



## **Plautus: The Darker Comedies. Bacchides, Casina, and Truculentus**

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The plays translated in this volume represent everything one would not expect either from the third-century B.C. playwright Plautus or from Roman comedy in general.

A common theme in all three comedies is the triumph of women over men. In *Truculentus*, prostitutes snare all of the men in the play; in *Bacchides*, the victims include fathers and sons. In *Casina*, Plautus creates a fantasy that turns traditional social and sexual roles upside down. The plays' mordant, cynical treatment of the normal plots and casts of Roman comedy, their dark humor rooted in homosexuality, oedipal encounters, cruelty, larceny, and prostitution, and their pervasive lack of romance or sentimentality have alternately puzzled and offended the few audiences that have seen them since the Renaissance.

Now these unusual plays have been rescued from obscurity in the best possible way?through performance. James Tatum's translations, revised from actual productions, demonstrate that these are among the most entertaining and theatrically effective of Plautus's comedies. The speakable, performable scripts, along with Tatum's introduction, notes, and critical essays summarizing his own experiences in producing them, make this a gold mine for troupes wishing to produce these classics on the contemporary stage as well as for students of classical drama.

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