

Twelfth Night, or What You Will

SYNOPSIS

Twelfth Night, or What You Will

Viola and her twin brother Sebastian have been shipwrecked off the coast of Illyria. Each believes that the other has been drowned. Thinking that it is dangerous to travel as a girl on her own, Viola disguises herself as a boy called Cesario and is employed by Duke Orsino. Orsino is lovesick for the Lady Olivia, who is in mourning for her brother and has no interest in Orsino.

However, when Orsino sends Cesario as a messenger to Olivia, Olivia falls in love with Cesario, not knowing she is in fact a girl. Meanwhile Sebastian has been saved by the sea-captain Antonio, and he too arrives in Illyria. This is dangerous for Antonio, who once fought against the Duke's ships, but out of friendship for Sebastian he stays with him and gives him his money to look after.

Olivia's steward, Malvolio, disapproves of the other people staying in the house: Olivia's hard-drinking relative Sir Toby Belch, his thin friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek, who Sir Toby hopes will marry Olivia, and Feste, the jester. With Maria, Olivia's servant, they make a plan to get revenge. They leave a forged note which Malvolio believes is from Olivia suggesting that she is in love with him and telling him to do ridiculous things to show he returns her love. When he does, he is declared mad and locked up in a dark room.

Sir Andrew challenges Cesario to a duel, but when he actually wants to fight he meets Sebastian instead. Sebastian also meets Olivia, who arranges to be secretly married to him, thinking he is Cesario. Antonio needs his money back because he has been arrested, but asks Cesario for it, who knows nothing about it. Orsino is furious because he thinks Cesario has married Olivia. In the end all the mistaken identities are revealed in the happy ending, with Sebastian marrying Olivia and Orsino realizing that he is really in love with Viola. The only sour note is Malvolio's anger at his cruel humiliation. Feste ends the play with a philosophical song.

Media:**DVD:**

Twelfth Night (1969), dir. John Dexter with Alec Guinness and Joan Plowright

Twelfth Night (BBC TV Shakespeare 1980), dir. John Gorrie, with Felicity Kendal and Sinead Cusack

Twelfth Night (1988), dir. Paul Kafno, with Richard Briers

Twelfth Night (1996), dir. Trevor Nunn, with Imogen Stubbs and Helena Bonham Carter

Twelfth Night (2003), dir. Tim Supple (in a 2-disc set with *Macbeth*)

She's the Man (2006), dir. Andy Fickman (set in an American High School football team)

Shakespeare: The Animated Tales Act 2 (2007) *Julius Caesar* and *Twelfth Night*

Not available:

Twelfth Night (1998), dir. Nicholas Hytner

CD Audio:

Twelfth Night (Naxos)

Twelfth Night (SmartPass mp3 CD) (full play + commentary)

Twelfth Night (Arkangel Complete Shakespeare)

[Michael Mitchell]