are available for download [here](#).

Mercy: An Exploration of Justice and the Law vs Compassion

Dates: Sunday 4 September 2016
Venue: Venue 1, Sydney Opera House
Bookings: 02 9250 7777

FODI is a flagship festival as part of the Sydney Opera House Talks & Ideas program, which also features All About Women (celebrating International Women's Day in March), For Thought in partnership with Wheeler Centre and the University of Melbourne, the Culture Club arts talks series, and key solo events throughout the year.

View a "Best of FODI" Playlist on [Youtube](#):

KEY INFORMATION:

What: Festival of Dangerous Ideas 2016
When: Saturday 3 - Sunday 4 September, various times
Venue: Sydney Opera House, various venues
Tickets: From \$27, multipack discount of 10% for 3+ tickets and 15% for 5+ tickets
More info: <http://www.sydneyoperahouse.com/fodi>

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FOR MEDIA ENQUIRIES CONTACT:

Julia Lenton, Communications Manager, Sydney Opera House
02 9250 7825 | 0410 748 039 | jlenton@sydneyoperahouse.com

Caitlin Neville, Communications Manager, Sydney Opera House
02 9250 7691 | 0449 181 945 | cneville@sydneyoperahouse.com