

Twelfth Night

College of the Desert
Director: Ryan Landman

Character Descriptions

Viola

The play's protagonist, she is washed up on the shore of Illyria when her ship is wrecked by a storm. Viola decides to disguise herself as a young man, "Cesario" and becomes a page to Duke Orsino. She ends up falling in love with him, just as Olivia is courting and falls in love with Casario. Thus, Viola finds her disguise has entrapped her: she cannot tell Orsino that she loves him, and cannot tell Olivia why she as Cesario cannot love her.

Orsino

A powerful nobleman in the country of Illyria. Orsino is lovesick for the beautiful Lady Olivia, but finds himself becoming fonder of Casario, who is actually a woman - Viola. A supreme egotist, Orsino mopes around complaining how heartsick he is over Olivia, when it's clear that he is in love with the idea of being in love and enjoys making a spectacle of himself.

Olivia

Countess Olivia is a wealthy woman of high social status. She is in mourning for her father and brother who both died within the last year. Without any close family, she is in charge of her household and can decide for herself who she marries. She rejects messages of love from Duke Orsino and instead falls in love with his servant Cesario, not knowing that Cesario is Viola in disguise as a young man. Her only family is Sir Toby Belch, who is often drunk and she does not have much respect for him.

Sir Toby Belch

Sir Toby Belch is related to Olivia and lives in her house. He spends a lot of his time drunk and Olivia has little respect for him. Sir Toby has invited his friend Sir Andrew to stay and encourages Sir Andrew to think that Olivia wants to marry him. Sir Toby knows Olivia has no interest in Sir Andrew but the deception allows him to con money from Sir Andrew. Sir Toby resents being reprimanded for his drunken behaviour by Malvolio and, with Maria's help, plays a cruel trick on Malvolio.

Malvolio

Malvolio runs Olivia's household as her senior servant, her steward. Malvolio, however, secretly hopes to improve his social position and one day rule the household as Olivia's husband. Malvolio insults several characters in the play, including Sir Toby, Feste and Maria who get their revenge by playing a trick to make him think Olivia loves him. They then lock him up in a dark room as a madman.

Sir Andrew

Sir Andrew is visiting his friend Sir Toby and staying in Olivia's house. Sir Andrew believes that Sir Toby is helping him in his bid to marry Olivia but Sir Toby is taking money from Sir Andrew and using him for entertainment. Sir Andrew is generally regarded as foolish.

Maria

Maria is Olivia's maid. She gets on well with Sir Toby and plans a clever trick against Malvolio which helps Sir Toby get revenge on Malvolio for insulting him. Maria also gets on well with Fool.

Fool

Fool is a jester who used to work for Olivia's father. He has returned to Olivia's house after some time away and, although she is at first angry with him for his absence, she soon forgives him and is pleased to see him. Fool makes a living as a musician and from his witty remarks for both of which he receives money from characters of a higher social position. He seems to be based in Olivia's house but also sings for Orsino.

Sebastian

Sebastian is Viola's twin brother, separated from her during the shipwreck which happens before the play begins. Sebastian was rescued by a sea captain called Antonio. After three months with Antonio, Sebastian decides to set out to the court of Orsino. Once in Illyria, Sebastian is mistaken for 'Cesario' (Viola disguised as a boy) by Fool, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Olivia. Olivia is delighted when 'Cesario' seems to change his mind and agree to marry her.

Antonio

Antonio found Sebastian half drowned on the shore and rescued him. He quickly grows fond of Sebastian and stays with him, even following him to Illyria despite how dangerous this might be for him. Antonio was once in a sea battle against Orsino's ships and knows he could be arrested for piracy if he is caught in Illyria.