



GUTHRIE  
THEATER

Wurtele Thrust Stage / Feb 8 - March 22, 2020



# Twelfth Night

by WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
directed by TOM QUAINANCE

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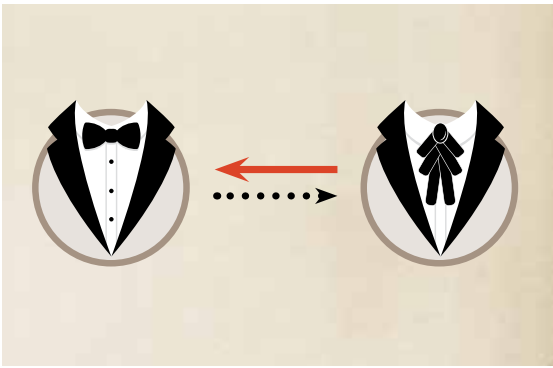
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The Guthrie creates transformative theater experiences that ignite the imagination, stir the heart, open the mind and build community through the illumination of our common humanity.

## Guthrie Theater Play Guide

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PHOTO: EMILY GUNYOU HALAAS AND NATE CHEESEMAN IN *TWELFTH NIGHT* (DAN NORMAN)

“If music be the food of love, play on;  
give me excess of it.”

- Orsino in *Twelfth Night*

## About This Guide

This play guide is designed to fuel your curiosity and deepen your understanding of a show’s history, meaning and cultural relevance so you can make the most of your theatergoing experience. You might be reading this because you fell in love with a show you saw at the Guthrie. Maybe you want to read

up on a play before you see it onstage. Or perhaps you’re a fellow theater company doing research for an upcoming production. We’re glad you found your way here, and we encourage you to dig in and mine the depths of this extraordinary story. [G](#)

### DIG DEEPER

If you are a theater company and would like more information about this production, contact Resident Dramaturg Carla Steen at [carlas@guthrietheater.org](mailto:carlas@guthrietheater.org).



PHOTO: JOY DOLO, LUVERNE SEIFERT AND SALLY WINGERT IN TWELFTH NIGHT (DAN NORMAN)

**SETTING**

Illyria and the sea coast. Most of the action occurs in and around Orsino's palace and Olivia's house.

**CHARACTERS**

**Orsino**, duke of Illyria

**Curio**, a lord in Orsino's court

**Valentine**, a lord in Orsino's court

**Viola**, twin sister to Sebastian; disguises herself as Cesario

**Sebastian**, twin brother to Viola

**Captain**, rescuer of Viola

**Antonio**, friend and rescuer of Sebastian

**Olivia**, a countess in mourning

**Maria**, Olivia's waiting gentlewoman

**Sir Toby Belch**, Olivia's uncle

**Sir Andrew Aguecheek**, Sir Toby's friend; a suitor to Olivia

**Feste**, a fool in Olivia's household

**Malvolio**, Olivia's steward

Other characters include officers, musicians and sailors.

## Synopsis

A storm at sea separates twins Viola and Sebastian. Viola washes ashore on the coast of Illyria and disguises herself as a man (Cesario) to work in the court of Duke Orsino, who promptly tasks Cesario (aka Viola) with wooing the countess Olivia on his behalf. Like Viola, Olivia is mourning a brother and has refused Orsino's advances, but she agrees to hear Cesario out, which results in her quickly falling in love with "him." Viola suddenly finds herself in a complicated

position: She herself is in love with Orsino, who in turn pines for Olivia. And things only get more confusing when the thought-to-be-lost Sebastian and his friend Antonio turn up in Illyria.

Amidst all the wooing and pining, several members of Olivia's household embark on adventures of their own. Olivia's uncle Sir Toby encourages his friend Sir Andrew to be a suitor to Olivia. Dampening their drunken merriment is Olivia's

steward Malvolio, who tries to maintain decorum in a house of mourning. In retaliation, Olivia's gentlewoman Maria devises a practical joke to be played on Malvolio. From hijinks to romances, everything in Illyria happens in a spirit that befits the revelry of the play's title. [G](#)

# Scene by Scene

## ACT ONE

### Scene One

At Duke Orsino's palace in Illyria, Cesario and others sing for Orsino. He's in love with the countess Olivia, but it's unrequited because she is in mourning for her brother and won't receive his messengers.

### Flashback Scene

Cesario reveals he's really Viola in disguise. She is separated from her twin brother Sebastian during a shipwreck.

### Scene Two

Viola washes ashore in Illyria, saved by the ship's captain. She asks the captain to help her disguise herself so she can get work in Orsino's court. She fears Sebastian has drowned.

### Scene Three

Olivia's uncle, Sir Toby, comes back late to Olivia's house. Maria, Olivia's waiting gentlewoman, warns him that Olivia's patience is wearing thin. Sir Toby has brought in his rich friend Sir Andrew to woo Olivia.

### Scene Four

As Cesario, Viola finds favor with Orsino, who sends her off to woo Olivia on his behalf. Unfortunately for Viola, she has fallen in love with Orsino.

### Scene Five

Feste the fool returns to Olivia's house after a prolonged absence. After some verbal Olympics, in which Feste proves Olivia a fool, Olivia forgives him. Her steward Malvolio feels less kindly toward Feste. Maria announces Cesario's arrival, and an intrigued Olivia agrees to see him. Cesario speaks well, and by the end, Olivia has fallen in love with Cesario. She sends Malvolio out with a ring she says he left behind.

## ACT TWO

### Scene One

Sebastian has spent the last few months with Antonio, who rescued him from the sea. He now sets off for Orsino's court. Despite having enemies in Orsino's court, a devoted Antonio follows Sebastian.

### Scene Two

Malvolio gives the ring to Cesario. Not having given a ring to Olivia, Viola realizes Olivia has fallen in love with Cesario.

### Scene Three

Late at night, a drunken Sir Toby and Sir Andrew make a ruckus with Feste. Maria tries unsuccessfully to quiet them. Malvolio disperses them and threatens to tell Olivia. Maria devises a plot to get revenge on Malvolio by leaving a letter for him in which Olivia supposedly confesses her love for him.

### Scene Four

Early in the morning, Orsino wants music again, so the musicians search for Feste. Orsino and Cesario talk about how men and women love differently, and Cesario says his sister loved once. Orsino sends Cesario to Olivia again.

### Scene Five

Maria, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew watch Malvolio discover the letter and resolve to do all it says he should.

**ACT THREE****Scene One**

Cesario encounters Feste and then Sir Toby and Sir Andrew outside Olivia's house. Olivia again refuses Orsino and confesses she loves Cesario. Cesario says he won't visit her again.

**Scene Two**

Sir Andrew decides to leave because Olivia won't see him. Sir Toby persuades him that Olivia's interest in Cesario is to make Sir Andrew prove his valor, so they plan to challenge Cesario to a duel. Sir Andrew goes off to write the challenge.

**Scene Three**

Antonio catches up with Sebastian. Antonio plans to arrange for their lodging and gives his purse to Sebastian in case he needs money while sightseeing.

**Scene Four**

Olivia sends Feste to bring Cesario back. Maria warns Olivia that Malvolio is acting strangely. Malvolio comes in smiling, with yellow stockings and cross-gartered, as the letter told him to. Olivia is bewildered, worries Malvolio is sick and asks Sir Toby and Maria to take care of him. For fun, they decide to treat him like a madman. Cesario and Olivia talk again. Sir Andrew has the challenge ready, but Sir Toby plans a joke on them both. When Cesario is leaving, Sir Toby makes each think the other is a fierce fighter, so both will be too scared to fight. But in the midst of the duel, Antonio arrives, mistakes Cesario for Sebastian and fights on his behalf. He's arrested and asks Cesario for his purse. Cesario has no idea what he means. But hearing Antonio mention Sebastian, Viola has hope her brother is alive.

**ACT FOUR****Scene One**

Mistaking Sebastian for Cesario, Feste tries to bring him to Olivia's. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew also mistake Sebastian for Cesario and try to continue the duel. Olivia intervenes and brings Sebastian into her house.

**Scene Two**

Malvolio is imprisoned in a dark room, and Sir Toby and Maria send Feste in disguise as the curate Sir Topas. Then he goes back in as himself. Malvolio asks for pen and ink to write to Olivia.

**Scene Three**

Olivia proposes to Sebastian. He accepts.

**ACT FIVE****Scene One**

Orsino and Cesario arrive at Olivia's. An officer brings in Antonio, who Cesario identifies as the person who rescued him. Antonio mistakes Cesario for Sebastian and reveals they've been companions for three months. Olivia rebuffs Orsino and calls Cesario her husband. They are interrupted by a bloodied Sir Andrew, claiming to have just come from a beating by Cesario. Sir Toby reports the same. Sebastian then enters, apologizing for hurting Olivia's uncle. Everyone recognizes the remarkable similarity between Sebastian and Cesario. Cesario reveals she's really Viola. The twins are reunited. Orsino proposes to Viola. Malvolio comes in, reveals the plot against him and leaves vowing revenge on everyone.

# Who's Who in *Twelfth Night*



**KEY**

- Family
- Love interest
- ⋯ Employee
- Friends

## Illyria



# Comments on Some of the Characters



## MALVOLIO

The radical defect in [Malvolio's] nature is a lack of that sense of humor which is the safety-valve of all our little insanities, preventing even the most expansive egoism from altogether over-inflating us. He takes himself and the world too seriously. He has no intuition for the incongruous and grotesque, to put the drag upon his egoistic fantasy, "sick of self-love." His face, not only smileless itself, but contemptuous of mirth in others, has acted as a damper upon the humor of the sprightly Maria and the jovial Sir Toby; he has taken a set pleasure in putting the poor Clown out of countenance by receiving his quips with a stolid gravity.

Hence the rancor of the humorists against a fundamentally antagonistic nature; hence, perhaps, their whim of making him crown his absurdities by a forced smile, a grimace more incongruous with his pompous personality than even cross-garters or yellow

stockings. He is a being, in short, to whom the world, with all its shows and forms, is intensely real and profoundly respectable. He has no sense of its littleness, its evanescence, without which he can have no sense of its greatness and its mystery.

William Archer, *Macmillan's Magazine*, August, 1884



## SIR TOBY AND SIR ANDREW

I do not think that Sir Toby is meant for nothing but a bestial sot. He is a gentleman by birth or he would not be Olivia's uncle (or cousin, if that is the relationship). He has been, it would seem, a soldier. He is a drinker, and while idleness leads him to excess, the boredom of Olivia's drawing-room, where she sits solitary in her mourning, drives him to such jolly companions as he can find: Maria ... and the Fool.

He is a poor relation and has been dear to Sir Andrew some two thousand strong or so (poor Sir Andrew), but as to that he might

say he was but anticipating his commission as matrimonial agent. Now, dull though Olivia's house may be, it is free quarters. He is, it seems, in some danger of losing them, but if only by good luck he could see Sir Andrew installed there as master! Not perhaps all one could wish for in an uncle; but to found an interpretation of Sir Toby only upon a study of his unfortunate surname is, I think, for the actor to give us both less and more than Shakespeare meant.

I do not believe that Sir Andrew is meant for a cretinous idiot. His accomplishments may not quite stand to Sir Toby's boast of them; alas! the three or four languages, word for word without book, seem to end at "Dieu vous garde, Monsieur." But Sir Andrew, as he would be if he could — the scholar to no purpose, the fine fellow to no end, in short the perfect gentleman — is still the ideal of better men than he who yet can find nothing better to do.

Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 1912





**FESTE**

Not until we enter the Lady Olivia's courtly household in *Twelfth Night* do we meet, in Feste, the Fool refined of all clownish alloy. ... The artificial Fool has at length shaken off all rustic humor and memories bucolic. For us Feste in the idiot's motley robe of privilege stands as the quintessential high-comedy jester, the triumph of Shakespeare and [actor Robert] Armin in this kind. His wit is courtly, his admirable fooling scholarly, his singing exquisite. The delight of wise foolery is his whole spring of being. ...

As ruler of the revels in *Twelfth Night*, that most spirited, gay and graceful of courtly comedies, Feste remains for us the jester supreme. The wise wit and charm of the artificial Fool could hardly mount higher.

Leslie Hotson, *Shakespeare's Motley*, 1971



**THE AUDIENCE**

In the case of *Twelfth Night*, the spectator plays the part of co-protagonist. This role is inscribed in the text, beginning

with Shakespeare's gesture, in the play's second title, of leaving the responsibility to the audience: the "you" in *What you will* is addressed directly to us spectators and readers and can be interpreted either self-referentially as "find your own title" ... or more amply as "make of the play what you wish." The comedy goes on to invite an unusual degree of audience complicity with the main action, first in Viola's disguise plot, then in the "good practice" of the duping of Malvolio, encouraging us to join the company of the plotters hidden in the box tree or sneering in the dark room.

Keir Elam, editor, from the introduction of *Twelfth Night* for The Arden Shakespeare, 2008



## Responses to *Twelfth Night*

At our feast wee had a play called "Twelve Night, or What You Will," much like the *Commedy of Errores*, or *Menechmi* in Plautus, but most like and neere to that in Italian called *Inganni*. A good practise in it to make the Steward beleve his Lady Widdow was in love with him, by counterfeyting a letter as from his Lady in generall termes, telling him what she liked best in him, and prescribing his gesture in smiling, his aparaille, and then when he came to practise making him beleve they tooke him to be mad.

John Manningham, a lawyer who saw a performance of *Twelfth Night* in February 1602 and recorded his thoughts in his diary



PHOTO: SARAH JANE AGNEW IN *TWELFTH NIGHT* (DAN NORMAN)

*Twelfth Night* is, to me, the last play of Shakespeare's golden age. I feel happy ease in the writing and find much happy carelessness in the putting together. It is akin to the *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (compare Viola and Julia), it echoes a little to the same tune as the sweeter parts of *The Merchant of Venice*, and its comic spirit is the spirit of the Falstaff scenes of *Henry IV*, that are to my taste the truest comedy he wrote. ...

I believe the play was written with a special cast in mind. Who was Shakespeare's clown, a sweet-voiced singer and something much more than a comic actor? He wrote

Feste for him and later the Fool in *Lear*. At least, I can conceive no dramatist risking the writing of such parts unless he knew he had a man to play them. And why a diminutive Maria — Penthesilea, the youngest wren of nine — unless it was only that the actor of the part was to be such a very small boy? I have cudged my brains to discover why Maria, as Maria, should be tiny, and finding no reason have ignored the point. ...

The keynotes of the poetry of the play are that it is passionate and it is exquisite. It is life, I believe, as Shakespeare glimpsed it with the eye of his genius in that half-

Italianized court of Elizabeth. Orsino, Olivia, Antonio, Sebastian, Viola are passionate all, and conscious of the worth of their passion in terms of beauty.

Harley Granville-Barker, *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, 1912

The atmosphere of love is round all that Viola is; and it creates love in whomsoever it touches. It infects Olivia. It has already infected the Duke. He loves Cesario; he needs only one touch of circumstance to love Viola.

Stopford A. Brooke, *Ten More Plays of Shakespeare*, 1913

*Twelfth Night* is one of Shakespeare's unpleasant plays. It is not a comedy for schoolchildren, as is commonly felt. Most of the characters are not individual enough to provide comic depth, and at the time Shakespeare wrote the play, he seems to have been averse to pleasantness. The comic convention in which the play is set prevents him from giving direct expression to this mood, but the mood keeps disturbing, even spoiling, the comic feeling. One has a sense, and nowhere more strongly than in the songs, of there being inverted commas around the "fun." The plays that followed *Twelfth Night* are the tragedies, as well as *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well That Ends Well*, which are considered his dark comedies. ...

Shakespeare returns to the use of twins in the play, as in *The Comedy of Errors*. Viola's motivation for disguising herself is capricious — it is necessary only to set the plot in motion — and the shipwreck has merely a technical use, to get the characters in place. In the last plays, storms and shipwrecks are elaborately developed as symbols

of death, rebirth and purgation by suffering.

W.H. Auden, "Twelfth Night," 1947, in *Lectures on Shakespeare*, 2000

When Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* he could only surmise what the future had in store for him. But we know. To us this play, with the song that brings it to a conclusion, looks both ways. It is a bridge between the poet's Comedies and his Tragedies as *Julius Caesar* more obviously is between his Histories and his Tragedies. ... Compared with himself, he is now for the first time about to confront the full force of the wind and the rain, to come to man's estate. *King Lear* is not far under the horizon. His "play" is done.

Harold C. Goddard, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, 1951

*Twelfth Night* is the climax of Shakespeare's early achievement in comedy. The effects and values of the earlier comedies are here subtly embodied in the most complex structure which Shakespeare had

yet created. But the play also looks forward: the pressure to dissolve the comedy, to realize and finally abandon the burden of laughter, is an intrinsic part of its "perfection." ... After *Twelfth Night* the so-called comedies require for their happy resolutions more radical characters and devices — omniscient and omnipresent Dukes, magic and resurrection. More obvious miracles are needed for comedy to exist in a world in which evil also exists, not merely incipiently but with power.

Joseph H. Summers, "The Masks of Twelfth Night," *The University of Kansas City Review*, Autumn 1955

The more one thinks over *Twelfth Night* in relation to the earlier comedies, the more one can relish the undeluded gentleness of its spirit and the perfect control of its art. And one can begin to see how Shakespeare, with this control, could have written *Hamlet* at about the same time.

Francis Fergusson, introduction to *Twelfth Night*, *The Laurel Shakespeare*, 1959

PHOTO: SARAH JANE AGNEW, SALLY WINGERT AND LUDERNE SEIFERT IN TWELFTH NIGHT (DAN NORMAN)





PHOTO: SUN MEE CHOMET, SARAH JANE AGNEW, JIM LICHTSCHEIDL AND LUVERNE SEIFERT IN *TWELFTH NIGHT* (DAN NORMAN)

It is the task of Feste in his final song to ... build a bridge from that remote enchanted place where the two romantic couples remain forever to the very different world outside the theater which is our own. ... Precisely because of his anonymity and aloofness in the play now ended, he can be trusted to speak for all mankind and not simply for himself.

Anne Barton, *The Riverside Shakespeare*, 1974

The origins of the main plot in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* have been traced to a cluster of earlier comedies and their derivatives; however, the subplot, involving Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Maria and their "gull," Malvolio, was entirely Shakespeare's invention. Like the main story, the Malvolio subplot also involves comic "errors," disguise and performance and the pursuit of marriage. It similarly explores the themes of identity, desire and the confusion of both. In fact, the "gulling" of Malvolio and Sir Toby's debauched revelry literalize the "misrule" of the main story.

But the subplot does not resolve itself as neatly as the main plot does; indeed, it fails to resolve itself at all. It might be supposed, then, that Shakespeare sought to counter the

easy connubial resolutions inherent in his sources with something more problematic, thereby adding to the comic ending of the play something of a tragic one.

Edward Cahill, "The Problem of Malvolio," *College Literature*, June 1996

Wild with laughter, *Twelfth Night* is nevertheless almost always on the edge of violence. Illyria is not the healthiest of castaway climes, located as it is in the Shakespearean cosmos between *Hamlet's* miasmatic Elsinore and the fierce wars and faithless lovers of *Troilus and Cressida*.

Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, 1998

Romance, the genre of Shakespeare's late plays, was a popular Elizabethan mode. Among its signature elements were shipwrecks, the rediscovery of long-lost brothers and sisters, physical marks of recognition and rebirths from the sea. A fundamentally narrative genre, which would eventually give rise to the modern novel, romance always turns on epiphany and on moments of rebirth.

These elements, it is worth noting, were also present in the farcical *Comedy of Errors*, the plot of which turns on separated twins, lost and found parents, a shipwreck, and the miracle of rebirth, all with a definite Christian undertone. In *Twelfth Night* Shakespeare returns to this basic pattern, as he will have recourse to it yet again in *The Tempest*, near the end of his career. But in *Twelfth Night* he makes an important change from the earlier *Comedy of Errors* design, by making his "identical" twins of different sexes.

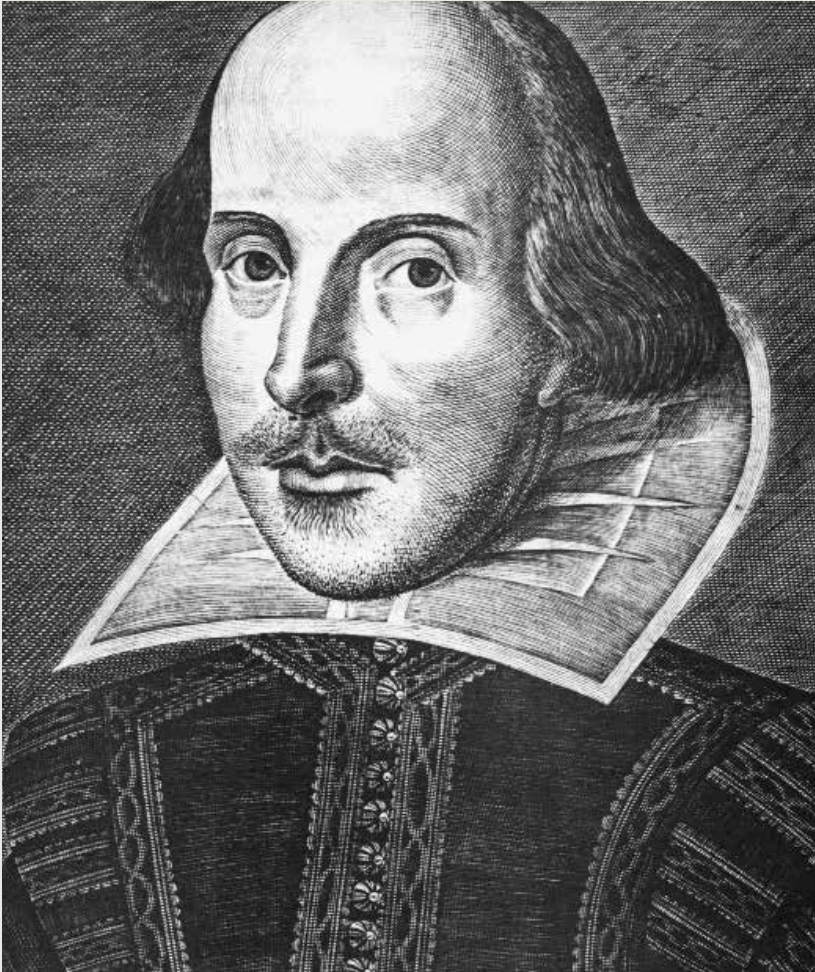
By doing this he is able to combine an old theme with a newer one, the theme of rebirth with the theme of sexual love and growth and the freeing and educative function of erotic ambiguity and sexual disguise. Viola as a boy, though carefully described as high-voiced and clear-complexioned, is able to educate both Orsino and Olivia in love, as Rosalind did Orlando in *As You Like It*, because she is herself in a middle space, in disguise, and in both genders.

Once again the fact that boy actors played the roles of women on the public stage meant that a boy played a young woman playing a boy — one reason for the plentiful reminders in this play that "Cesario" is not a man, but a woman in disguise. If the audience were to make the same "mistake" as Orsino and Olivia, there would be no comedy and no play. But if Orsino and Olivia did not make this crucial error, falling in love with the elusive and delusive "Cesario," they would learn nothing. There would be no romance and no play.

Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, 2004

Some quotes were sourced from the play guide created for the Guthrie's 2001 production of *Twelfth Night*.

# William Shakespeare



William Shakespeare was born in 1564 to John and Mary Arden Shakespeare and raised in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, in England's West Country.

Much of the information about him comes from official documents such as wills, legal documents and court records. There are also contemporary references to him and his

writing. While much of the biographical information is sketchy and incomplete, for a person of his class and as the son of a town alderman, quite a lot of information is available.

Young Shakespeare would have attended the Stratford grammar school, where he would have learned to read and write not only English, but also Latin and some Greek. In 1582, at age

18, Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, and the couple would have three children: Susanna in 1583 and twins Hamnet and Judith in 1585.

After an eight-year gap where Shakespeare's activity is not known, he appeared in London by 1592 and quickly began to make a name for himself as a prolific playwright. He stayed in London for about 20 years, becoming increasingly successful in his work as an actor, writer and shareholder in his acting company. Retirement took him back to Stratford to lead the life of a country gentleman. His son Hamnet died at age 11, but both daughters were married: Susanna to Dr. John Hall and Judith to Thomas Quiney.

Shakespeare died in Stratford in 1616 on April 23, which is thought to be his birthday. He is buried in the parish church, where his grave can be seen to this day. His known body of work includes at least 37 plays, two long poems and 154 sonnets.

# A Legacy That Continues to Inspire

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The Poetry of Shakespeare was Inspiration indeed: he is not so much an Imitator as an Instrument of Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks through him.

Alexander Pope, Preface to *The Works of Shakespeare*, 1725

We do not understand Shakespeare from a single reading, and certainly not from a single play. There is a relation between the various plays of Shakespeare, taken in order; and it is work of years to venture even one individual interpretation of the pattern in Shakespeare's carpet.

T.S. Eliot, *Dante*, Faber & Faber, 1929

Shakespeare's mind is the type of the androgynous, of the man-woman mind. ... It is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 1929



His characters are intimately bound up with the audience. That is why his plays are the greatest example there is of a people's theater; in this theater the public found and still finds its own problems and re-experiences them.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *On Theater*, 1959

[A]lthough each play is a separate and individual work of art, they all generally illuminate one another, and taken together they form an impressive achievement in which each individual play acquires more weight and dignity when placed against the background of the whole corpus. Each play is more or less a landmark in the road along which Shakespeare the artist traveled, or, to change the metaphor, each play is a variation on a number of themes that recur in the poet's work.

M.M. Badawn, *Background to Shakespeare*, Macmillan India Limited, 1981

If one takes those thirty-seven plays with all the radar lines of the different viewpoints of the different characters, one comes out with a field of incredible density and complexity; and eventually one goes a step further, and one finds that what happened, what passed through this man called Shakespeare and came into existence on sheets of paper, is something quite different from any other author's work. It's not Shakespeare's view of the world, it's something which actually resembles reality. A sign of this is that any single word, line,

character or event has not only a large number of interpretations, but an unlimited number. Which is the characteristic of reality. ... An artist may try to capture and reflect your action, but actually he interprets it – so that a naturalistic painting, a Picasso painting, a photograph, are all interpretations. But in itself, the action of one man touching his head is open to unlimited understanding and interpretation. In reality, that is. What Shakespeare wrote carries that characteristic. What he wrote is not interpretations: it is the thing itself.

Peter Brook, "What is Shakespeare?" (1947), in *The Shifting Point*, Harper & Row, 1987

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Every age creates its own Shakespeare. ... Like a portrait whose eyes seem to follow you around the room, engaging your glance from every angle, [his] plays and their characters seem always to be "modern," always to be "us."

Marjorie Garber, *Shakespeare After All*, Anchor Books, 2004

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# Shakespeare's Plays



PHOTOS: ZLATO RIZZIOLI, WAYNE T. CARR AND SAM WICK IN *PERICLES* (JENNY GRAHAM); NATHANIEL FULLER IN *KING LEAR* (T CHARLES ERICKSON); LUIS VEGA AND ANDREA SAN MIGUEL IN *AS YOU LIKE IT* (DAN NORMAN)

*Twelfth Night* was written sometime between 1600 and 1602 during Shakespeare's mature period, and it was performed at the Middle Temple in London in February 1602. Written slightly after *As You Like It*, the play marks the pinnacle of Shakespeare's great comedies. Around this time, Shakespeare also wrote *Hamlet* and his final (darker) comedies, *All's Well That Ends Well* and *Measure for Measure*.

The play's source is the 1531 Italian play *Gl'Ingannati* or *The Deceived Ones*. Shakespeare likely knew of it from other plays that borrowed its mistaken twins plot. The subplot involving Malvolio is Shakespeare's invention. *Twelfth Night* was first published in the First Folio in 1623.

The current production is the fourth time the Guthrie has produced *Twelfth Night*, in addition to presenting two all-male productions. Mark Rylance played Olivia in an "original practices" production by Shakespeare's Globe in 2003 and Propeller's *Twelfth Night* played in repertory with its *Taming of the Shrew* in 2013.

## EARLY PERIOD

- ca. 1587–92 *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*
- ca. 1589–90 *Titus Andronicus*
- ca. 1590 *Henry IV, Part II*
- ca. 1590–91 *Henry IV, Part III*
- ca. 1591 *The Taming of the Shrew*
- ca. 1592 *Henry IV, Part I; Richard III*
- ca. 1594 *The Comedy of Errors; Love's Labour's Lost*

## MIDDLE PERIOD

- ca. 1595 *Richard II; Romeo and Juliet*
- ca. 1596 *A Midsummer Night's Dream; King John; The Merchant of Venice*
- ca. 1598 *Henry IV, Part I; Henry IV, Part II; Much Ado About Nothing*
- ca. 1599 *Henry V; Julius Caesar*
- ca. 1600 *As You Like It; The Merry Wives of Windsor*
- ca. 1601 ***Twelfth Night***
- ca. 1602 *Troilus and Cressida*
- ca. 1602–04 *Hamlet*
- ca. 1604 *Othello; Measure for Measure*
- ca. 1605–06 *All's Well That Ends Well; King Lear; Macbeth*

## LATE PERIOD

- ca. 1606 *Timon of Athens; Antony and Cleopatra*
- ca. 1608 *Pericles; Coriolanus*
- ca. 1609–11 *The Winter's Tale*
- ca. 1610 *Cymbeline*
- ca. 1611 *The Tempest*
- ca. 1613 *Henry VIII*
- ca. 1613–14 *The Two Noble Kinsmen*

Authorship and dating of Shakespeare's plays is a subject of much academic debate. These dates are speculative, but are the "most probable" dating from *The New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*.

# Fools, Music and Revels: The Joy of *Twelfth Night*

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PHOTO: SALLY WINGERT, SARAH JANE AGNEW AND JOY DOLO IN *TWELFTH NIGHT* (DAN NORMAN)

## DELIGHT IN MASQUES AND REVELS

*Twelfth Night* takes its title from the culminating celebration of the twelve-day Christmas season. January 5 was marked with drinking and feasting as well as entertainment and other revels, which then ushered in Epiphany on January 6. The twelve days had a carnival atmosphere: masques and plays performed at court, students released from their studies and the suspension of many typical societal rules.

During this period was the Feast of Fools, in which the hierarchy flipped and low officials took the

place of higher officials and vice versa, with mocking authority a mostly approved activity.

While there's no evidence that Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* was either specifically written or performed for Twelfth Night, the spirit of the season infuses the play. From Sir Toby and Sir Andrew's revelry and drinking to the upending of Malvolio's authority to the fool Feste's antics, *Twelfth Night* is a pure celebration of delight and joy.

Of course, every party must end, and Feste's final song provides a gentle reminder to the audience

that we all must return to our workaday world and resume responsibilities, at least until the next festive season.

## FOOLS, MADMEN AND DRUNKARDS

The revelry in *Twelfth Night*, at least among the characters in the play's subplot, is almost equally divided among drunkards (Sir Toby and Sir Andrew), fools (Feste and others) and madmen (allegedly Malvolio). Feste returns to Olivia's good graces by, of all things, proving that she's a fool for mourning a brother who is in heaven. Upon witnessing a very drunk Sir Toby pass by, Olivia asks Feste, "What's



a drunken man like, fool?" He responds, "Like a drowned man, a fool and a madman: one draught above heat makes him a fool, the second mads him and a third drowns him." This short exchange brings together many threads of the play's themes.

The word "fool" appears more than 50 times in the uncut text, and as an "allowed fool," Feste is able to move seamlessly between Olivia and Orsino's households and between the highborn and their servants. Feste has scenes with all the major characters. The drunken singing initiated by Sir Toby outside Olivia's house brings the reprimand of Malvolio — the action that sparks Maria's device for which Malvolio will be taken as a madman. The "sportful malice" of the letter Malvolio finds and follows results in him getting locked up in a darkened room, which was the Elizabeth "treatment" for madness. In *Twelfth Night*, drunkenness, foolery and madness are intertwined.

### **"AND SPEAK TO HIM IN MANY SORTS OF MUSIC"**

*Twelfth Night* starts and ends with music: Orsino calls for it in his famous opening line, and Feste closes the play with a song that sends the audience back to the real world. Many of the songs in *Twelfth Night* have known tunes, but the music for the Guthrie's production has been written and arranged by sound designer/composer Sartje Pickett.

The text of the play doesn't provide the song Orsino hears at the play's start, so Pickett and director Tom Quaintance created one. The musicians in Orsino's court play a song with lyrics from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 29," which has a number of themes that resonate with those of *Twelfth Night*.

## SONNET 29

BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

*When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,  
I all alone beweep my outcast state,  
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,  
And look upon myself and curse my fate,  
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,  
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,  
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,  
With what I most enjoy contented least;  
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,  
Haply I think on thee, and then my state,  
(Like to the lark at break of day arising  
From sullen earth) sings hymns at heaven's gate;  
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings  
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.*



PHOTO: MICHAEL HANNA AND TYSON FORBES IN *TWELFTH NIGHT* (DAN NORMAN)

# A Selected Glossary of Terms

## A

### accost

Approach, pay court to; also a nautical or military term meaning front, board or assail  
 “Accost, Sir Andrew, accost”  
 (Sir Toby, 1.3.40)

### allowed

Licensed, permitted  
 “In an allowed fool, though he do nothing but rail”  
 (Olivia, 1.5.76)

## B

### barful

Full of obstacles  
 “Yet a barful strife!/Whoever I woo, myself would be his wife.”  
 (Viola, 1.4.38–39)

### betimes

Early in the morning  
 “Not to be abed after midnight is to be up betimes”  
 (Sir Toby, 2.3.1)

## C

### cakes and ale

Food at celebrations for church holy days  
 “There shall be no more cakes and ale?”  
 (Sir Toby, 2.3.82)

### canary

Sweet wine from the Canary Islands  
 “O knight, thou lack’st a cup of canary”  
 (Sir Toby, 1.3.67)

### catechize

Ask questions; learn through formal questions and answers  
 “I must catechize you for it, Madonna”  
 (Feste, 1.5.51)

### cockatrices

Mythical serpents, also known as basilisks, who can kill with a look  
 “That they will kill one another by the look, like cockatrices”  
 (Sir Toby, 3.4.162–163)

### complexion

Temperament, personality; appearance, coloring; outward appearance, physical makeup  
 “The manner of his gait, the expresser of his eye, forehead and complexion”  
 (Maria, 2.3.112–113)

### constrained

Obliged, compelled  
 “I shall be constrain’d in’t to call thee knave, knight”  
 (Feste, 2.3.51–52)

### coxcomb

Slang for the head via an allusion to a fool’s cap  
 “Has given Sir Toby a bloody coxcomb, too”  
 (Sir Andrew, 5.1.164)

### curate

A parish priest  
 “Make him believe thou art Sir Topas the curate”  
 (Maria, 4.2.1–2)

### cypress

Wood and foliage associated with mourning  
 “And in sad cypress let me be laid”  
 (Feste, 2.4.50)

### Why does Viola name herself “Cesario”?

Cesario is derived from Caesar, and it is one of several references to Caesar Augustus in *Twelfth Night*. Ancient Greeks used the honorific Sebastos for Augustus, who had three military campaigns in Illyricum. Augustus (aka Sebastos) married Livia.

## D

### device

Plot, stratagem  
 “Excellent, I smell a device”  
 (Sir Toby, 2.3.116)

## E

### Elysium

In Greek mythology, the afterlife for the blessed; heaven  
 “My brother he is in Elysium”  
 (Viola, 1.2.4)

### entertainment

Reception, hospitality  
 “The rudeness that hath appeared in me have I learned from my entertainment”  
 (Viola, 1.5.176–177)

## F

### fadge

To turn out well  
 “How will this fadge?”  
 (Viola, 2.2.30)

**fancy**

Love; imagination  
 “So full of shapes is fancy”  
 (Orsino, 1.1.14)  
 “Let fancy still my sense in  
 Lethe steep”  
 (Sebastian, 4.1.55)

**fool**

Jester; idiot  
 “If you be no better in your wits  
 than a fool”  
 (Feste, 4.2.75–76)

**G****gull**

Dupe, fool  
 “Yond gull Malvolio is turned  
 heathen, a very renegado”  
 (Maria, 3.2.54)

**I****it's all one**

It doesn't matter  
 “I care not: give me faith, say I.  
 Well, it's all one.”  
 (Sir Toby, 1.5.105–106 and 5.1.181;  
 Feste, 5.1.351 and 384)

**M****mend**

Repair, make better,  
 improve, amend  
 “Bid the dishonest man mend  
 himself; if he mend, he is no  
 longer dishonest”  
 (Feste, 1.5.37–38)

**motley**

Multi colored fool's garments; also  
 used to describe a professional  
 jester like Feste  
 “That's as much to say as I wear not  
 motley in my brain”  
 (Feste, 1.5.46)

**O****ordinary fool**

Ordinary means tavern, so a born  
 fool who entertains in a tavern  
 “I saw him put down the other day  
 with an ordinary fool that has no  
 more brain than a stone”  
 (Malvolio, 1.5.68)

**P****Penthesilea**

A queen of the Amazons  
 “Good night, Penthesilea”  
 (Sir Toby, 2.3.127)

**puritan**

A self-righteous moralist; may  
 or may not be a reference to  
 Puritans, the reformist Protestants  
 who wanted to rid the last bits of  
 Catholicism from the Church  
 of England  
 “Marry, sir, sometimes he is a  
 kind of puritan”  
 (Maria, 2.3.101)

**S****surfeiting**

Overindulging, feeding to excess  
 “Give me excess of it, that  
 surfeiting/The appetite may  
 sicken and so die”  
 (Orsino, 1.1.2–3)

**W****welkin**

Sky  
 “Who you are, and what you would  
 are out of my welkin — I might  
 say 'element'”  
 (Feste, 3.1.48)

**willow**

Huts of willow were symbols  
 of unrequited love  
 “Make me a willow cabin  
 at your gate”  
 (Viola, 1.5.223)

Sources include notes to The New Cambridge Shakespeare and The Arden Shakespeare editions of the play; *Shakespeare's Words* by David Crystal and Ben Crystal; and Oxford English Dictionary.

## Connecting Local Youth With the Arts

Our community partner for *Twelfth Night* is Legacy Arts Group — a local nonprofit on a mission to provide arts immersion experiences that develop and provide a platform for the next generation of artists in the Twin Cities. This spring, their students will participate in post-play discussions for *Twelfth Night* as well as perform in the Dowling Studio. Artistic Associate Morgan Holmes recently caught up with Tamiko French, founder and artistic director, to talk about her heart for local youth and the arts.



Tamiko French, founder and artistic director of Legacy Arts Group

PHOTO: COURTESY OF LEGACY ARTS GROUP

**MORGAN HOLMES:** Tell me about your work with students through Legacy Arts Group.

**TAMIKO FRENCH:** Legacy Arts Group exists to assist students in finding mentorship and a safe space to express their feelings through art-making. Students are able to further dig into and apply the arts education they receive to theater, dance, visual arts, vocal performance, broadcast recording and fashion design. I have amazing volunteer teachers on my team — one for every discipline. We also have a college student who serves as a bridge from high school to college and a community education department. Before founding Legacy Arts Group, I worked at North High School as a dance teacher and

arts integration specialist for five years, and I've worked with artists across the Twin Cities for the last 23 years. I graduated from North in 1997, so I have a very deep connection to the school. When I submitted a proposal to perform in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the district couldn't support the project because it fell outside the school year. So I started Legacy Arts Group to help support the trip. Through work and development, the students decided to continue its mission beyond the trip. That was a powerful statement for me.

**MH:** I work with students in a theater program in St. Louis Park. They may not initially feel connected to “classic texts,” but they spend so much time watching and observing people on

Instagram, TikTok and YouTube, so I find them to be naturally adept storytellers. What are some of your students' favorite stories? How do they feel about theater's relevance to their lives?

**TF:** They are interested in stories that apply to their lives, community and environment. I recently took five students to see *Grey Rock* at the Guthrie. I told them it was about another culture and it might blow their minds. They especially connected to the message of imagining the possible in the impossible and overcoming the insurmountable. I also coach students to understand different languages, including body language. Theater helps students dig into issues they don't feel like they can speak about: being

different, experiencing love, having family difficulties, wrestling with demons in their head, struggling to connect with others. Cultural relevancy is part of Legacy Arts Group's mission. We want to develop the next generation of artmakers by helping them understand history and how past generations affect and reflect back their modern voices.

**MH: What sparked your interest in partnering with the Guthrie around *Twelfth Night*?**

**TF:** When I learned that the cast was entirely local community members, it felt important to me. The cast sharing their artistry with young people builds a bridge that is priceless. Young people often feel they aren't in control of their futures. Being mentored by professional actors at the Guthrie allows the students to see that the process, through lines and scaffolding are the same as theirs. They learn they have the same shot as the actors onstage. Anything is possible. At the first read-through, listening to *Twelfth Night* director Tom Quaintance talk about his passion and personal connection to the work was so inspiring. It parallels what I'm trying to reflect to my students as a homegrown talent. When I was a freshman at North, my first teacher was a North graduate. That intergenerational

learning inspired me to pursue my career and return to Minneapolis to teach. It means something to me to make art and build a career here at home. It's an investment in the future. I have a fire for my alma mater.

**MH: What do you hope your students understand about Shakespeare and his plays?**

**TF:** The historical context of Shakespeare is invaluable. The idea that you can't know where you're going until you know where you've been hasn't lost value. When you listen to Shakespeare, you can understand it as just another foreign language. But designers make it relevant and actors give us body language, so the story looks the same no matter the language. And the themes in *Twelfth Night* — grief, survival, doing something daring to find your identity, love so blind that you forget who you are and then suffer — are prevalent in every culture and transcend boundaries of race and age. Throughout history in art, artists break stories, abstract them and use them as a model to speak their own language. So we must understand stories of the past in order to reflect, fragment and transpose them in the present.

**MH: What do you want Guthrie patrons to understand about Legacy Arts Group and its students?**

**TF:** We want to continue building a conversation that does not stop, passing the torch of artmaking and building a passion for the arts through intergenerational sharing, collaboration, innovation and empowerment. Involving student voices in the education process is important to help foster ownership of what they are absorbing. Giving them a platform and empowering them to exercise their voices is huge because it allows them to share their passion. I'm hoping Legacy Arts Group will be here for a long time, allowing a beautiful interchange between how a young person can be interested in arts and how they translate that from high school to college to the professional world. We want to be in partnership with the community.

Learn more at [www.legacyartsgroup.com](http://www.legacyartsgroup.com).

# For Further Reading and Understanding

## EDITIONS OF *TWELFTH NIGHT*

*Twelfth Night*, The New Cambridge Shakespeare, edited by Elizabeth Donno.

*Twelfth Night*, The Arden Shakespeare, edited by Keir Elam.

## FILMS

*Twelfth Night*, directed by John Sichel, with Joan Plowright as Viola and Sebastian, Gary Raymond as Orsino, Adreinne Corri as Olivia and Alec Guinness as Malvolio, 1970.

*Twelfth Night or What You Will*, directed and adapted by Trevor Nunn, with Helena Bonham Carter as Olivia, Imogen Stubbs as Viola, Toby Stephens as Orsino and Ben Kingsley as Feste, 1996.

*Twelfth Night*, directed and adapted by Adam Smethurst, with Sheila Atim as Viola and Sebastian, Shalini Peiris as Olivia and Ben Whybrow as Orsino, 2018.

## BOOKS (GENERAL SHAKESPEARE STUDIES)

Asimov, Isaac, *Asimov's Guide to Shakespeare* (two volumes), New York: Avenel Books, 1970.

Auden, W.H., *Lectures on Shakespeare*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000.

Bell, Robert H., *Shakespeare's Great Stage of Fools*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Coye, Dale F., *Pronouncing Shakespeare's Words: A Guide From A to Zounds*, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998.

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Duffin, Ross W., *Shakespeare's Songbook*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Garber, Marjorie, *Shakespeare After All*, New York: Pantheon, 2004.

Granville-Barker, Harley. *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947.

Greenblatt, Stephen, *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004.

Hotson, Leslie, *Shakespeare's Motley*, New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1971.

Shapiro, James, *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Thompson, Ayanna, *Passing Strange: Shakespeare, Race and Contemporary America*, England: Oxford University Press, 2011.

## ONLINE

### Folger Shakespeare Library

[www.folger.edu](http://www.folger.edu)

A wealth of resources, including lesson plans, study guides and interactive activities.

### Shakespeare Unlimited

[www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited](http://www.folger.edu/shakespeare-unlimited)

A biweekly podcast produced by the Folger Shakespeare Library that features interviews with Shakespeare experts on topics ranging from adapting Shakespeare to what Elizabethans ate to discussions about current productions.

### Internet Shakespeare Editions

<http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/index.html>

A collection of materials on Shakespeare and his plays, an extensive archive of productions and production materials.

### Shakespeare Uncovered

[www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/shakespeare-uncovered)

A series that goes in-depth into one play per episode. A host with a personal tie to the play investigates the text and its interpretations and visits companies in rehearsal and in performance. Full episodes are available online. *Twelfth Night* is included in an episode called "The Comedies," which is hosted by Joely Richardson.

### MIT Shakespeare: The Complete Works Online

<http://shakespeare.mit.edu>

### PlayShakespeare.com:

#### The Ultimate Free

#### Shakespeare Resource

[www.playshakespeare.com](http://www.playshakespeare.com)

After registration, receive access to the full texts of the plays, synopses, the First Folio and study aids; also produces a smartphone app with the full texts of the plays.