

# Simple Timon

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The Life of Timon of Athens isn't just a clumsy title, it's a rather stuttering play as well. Not what you would expect from that very English obsession – William Shakespeare.

Chock full of awkward subplots, gratuitous characters and narrative non-sequiters, of unknown date, possibly not even the work of William the untouchable, Timon really is a 'problem play'.

So why has Caroline Boulton decided to stage it for six nights at Putney Arts Theatre?

"Because all those things are what makes it interesting," says Caroline. "with Shakespeare, so many of his plays are well known, it is difficult to bring something new to it."

"You can set Romeo and Juliet in 1950 if you like, but with Timon you need to change things, because not all of it works, and that gives you great freedom as a director."

"There are no standardised expectations from audiences as they aren't familiar with it. So the actors aren't just replicating characters that people already know – no one knows what Timon should be like."

More on Caroline's interpretation of Timon later, first to the nuts and bolts of the story.

Timon is young, successful and surrounded by hangers on. He soon finds himself crippled by debt and before long he has taken to the streets to avoid the bailiffs and his friends are abandoning him.

Timon goes from A-list to asylum in a modern production featuring a slowly dissolving set and burlesque dancers.

Having removed a subplot about Athens, trimmed the text and merged two of the characters, Caroline has created a distraction-less study of Timon's descent into madness.

And her Timon is a young actor who believes he is more lucky than talented – an insecurity which triggers his spiralling mental condition.



**THEATRE:**  
The Life of Timon,  
Putney Arts Theatre

Paul  
Fleckney

**Absolutely trolleyed: Shakespeare's Timon is given a modern makeover in Putney**

alling mental condition.

This eschews the most common route of having Timon as a retired soldier, so you can see Caroline's point about directorial freedom.

About the only consensus among academics about the play's elusive origins is that it was a combined effort between the Bard and his playwright peer, Thomas Middleton.

But is this beard-scratching helpful at all? Plays are written for performance, not vivisection, so never mind keeping the academics in a tizz, is it a

good play?

"It is really good," insists Caroline, also an actor and award-winning film-maker, "as with a lot of Shakespeare it is absolutely about the human condition. And it is more relevant to the modern age than most of his others."

"People don't have Romeo and Juliets anymore, Timon demonstrates contemporary worries about the cost of living, the bailiffs and keeping on top of our lifestyles."

"I want to get away from the academic debate about Timon.

I hate all the snobbery around Shakespeare, it's absolute crap and it gets in the way.

"This is simply a play about a man, and what I was really passionate about was making it appealing to everyone. So it is not in RP, it's not 'Shakespearean', we've done it in a filmic, naturalistic way with natural accents."

**The Life of Timon; Putney Arts Theatre, Ravenna Road, SW15 6AW; March 10-15 (Mon-Sat), 7.45pm, £10/£8, 07506 919227 or cp-theatre.org.uk for booking.**

## Quick Crossword

1	2			3	4	5	6	7
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9		10						
11						12		
13			14			15		
					16			
17					18	19		
		20						21
22								
				23				

**ACROSS**

- 1. Hopeless (2,7)
- 8. Tune (3)
- 9. Mediator (11)
- 11. In respect of (7)
- 12. Willow (5)
- 13. Opportunity (6)
- 15. Remove (6)
- 17. Sift (5)
- 18. Expose to ridicule (7)
- 20. Haughtily (11)
- 22. Possess (3)
- 23. Esteemed (9)

**DOWN**

- 2. Holy woman (3)
- 3. Divest (5)
- 4. Disliking (6)
- 5. Put back (7)
- 6. Flesh-eating (11)
- 7. Decorum (9)
- 10. Ominous (11)
- 11. Coming to power (9)
- 14. Sycophant (7)
- 16. Athletics (6)
- 19. Slack (5)
- 21. Untruth (3)

## Last Week's solution:

**Across:** 7 Except; 8 Twelve; 10 Aviator; 11 Novel; 12 Save; 13 Adult; 17 Delay; 18 Thin; 22 Realm; 23 Liberal; 24 Strong; 25 Assent.

**Down:** 1 Relapse; 2 Achieve; 3 Spite; 4 Swindle; 5 Slave; 6 Dealt; 9 Gradually; 14 Germane; 15 Charter; 16 Inflate; 19 Trust; 20 Carry; 21 Obese.

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MAR			
Thu 6	Jo Brand - Committed 08	CH	Comedy
Sat 8	The London Chorus - St Matthew Passion	CH	Choral
Sun 9	Rhema Ministries	CH	Worship Event
Tue 11	National Youth Ballet	AT	LTE
	An Evening With Charlie Landsborough	AT	Country Music
Wed 12	Croydon Schools Dance Association	CH	Schools Concert
	The Assassination of Jesse James	AT	Film
Thu 13	Antony Costa	AT	Pop Music
	Croydon Schools Dance Association	CH	Schools Concert
	Jobs & Careers Croydon	AG	Jobs Fair
Fri 14	John Fisher & Old Palace Schools Concert	CH	Schools Concert
Sat 15	Arthur Davison Family Concert	CH	Classical Music Fun
	London Mozart Players	CH	Classical
Sun 16	Rhema Ministries	AT	Worship Event
	Live & Unsigned	AT	Talent Show
Mon 17	Shakespeare School Festival	AT	Schools Concert
	Croydon Music Service	CH	Schools Concert



Bless Em All  
19 March



Jon Gaunt  
20 March



The Assassination of  
Jesse James  
12 March

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21 March