



Twelfth Night

Royal Exchange Theatre production 2017

SYNOPSIS

The play starts with a storm. It looks like it's raining on the stage, and there's sand on the ground. Above the stage, is a large construction that looks a bit like a tangle of branches, or a nest, or a beautiful wooden sculpture. During the play, it moves and at one point becomes a kind of cage or prison.

A young woman is carried onto the stage by a group of people, led by a woman singing and playing the violin. Throughout the play, we can see how the musicians – who play violin, guitar, several brass instruments and accordion – move in and out of the story on stage and sometimes play from an area on the theatre's first gallery.

We are on an island. The sailors leave the young woman lying on the sand and she recovers. She is Viola and she has been shipwrecked; she has been brought to the island of Illyria. She was with her twin brother Sebastian who is thought to be drowned. She decides to disguise herself as a boy and call herself Cesario. This way she will be safer on her own, and can maybe get work.

Meanwhile, we find out that the Duke of Illyria, Orsino, is in love with his neighbour, Olivia. He is trying to work out how to get her to love him. She is grieving the death of her brother and doesn't seem interested in Count Orsino.

Count Orsino gives Viola (now called Cesario) a job as his page and gives her/him the task of helping him to get Olivia to love him. He asks Cesario (Viola) to take her a ring.

We meet two Sir Toby Belch who is Olivia's uncle and is living in her house. He is always drinking and often drunk – he likes to have fun and always has several bottles of alcohol in his pockets and hidden down the sofa. His friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek comes to visit and Sir Toby pretends to help him to have a romance with Olivia; really, he's just having a joke at Aguecheek's expense!

Cesario (Viola) meets Olivia to try and explain Count Orsino's love for her, but two things go wrong. Olivia falls in love with Cesario (Viola) not knowing her to be a woman. Meanwhile, Cesario (Viola) is falling hopelessly in love with Count Orsino!

Cesario's brother, Sebastian, has not been drowned! He has been rescued by a sea captain called Antonio. He is upset because his sister is missing and he thinks she must have drowned in the shipwreck. Antonio gives money to Sebastian to help him survive in Illyria but will not travel with him as he knows the Illyrians believe him to be a pirate, so he needs to keep out of people's way.

Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Feste the jester, and Olivia's maid, Maria, have a wild party. Malvolio, the steward of the house, comes in and is very angry with them for behaving so noisily and badly late at night. They decide to play a cruel joke on him to wind him up. Maria writes a letter which she pretends is from Olivia, confessing her love for Malvolio. He finds the letter, deliberately dropped on the path, and decides to follow its instructions, that he should wear yellow stockings with crossed garters (Look out for the funny costume he wears when he obeys the contents of the letter!)

Olivia declares her love for Cesario (Viola). Oh dear!

Furious with jealousy, Aguecheek challenges Cesario (Viola) to a duel. In this production of the play, this is a boxing match. Antonio arrives and mistakes Cesario (Viola) for Sebastian. He gets involved with the duel, defending Cesario (Viola) who he thinks is Sebastian. Antony calls her Sebastian and for the first time Cesario (Viola) realises her twin brother may be alive.

Malvolio is behaving quite madly, calling Olivia 'sweetheart' and repeating phrases from the letter to her. She thinks him crazy and gets him locked up, asking Sir Toby Belch to keep an eye on him.

Sebastian arrives and Aguecheek mistakes him for Cesario (Viola) so hits him. Olivia arrives just in time to stop real trouble. She thinks Sebastian is Cesario (Viola) and is delighted when he returns her romantic affection at last! Olivia sends for the priest for them to get married.

Count Orsino and Cesario (Viola) come to Olivia's where they meet again with Antonio. Antonio believes Cesario (Viola) is Sebastian and accuses him/her of being ungrateful. Then Olivia arrives and announces that she has just married Cesario (Viola). Sebastian enters and Cesario (Viola) reveals herself for who she really is. The confusion ends. The Duke Orsino realises he is in love with Viola and she agrees to marry him. Sir Toby Belch and Maria also decide to get married. Everyone is happy. Apart from Malvolio. Feste sings a song to end the play.

CAST



ANTONIO
Aaron Anthony



MARIA
Mina Anwar



SIR TOBY BELCH
Simon Armstrong



**SIR ANDREW
AGUECHEEK**
Harry Attwell



MALVOLIO
Anthony Calf



SEBASTIAN
Daniel Francis-
Swaby



MUSICIAN
Joe Gravil



ORSINO
Kevin Harvey



OLIVIA
Kate Kennedy



VALENTINE
Tarek Merchant



SEA CAPTAIN
Jill Myers



FESTE
Kate O'Donnell



VIOLA
Faith Omole



MUSICIAN
Kate Young