

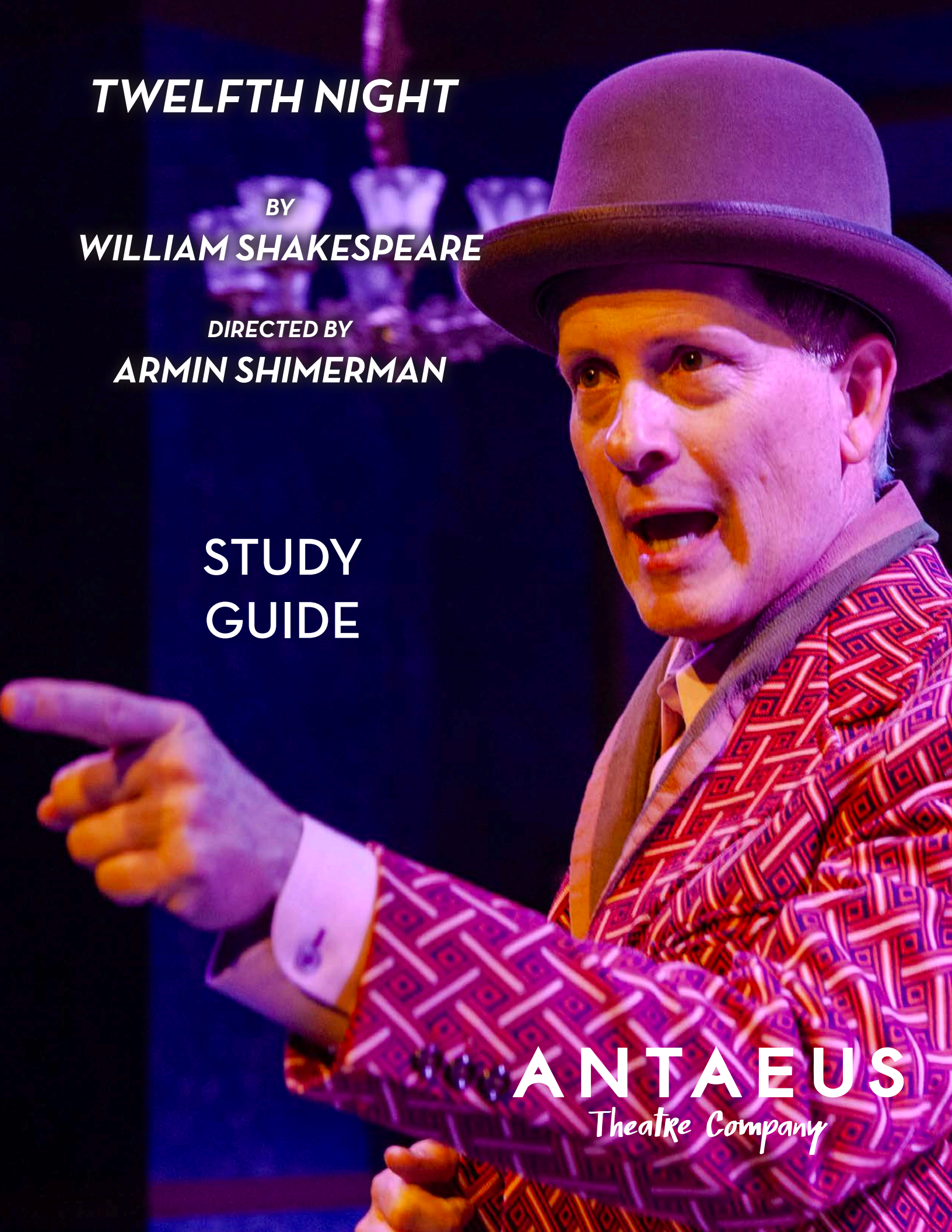
TWELFTH NIGHT

BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

DIRECTED BY
ARMIN SHIMERMAN

STUDY GUIDE

ANTAEUS
Theatre Company



WELCOME to **ANTAEUS**

We are excited to share with you this production of *Twelfth Night*, by William Shakespeare. As you step into our home, we want to share a little bit about our history and values as a theater company.

Antaeus began in 1991 as a project of the prestigious Center Theatre Group. Founding Artistic Directors Dakin Matthews and Lillian Groag believed there could be a world-class classical ensemble in a city driven by the TV and film industry. They brought together a remarkable group of 30 members to embark on this ambitious project. The group came together every Monday night to read, study and rehearse great, classical plays. Over the next three decades, Antaeus grew into a professional, non-profit theater featuring an acting company comprised of some of the greatest talents that Los Angeles has to offer.

In March 2017, we were thrilled to open the doors to our new, permanent home in Downtown Glendale, the Kiki & David Gindler Performing Arts Center. As Antaeus continues to grow and mature, we remain committed to producing full seasons of plays, providing professional training and arts education programs, and utilizing our home as much as possible.

We believe in the transformative power of live theater.

CHARACTERS

VIOLA: A lady of Messaline shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria (*later disguised as CESARIO*)

ORSINO: Duke of Illyria

OLIVIA: An Illyrian Countess

SIR TOBY BELCH: Olivia's kinsman

SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK: Sir Toby's companion

MARIA: Waiting gentlewoman to Olivia

MALVOLIO: Steward in Olivia's household

FESTE THE FOOL: A jester in Olivia's household

SEBASTIAN: Viola's brother, also shipwrecked

ANTONIO: Friend to Sebastian

FABIAN: A gentleman in Olivia's household

CURIO: A gentleman in Orsino's household

SEA CAPTAIN

SAILOR

POLICE OFFICER

OLIVIA'S VALETS

SYNOPSIS: *TWELFTH NIGHT*

ACT I

Orsino, Duke of Illyria, yearns to marry the Countess Olivia who is in mourning for her dead brother and refusing suitors. Viola, a young noblewoman from Messaline, is shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria and believes her twin brother Sebastian to be lost at sea. In order to survive, Viola disguises herself as a man, "Cesario," and gains employment as Orsino's servant. In the process of working her way into Orsino's trust, Viola has secretly fallen in love with him. Meanwhile, the rascally Sir Toby Belch, Olivia's kinsman, wants to marry Olivia to his witless companion Sir Andrew Aguecheek. When Orsino sends Viola to woo Olivia on his behalf, Olivia falls in love with "Cesario."

ACT II

Viola's brother Sebastian washes ashore, saved by the sailor Antonio. Sebastian makes his way toward Orsino's court and Antonio follows, even though Antonio is a wanted man in Illyria. When Olivia's cantankerous steward Malvolio brings a symbolic ring to Viola, she realizes that she's in the middle of a complex love triangle! Viola loves Orsino, Orsino loves Olivia, and Olivia loves Viola/Cesario. When Malvolio scolds Sir Toby and Olivia's gentlewoman Maria, they decide to get revenge on him by tricking him into believing that Olivia loves him. Though Viola tries to persuade Orsino to give up his pursuit of Olivia, he sends her once again to the Countess.

ACT III

When Viola as "Cesario" returns to Olivia, Olivia explicitly declares her love for him. Sir Toby convinces Sir Andrew that the only way to win Olivia's love is to challenge Cesario to a duel. Meanwhile, their trick on Malvolio is working perfectly, and totally convinced that Olivia loves him, Malvolio tries to seduce her. Olivia fears for his sanity and charges Toby to look after him. Toby's other plan comes to fruition when Sir Andrew and Cesario are forced into a hapless duel. Their fight is interrupted when Antonio arrives and mistakes Cesario for Sebastian. In the resulting scuffle, Antonio is arrested. When Antonio asks "Sebastian" to return money he lent him, Cesario is dumbfounded, having no idea who he is. Antonio believes his friend has forsaken him and scolds him. Recognizing Sebastian's name, Viola realizes her brother may be alive.

ACT IV

Sebastian runs into Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and Olivia's fool, Feste, who all mistake him for Cesario. Olivia arrives and, making the same mistake, resumes her courtship. Sebastian, delighted by this strange turn of events, shows none of the reluctance toward her that Cesario did. She later asks him to marry her, and he agrees. Malvolio's torment continues when he is locked in a dark cell and visited by Feste, who alternates between his true appearance and a disguise as a parson.

ACT V

Duke Orsino arrives at Olivia's estate and hears reports about Cesario's behavior. Olivia, mistaking "Cesario" for Sebastian, insists that they are married, perplexing Viola and infuriating Orsino. Toby and Andrew arrive with their own grievances against Cesario. Sebastian's arrival clears everything up; Viola reveals herself to be a woman and expresses her love for Orsino, and he agrees to marry her. The arrival of the "mad" Malvolio briefly sours the mood when he confronts Olivia and the trick played upon him is revealed. Olivia takes pity on him. The group then celebrates the impending marriages of Olivia to Sebastian and Orsino to Viola.



The Life of “The Bard”



William Shakespeare was born in 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon, England, 91 miles northwest of London. He was the third child of John Shakespeare, a glove-maker and leather merchant, and Mary Arden. He was likely educated in grammar school in Stratford, where he learned Latin, a bit of Greek, and read the Roman dramatists; he did not, however, attend university. At eighteen years old he married Anne Hathaway. They raised two daughters, Susanna and Judith (born 1583 and 1585), and lost their son Hamnet at age eleven.

By 1592, Shakespeare had moved to London and was earning some income as an actor and poet. His first published works were two long-form narrative poems, “Venus and Adonis” (1593) and “The Rape of Lucrece” (1594). In 1594, Shakespeare joined the acting troupe The Lord Chamberlain’s Men, where he worked as an actor and writer and was also a financial shareholder. The company was very popular in the London theater scene and quickly attracted the attention of Queen Elizabeth I, who became their most famous admirer. Also in 1594 appeared Shakespeare’s first published plays, *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI, Part 2* (as it is now called).

In 1596, Shakespeare wrote his second tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*, and over the next dozen years continued to further explore the genre and wrote some of the plays he is now most famous for: *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. He also wrote many successful comedies, including *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Twelfth Night*, and *Much Ado About Nothing*. In 1599, Shakespeare’s company built the Globe Theatre, which became their new playhouse.

WHAT MAKES SHAKESPEARE SPECIAL?

The answer to the above question is a difficult one, and every avid reader of the Bard may have a slightly different answer. Literary critic Harold Bloom famously argued that Shakespeare “invented the human,” by first portraying characters who “overheard” themselves and developed through introspection and self-interrogation rather than external factors. Some may argue this is giving Shakespeare a bit too much credit. Regardless, one thing is true: a lot of people love these plays.

“SHAKESPEARE’S THE ‘WHAT’S GOING ON,’ THE WHITE ALBUM, THE ‘TAPESTRY’ FOR ME. THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE AND THE ULTIMATE STANDARD.”

- DENZEL WASHINGTON

“THE WHOLE RAFT OF HUMAN FEELINGS – ABOUT LOVE, ABOUT ENVY, ABOUT IDOLATRY, ABOUT SADNESS, ABOUT DEATH, ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE – THERE’S NOBODY WHO HAS WRITTEN LIKE THAT AND WHO STILL REMAINS WITH US IN OUR, AS I SAY, EVERYDAY EXPRESSIONS.”

- DAME JUDI DENCH

“THERE NEVER SEEMS TO BE ANY END TO THE BREADTH OF EXPERIENCE HE PUTS INTO PLAYS. HE WAS UTTERLY UNIQUE AND UTTERLY AMAZING - A GREAT MAN WHOSE IMAGINATION WAS SO HUGE THAT HE DIDN’T HAVE TO BE A COURTIER TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE WITH KINGS, WHO DIDN’T HAVE TO WORK IN A PUBLIC HOUSE IN LONDON TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE A DRUNKARD. HE JUST SORT OF CLICKED HIS IMAGINATION AND HAD TOTAL SYMPATHY WITH ALL OF US.”

- SIR IAN MCKELLEN

“THE GREATEST POET IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOUND HIS POETRY WHERE POETRY IS FOUND: IN THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE.”

- JAMES BALDWIN

Twelfth Night *Background*

Shakespeare wrote *Twelfth Night* (subtitled *Or What You Will*) in approximately 1601-1602, and it had its first public performance on February 2, 1602 in Middle Temple Hall, London. This date marks the Candlemas holiday, a Christian feast day which was historically considered the end of the Christmas-Epiphany holiday season. It's widely believed (though not officially verified) that the first performance of *Twelfth Night* was for Queen Elizabeth I, who commissioned Shakespeare to write the play as part of her Christmastide celebrations.

The title of the play is a reference to yet another holiday: the last of the twelve days of Christmas. **Twelfth Night was a holiday of merrymaking, mischief, and role reversals.** Servants would dress as masters, men would dress as women, and the social order at large was playfully subverted. In this holiday we see the inspiration for the themes of Shakespeare's play. Not only does Viola disguise herself as a man, but she is a noblewoman posing as a servant. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, who are men of some distinction, are portrayed as scoundrels who fraternize with servants and play tricks on others for their own amusement.

Not everyone was a fan of the revelry associated with the Twelfth Night holiday. The **Puritans** were a Protestant

group in England who saw such merriment, mockery, and subversion as sinful. One of their prime targets was the theater itself; they believed that actors were actively engaging in deception and making a mockery of God's creation when they pretended to be someone they weren't. And generally, they just weren't big fans of fun. Shakespeare parodies the Puritans with the character of Malvolio, whose uptight and self-righteous attitude leads to him being made a fool of by Sir Toby and Maria.

However it's important to note that at the end of the play the social order is more or less re-established. Just as Twelfth Night was only a one-day holiday, Shakespeare's characters ultimately return back to "normal."



Shakespeare's England

Shakespeare lived in two different centuries and during the reign of two English monarchs: Elizabeth I and James I. This era as a whole is known as the English Renaissance, a cultural and artistic flourishing in England following the Late Middle Ages and the Italian Renaissance, which preceded the English Renaissance by about a century. Rather than the architecture, sculpture, and painting that made the Italian Renaissance famous, the English Renaissance was known mostly for its contributions to music and literature. It was also known for its conflicts between Protestants and Catholics as the monarchy changed its religious policies and allegiance. This led to spying, assassination attempts, persecutions, and foreign wars over religion.

London flourished in the Elizabethan era as the population exploded. It was the centre of government, of overseas trade and finance, and of fashion, taste, and culture. It was ruled by a merchant oligarchy, whose wealth increased tremendously over the course of the century as international trade expanded. By the end of Elizabeth's reign it housed a quarter of a million people, many of whom were poor migrants from the countryside looking for work. The streets were loud, smelly, and dirty, but also very lively.

IF YOU LIVED IN SHAKESPEARE'S LONDON, YOU MIGHT...

- DRINK A BEER FOR BREAKFAST! (FOR NUTRITION, OF COURSE.)
- APPRENTICE FOR A LOCAL BLACKSMITH, CLOTH-WEAVER, OR CARPENTER
- BAKE YOUR BREAD IN A BAKERY'S COMMUNAL OVEN DOWN THE STREET
- WATCH THE MERCHANT SHIPS SAIL ALONG THE THAMES
- STROLL DOWN LONDON BRIDGE AND SEE THE HEADS OF TRAITORS ON SPIKES - OR GO SEE AN EXECUTION IN PERSON!
- LISTEN TO A STREET MUSICIAN OR ATTEND A FAIR
- DO SOME GAMBLING, FENCING, OR WATCH A BEAR-BAITING!
- AVOID THE PLAGUE LIKE THE PLAGUE!

THEATER IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

Theater in Shakespeare's London was not considered a high art, but rather popular entertainment. Poetry was considered the peak of literature, but theater was how writers like Shakespeare made their money. Plays were incredibly popular among the lower and upper classes alike. The only people who didn't like them were the Puritans—extreme Protestants who preached solemnity and disliked excess. To them, popular entertainment such as theater, music, and dance was contrary to a life of worship and they sought to shut it down whenever they could, with mixed success.

Plays were performed in playhouses, inns, courtyards, outdoor stages, and royal courts and palaces. Stages were relatively bare, with the exception of some emblematic set pieces that might represent the setting such as a tree for a forest. All of the roles were played by men, with young boys usually playing the women. There were famous actors of the time that were favorites with audiences who played many of the leading roles. Actor Richard Burbage played many of Shakespeare's lead roles, including Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Richard III, Romeo, King Lear, and Othello.

Plays were often produced by acting companies that maintained a regular repertoire of plays with consistent actors and writers that leased but sometimes owned their own performance space, like Shakespeare's company and their Globe Theatre. They were reliant on wealthy aristocrats or merchants to sponsor them and if they were really lucky could receive favor or sponsorship from the Crown.

Because printing was expensive, no actor ever had the entire script to a play. Instead, their lines and their cue lines were written down on slips of paper called roles (sound familiar?). Shakespeare's plays were mostly performed outdoors, in daylight, and to large, rowdy crowds. Only the wealthy could afford seats and instead most spectators stood.



Early Modern English

Have you ever heard or read a Shakespeare play and thought it sounded like a foreign language? While there are certainly a lot of words and grammatical conventions used in Shakespeare that aren't so popular today, Shakespeare's English is actually much closer linguistically to our English than you might think.

The English spoken in Shakespeare's day is called **Early Modern English**. It's also sometimes called Elizabethan English or, appropriately, Shakespearean English! That's right: Shakespeare's plays are so influential we named an entire period of our language after him! This period ran from about 1500 to 1750 CE. Before this came **Old English** (450-1200 CE) and **Middle English** (1200-1500 CE) and then afterward is the form that we speak today: **Modern English**.

Let's check out some sample sentences from each of these periods to see how foreign they sound to us!

BEOWULF, AUTHOR UNKNOWN, WRITTEN BETWEEN 700 AND 1000 CE

Old English: "Selre bið æghwæm þæt he his freond wrece þonne he fela murne."

Modern English: "It is always better to avenge dear ones than to indulge in mourning."

THE CANTERBURY TALES, GEOFFREY CHAUCER, WRITTEN 1387-4000 CE

Middle English: "He nevere yet no vileynye ne sayde In al his lyf unto no maner wight."

Modern English: "He never said any rude word in all his life to any sort of person."

TWELFTH NIGHT, WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, WRITTEN 1601-1602 CE

Early Modern English: "If she be so abandoned to her sorrow as it is spoke, she will never admit me."

Modern English: "If she's as sad as they say she is, she'll never let me in."

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: VERSE

Shakespeare's plays are written in two forms: **verse** and **prose**.

VERSE

consists of structured lines that follow a **meter**, or a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables; the language of formal poetry

Characters may speak in verse to show emotion, formality, or respect.

PROSE

unstructured, “everyday” speech

Characters may speak in prose to show rationality or a casual tone.

Verse is the language of formal poetry, and so in Shakespeare's dialogue we see him combine an ear for human speech and characterization and the poetic talent he reveals in his sonnets. Meanwhile, **prose** is unstructured, “everyday” speech. Shakespeare makes very deliberate choices in when to use prose and verse.

The most popular form of verse in Shakespeare's day is called **iambic pentameter**. A metrical **foot** is a unit of two syllables, while an **iamb** is a metrical foot featuring an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable: duh-dum. The prefix *penta-* means “five.” So iambic pentameter is a line of verse in which there are five iambs (and ten syllables total). So the rhythm of the line is: duh-dum duh-dum duh-dum duh-dum duh-dum.

Check out this line of Viola's dialogue:

**“O Time, thou must untangle this, not I.
It is too hard a knot for me t' untie.”**

Now look at the meter (emphasis shown in italics).

**“O Time, thou *must un-tang-le this*, not I.
It is too *hard a knot for me t' untie*.”**

Notice how Shakespeare in the second line reduces the word *to* into *t'*. Instead of the three syllable phrase “to untie,” he's tacked the letter *t* onto the first syllable of *untie*—making this word sound like “*tuntie*.” This makes the line ten syllables instead of eleven, preserving the even iambic pentameter. Notice, too, that this is a rhyming couplet. This both ends the scene on a strong note and emphasizes the poetic element of personifying Time. The use of verse further shows Viola's emotional turmoil in working out this problem.

A CLOSER LOOK: VERSE & PROSE

Shakespeare alternates prose and verse very strategically in order to lend structure to his scenes and communicate story and character development. One of the clearest examples of this in *Twelfth Night* as Act I, Scene V, when Viola goes to entreat with Olivia for the first time.

The beginning of their interaction is entirely in prose—Viola is there on business to deliver a message from Orsino. Although Viola calls Olivia a **“Most radiant, exquisite, and unmatched beauty”** she is not yet speaking in verse, the language of poetry and love. This lends a stiffness and insincerity to the language. Olivia’s responses are transactional. She asks interrogating questions like, **“Whence came you, sir?”** and **“Are you a comedian?”** She bluntly tells Viola to **“Come to what is important”** in the message.

However, the scene begins to shift as Viola turns on the charm. Rather than merely conveying her master’s message, she convinces Olivia to lift her veil, personalizing the interaction. She then begins to speak in verse:

**“‘Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white
Nature’s own sweet and cunning hand laid on.
Lady, you are the cruel’st she alive
If you will lead these graces to the grave
And leave the world no copy.”**

The real seduction has begun. But Olivia responds in prose: **“O, sir, I will not be so hard-hearted! I will give out divers schedules of my beauty.”** She resists Viola’s invitation to be emotionally sincere.

However, by the end of the scene, Olivia is responding to Viola in verse! Her parting words are: **“I cannot love him. Let him send no more— / Unless perchance you come to me again / To tell me how he takes it. Fare you well.”** When Viola leaves, Olivia realizes she loves “Cesario.” The transition from prose to verse has charted the evolution of Olivia’s feelings about Cesario from indifference and formality to love.



SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: IMAGERY

Part of what makes Shakespeare's writing so alluring is his evocative use of imagery. Because in Elizabethan theater the visual spectacle of a production was limited, the spectacle came from the words of the playwright and imagination of the audience.

Let's unpack how imagery reveals characters' views of love. In the opening lines of the play, Orsino compares the passion of love to eating a feast:

**"If music be the food of love, play on.
Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken and so die."**

He compares lovesickness to sickness from eating too much food, demonstrating how Orsino is wallowing in his emotions. He later compares being in love to being hunted, as if he were a hart (a type of deer):

**"O, when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
Methought she purged the air of pestilence.
That instant was I turned into a hart,
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds,
E'er since pursue me."**

Notice that in addition to the hunting motif, Shakespeare again references sickness with the choice of "pestilence." Notice, too, that none of these metaphors—hunger, sickness, hunting—sound like the basis for a healthy romance.

Olivia repeats this hunting imagery later in the play:

**"If one should be a prey, how much the better
To fall before the lion than the wolf."**

Obviously Orsino has some warped ideas about love, but what about Olivia? Do these images hint that they share some blind spots in their pursuit of it?

SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: SOLILOQUY

In Shakespeare's plays he employs a special kind of speech called a **soliloquy**. In contrast to **dialogue**, where two or more characters are speaking to each other, or a **monologue**, in which one character is speaking to others in a long passage of speech, a soliloquy is when a character is delivering a speech presumably alone.

Sometimes a soliloquy can be a longer version of an **aside**, in which a character makes brief remarks to themselves with no one else able to hear them. The matter of who a character is addressing in a soliloquy is an important interpretive decision for the director and actors to make. Sometimes a character is truly babbling to themselves. But there are instances in which a character is making a **direct address**, in which they break the imaginary "**fourth wall**" that separates the audience from the action and speaks to the audience itself.

Tellingly, every major soliloquy found in *Twelfth Night* has to do with someone falling in love. The first is a shorter soliloquy when Olivia realizes she has fallen for Cesario: "**Methinks I feel this youth's perfections with an invisible and subtle stealth to creep in at mine eyes.**" This private information is not only crucial to the plot, but it's a major development for Olivia. As she has sworn off suitors to grieve for her brother, and is a Countess who must marry a noble, this is a surprising and difficult emotion.

The second major soliloquy is when Viola realizes that Olivia is in love with her and that she is caught in a complex love triangle: "**Fortune forbid my outside have not charmed her!**" Here she expresses her private guilt for the trouble her disguise has wrought and admits she has no idea how to resolve this new problem.

A third soliloquy depicts Sebastian's bafflement when he realizes that Olivia is in love with him: "**This is the air, that is the glorious sun.**" In contrast to Viola's soliloquy, Sebastian is delighted at this turn of events.

Do you think Malvolio has a soliloquy? Why or why not?



SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE: VOCABULARY

Shakespeare uses over 20,000 different words in his plays and poems. That's *a lot* of words! But did you know that he is said to have coined as many as 1,700 of them?

Shakespeare was a wordsmith. He took existing words and made compound words with them, or added new prefixes and suffixes to create totally new meanings. Sometimes he changed the part of speech of an existing word, like using a noun as a verb for the first time (such as “to elbow”). Some words just seem totally made up, like Dr. Seuss—except we still widely use some of those words today. Some of these may have existed orally prior to Shakespeare, but he is the first known person to write them down.

Here are some of Shakespeare's famous attributed words:

accommodation	dislocate	lapse
aerial	downstairs	laughable
amazement	dwindle	lonely
assassination	eventful	majestic
auspicious	exposure	misplaced
baseless	eyeballs	monumental
bloody	fashionable	obscene
bump	fitful	pious
castigate	frugal	premeditated
countless	generous	radiance
courtship	gloomy	reliance
critic	gnarled	sanctimonious
dawn	impartial	sportive
dexterously	indistinguishable	submerge
dire	invulnerable	suspicious
dishearten	lackluster	swagger

SHAKESPEAREAN COMEDY

There are a handful of distinct **genres**, or storytelling patterns, that appear in Shakespeare's canon. The most famous of these are comedy and tragedy. A somewhat crude but clear way to distinguish between these is that in a **tragedy**, many of the principal characters die by the end, whereas in a **comedy**, many of the characters get married in the end. Shakespeare also wrote **histories**, plays based on historical events, and plays variously labeled **problem plays** or **romances**, which blend elements of comedy and tragedy and have more ambiguous or ambivalent endings. These genre classifications are not always cut and dry and can sometimes overlap or be debated.

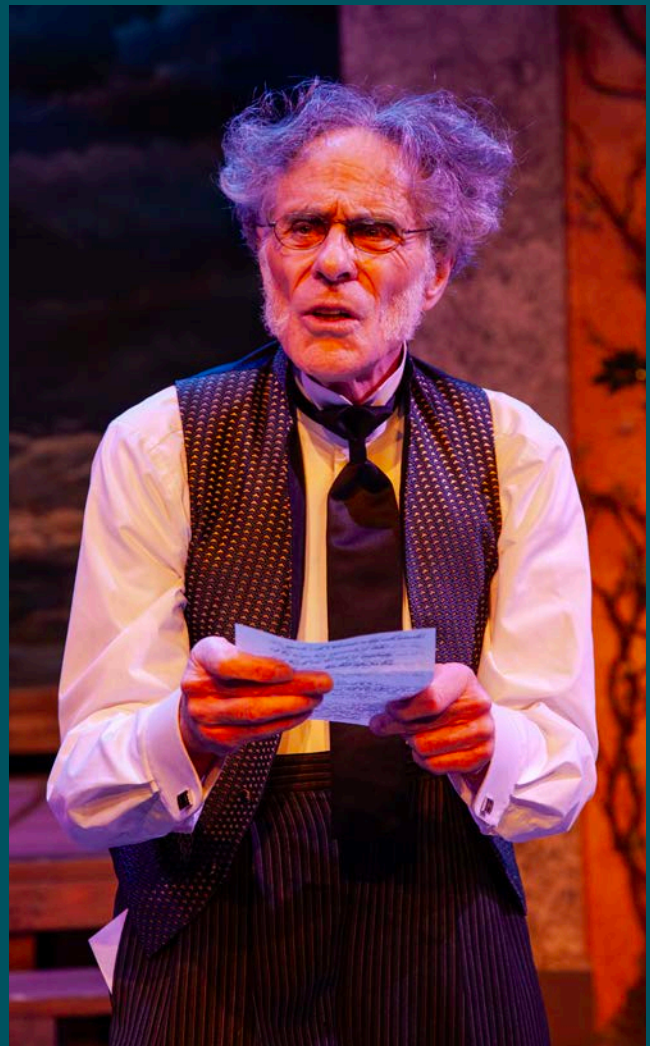
However, *Twelfth Night* is considered a prime example of Shakespearean comedy. This is because the vast majority of the characters get a happy ending, and the play finishes with a number of betrothals. While it's true that Malvolio is left out in the cold, there is no significant violence or death.

There are a number of tropes common to most Shakespearean comedies. First, as previously mentioned, plots often center around love and resolve in marriage. Characters often employ disguise to trick others, and there are often cases of mistaken identity that drive important developments in the plot. There are often multiple plotlines. The main plot often has higher stakes, or dramatic gravity that causes you to worry for the characters. Subplots are often lighter in tone, and present additional comic situations with supporting characters while reinforcing the play's themes.

In addition to the above comedic elements, which relate to plot structure, Shakespeare employed a great deal of humor in his language. *Puns* utilize a "play on words" based on different meanings of one word.

Irony is when a sentence conveys the opposite of its literal meaning or contradicts facts known by the audience to be true. *Sexual innuendo* is very common in Shakespeare, subtly (or unsubtly!) referring to sex or the body.

Then of course there is a great deal of physical comedy that happens in Shakespeare, some of which is directly written into the script and some of which is up to the imagination of the actors and director.



TWELFTH NIGHT THEMES

A **theme** in drama and literature is a main idea or message that is woven into the story and makes sense of its events. A theme can be a general idea, topic, or question, and doesn't necessarily have to answer that question in the way a **moral** does. An explicit moral is what defines the **fable** genre, which is a fantastical short story that delivers a clear lesson to be learned, such as "Obey your elders." The Boy Who Cried Wolf, for example, is a fable with the lesson, "Always tell the truth or else you won't be believed."

LOVE

Perhaps the most obvious theme throughout *Twelfth Night* is love. Different kinds of love are shown in the play. Perhaps the most sincere example of romantic love is that between Viola and Orsino. Though Orsino doesn't recognize who Viola really is until the play's conclusion, the rapport he builds with Cesario and how quickly he came to trust him and share with him shows that there was something genuinely there all along. There is also love of family, shown in the relationship between Viola and Sebastian. This sibling love is paralleled by Olivia's love for her late brother, which drives her grief in the beginning of the play. Love is also parodied in Orsino's superficial love for Olivia and Olivia's love of Cesario, which is seemingly easily transferred to Sebastian at the play's conclusion.

CLASS

Another critical theme is class. Viola is a noblewoman disguised as a lower-class servant. If she weren't secretly a noble, her eventual marriage to Orsino would likely be impossible. Malvolio dreams of rising above his situation and becoming "Count Malvolio," which leads him to humiliate himself.

FOOLISHNESS

Finally, a crucial theme is foolishness. The words "fool, fools, and foolish" are used approximately eighty times in the play. The irony is that the high-born characters are the most foolish, and the character of the Fool who is perhaps the wisest of them all.

GENDER & CROSS-DRESSING IN SHAKESPEARE

In Shakespeare's day, for religious, political, and cultural reasons, women weren't allowed to act on the stage. Women's roles were played by young men in makeup and costume. Yet, despite the fact that originally there were no female actors, the women in *Twelfth Night* are prominent, beloved characters. In fact, Shakespeare is often celebrated for his ability to write complex, powerful, and compelling women.

So how does this knowledge shape our understanding of *Twelfth Night*? Well, it certainly adds an additional layer to the elements of cross-dressing and disguise that are so central to the plot. In Shakespeare's time, Viola would be played by a man. So the audience would be watching a man (the actor) pretending to be a woman (Viola) pretending to be a man (Cesario). This complex arrangement likely would have provoked a number of varying reactions at the time. Some, like the Puritans, would have been outraged over the transgressing of gender boundaries (but remember, they opposed theater in general!). Others would have leaned into the parody of gender roles and probably found the whole thing amusing. Others still would have a greater ability to suspend their disbelief and immerse themselves in the feminine experience of the character.

Shakespeare's cross-dressing characters reflect the multifaceted ways his society viewed gender. He simultaneously pushes boundaries and stays within the confines of what was acceptable. He parodies gender while also relaying sincere experiences of it. Viola has the chance to see the world through a man's point of view. The irony is that her male presentation is an obstacle to her being with Orsino while at the same time is the only way she is able to become as close with him as she does.



POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

What does cross-dressing say about the female experience in *Twelfth Night*?

What about the male experience?

Do you think Shakespeare presents gender as a binary or as a spectrum?

Where do you see that?

INTERPRETING *TWELFTH NIGHT* IN MUSIC

In Shakespeare's day, design was fairly minimal. His plays were performed at the Globe in the outdoors, using daylight as the production's sole source of "lighting design." There was very little scenic design: the stage itself was the "set," and some minor pieces might be brought on and off stage. The only amplification was **acoustics** of the theater—the way the architecture allowed for sound to travel in the space. So sound design was limited to sound generated onstage by actors or **practical sound effects**. There was also live music played during the performance. Shakespeare writes song lyrics into many of his plays, but many of the original melodies are lost.

John Allee, who plays Feste the Fool in our production, is also an accomplished musician, composer, and songwriter. Since Feste sings many of the songs in the play, it made perfect sense for him to compose the melodies! John had this to say about working on this production:

"AS A PIANIST, IT WAS VITAL FOR ME THAT MY INSTRUMENT FIT THE PERIOD OF THE PRODUCTION (THE FIRST PIANO WAS INVENTED IN 1700, A FULL 100 YEARS *AFTER* THE PLAY WAS WRITTEN). TAKING A CUE FROM OUR DIRECTOR, ARMIN SHIMERMAN, AND HIS CHOICE OF A FIN-DE-SIÈCLE SETTING (THAT IS, THE AMERICAN 1890S), I BEGAN BY DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM THE COMIC OPERAS OF GILBERT AND SULLIVAN, THE MUSIC HALL AND PARLOR SONGS OF THE 1800S, AND EVEN THE PRELUDES OF CHOPIN. DURING THIS PERIOD, THE PIANO BECAME A CENTERPIECE OF SOCIAL GATHERINGS, INFLUENCING BOTH EVENING ENTERTAINMENT AND CULTURAL SOPHISTICATION.

CONSEQUENTLY, IN THIS PRODUCTION, I HAVE AVOIDED USING ELIZABETHAN PERIOD MUSIC, DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE MELODIES OF MOST OF THE SONGS IN *TWELFTH NIGHT* ARE STILL KNOWN—A RARITY FOR THE CANON. INDEED, MOST OF THE KNOWN MELODIES FROM ANY SHAKESPEARE PLAY ARE THIS PLAY. SHAKESPEARE HIMSELF USED SONGS FROM OTHER SOURCES, SOMETIMES RE-WORKING THE LYRICS, BUT ALSO WRITING HIS OWN. IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT I APPROACH MY OWN WRITING. ALONG WITH MY ORIGINAL COMPOSITIONS, YOU MAY EVEN HEAR A WHOLLY ORIGINAL LYRIC OR TWO IN OUR VERSION!"

REHEARSING SHAKESPEARE

What's it like to rehearse a play? Well, in some sense, it's just like any other production. You have the standard schedule from table read, to table work, to blocking, to run-throughs, to tech and dress rehearsals, to previews, and finally to opening night! However, in other ways, rehearsing a Shakespeare play is unique. Here's what some of our actors had to say about the process:

"I TRY TO MAKE IT AS SPECIFIC TO ME AS I CAN. IF I AM DOING THIS IN 2025, THE AUDIENCE IS WATCHING IT IN 2025. I THINK SHAKESPEARE IS TIMELESS BECAUSE HE WROTE THREE DIMENSIONAL PEOPLE. EVERYBODY IS GOOD AND EVERYBODY IS BAD. AND THEY HAD THE SAME PROBLEMS THEN AS WE HAVE NOW."

- KITTY SWINK, MARIA/FABIAN

"IT IS OFTEN BREATHTAKING TO WATCH THESE FINE ACTORS APPLY THEIR CRAFT AND TALENTS TO THE DEMANDS OF SHAKESPEARE'S LANGUAGE AND BEGIN TO PRESENT FLESH AND BLOOD PEOPLE WITH COMPLEX AND RECOGNIZABLE EMOTIONS. AS THE REHEARSAL WORK PROGRESSES, I LOVE HOW THE PEOPLE IN THE PLAY BEGIN TO COME TO LIFE, RATHER LIKE WATCHING CLAY OR STONE TAKE SHAPE IN THE HANDS OF A SKILLED SCULPTOR."

- ALBERTO ISAAC, ANDREW AGUECHEEK/CURIO

"SHAKESPEARE'S WRITING, THOUGH OVER FOUR CENTURIES OLD, IS STILL RELEVANT TODAY. WHY? BECAUSE SOMEHOW, HE MANAGED TO EXPLORE THEMES THAT ARE CENTRAL TO THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE AND TOUCH THE HUMAN CONDITION. LOVE. JOY. SORROW. ANGER. DESPAIR. IDENTITY. STATUS. BELONGING. LOSS. POWER. AMBITION. CORRUPTION. REVENGE. JUSTICE. AND HIS CHARACTERS ARE MULTIDIMENSIONAL AND COMPLICATED AND FLAWED AND AUTHENTIC."

- ROB NAGLE, TOBY BELCH

"THE MOST REWARDING ASPECT OF PERFORMING SHAKESPEARE FOR ME IS THE COMMAND OF THE LANGUAGE. IT'S ALMOST LIKE SHAKESPEAREAN LANGUAGE CAN BE WIELDED, A POWER THAT NEEDS TO BE TAMED. ONCE YOU HAVE IT UNDER CONTROL, YOU CAN USE IT TO AFFECT CHANGE IN OTHER CHARACTERS AND AUDIENCES."

- ISAAC YBARRA, SEBASTIAN/SAILOR

SHAKESPEARE OVER TIME

Shakespeare died in 1616, a little over 400 years ago. Today, he is one of history's most famous writers and is ubiquitously celebrated around the globe. But his reputation wasn't formed overnight; it took time.

In 1623, his plays were published for the first time in the First Folio, and though Shakespeare was quite successful in his lifetime it was only then that he started being lauded by other literary figures as a preeminent playwright. In 1642, the outbreak of the English Civil War forced theaters to close, and they remained so during Puritan rule of England until 1660. When theaters reopened, there had been no new plays produced for 18 years and Shakespeare was one of a handful of past playwrights whose works became sought after for performance.

In the late 17th century, some literary critics and producers felt Shakespeare's plays could be "improved," and a number of bizarre aberrations came out, including a version of the tragedy *King Lear* that was given a happy ending. It wouldn't be for another 150 years or so that such alterations became widely disparaged. In fact, in the 18th century much of Shakespeare's verbal comedy fell out of

style, and authors tried to edit out his puns and sexual innuendo.

However, the 18th century also saw the actor and producer David Garrick popularize Shakespeare on the stage like never before, and his widely acclaimed Drury Lane Theatre ignited international acclaim for Shakespeare. The Romantic literary movement of the 19th century were so enamored of Shakespeare that playwright George Bernard Shaw called it "bardolatry."

As the young United States was still developing its own theatrical style, revivals of Shakespeare dominated the stage. Celebrated actors like Edwin Booth, Ira Eldridge, and Ellen Terry cemented the idea that Shakespeare was the highest bar for stage performers. In the 20th century, Shakespeare was adapted into famous films and his plays became staples of secondary education.

Today Shakespeare's plays are translated into over 100 languages and performed all over the globe. He is the world's most widely read and performed playwright.





STUDENT MATINEES

Study Guide Dramaturg
RYAN MCREE

Teaching Artists
ANN NOBLE & CATIA OJEDA

Producing Executive Director
ANA ROSE O'HALLORAN

Artistic Director
NIKE DOUKAS


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