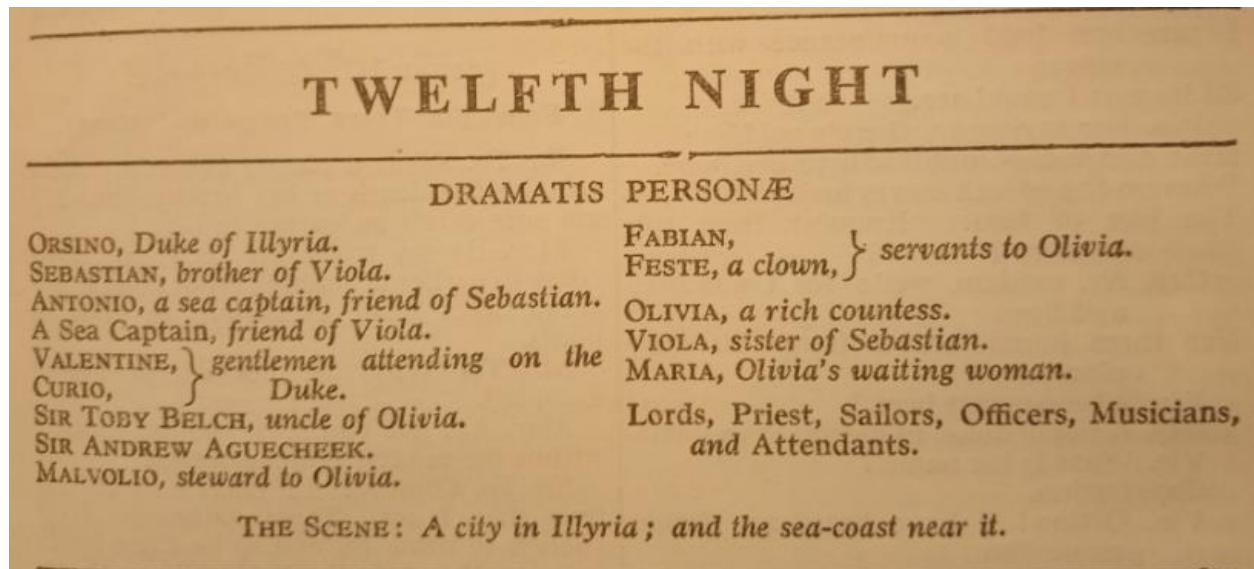


Twelfth Night or What You Will 1601



Source:

THE TUDOR EDITION OF
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
THE COMPLETE WORKS
COLLINS
LONDON AND GLASGOW
APRIL 1959

A new edition, edited with an
Introduction and glossary by
PETER ALEXANDER
*Regius Professor of English Language
and Literature, University of Glasgow 1959*

David Akenhead, CEO Akenhead crosswords currently enjoying 507,288 visits at his Visits page on his website at crosswordsakenhead.com where there is a link to his crossword challenges: A joint copyrighted 27 x 27 digital Times Jumbo has to be a First in On-line crossword competitions thanks to AI, two individuals and Microsoft.

Sources:

Howard Staunton (1810-1874)

Absolute proof of its authenticity comes from this original extract from one of the guests (Source: Howard Staunton Preface to his original commentary on Shakespeare's Works from the *Variorum* of 1821, dated his hand April 1860)

“Feb. 2 1601 At our feast, wee had a play called Twelve Night or what you will, much like the Comedy of errors . . . A good practice in it to make the steward believe his lady widdowe was in love with him by counterfaying a letter, as from his lady in general termes telling him what shee liked best in him, and prescribing his gestures, inscribing his apparaile, &c.; and then when he came to practice making believe they tooke him to be mad.”

Nathan Drake's (1776-1836) impressions of the play too:

“ . . . the poetry of Shakespeare with a character so transcendently his own, so sweetly wild, so tenderly imaginative. Of this description are the loves of Viola and Orsino, which, though involving a few improbabilities of incident, are told in a manner so true to nature, and in a strain of such melancholy enthusiasm, as instantly put to flight all petty objections, and leave the mind wrapt in a dream of the most delicious sadness. The fourth scene of the second act more particularly breathes the blended emotions of love, of hope, and of despair, with a highly interesting description of the soothing effects of music in allaying the pangs of unrequited affection, and in which the attachment of Shakespeare to the simple melodies of the olden time is strongly and beautifully expressed.”

Story (extracts and further comments) courtesy of John Goodwin RSC's Short Guide to Shakespeare's Plays 1990.

Twelwe-Night or What You Will - was first performed at Court on 6 January 1601 to entertain a Tuscan Duke, Orsino, during his official visit to Queen Elizabeth.

The action of the play takes place in a land whose very name, Illyria, has come to mean romantic, fairytale happenings. For Elizabethans, its title alone stood for the traditional feast of liberty, a saturnalian revel, at which the world was turned upside down and the usual rules of conduct reversed. *Twelfth Night's* subtitle is *What You Will*

The main story concerns Viola who, shipwrecked and thinking her twin brother drowned, disguises herself as a boy, and becomes the page to the lovesick Duke Orsino of Illyria, carrying his messages of entreaty to the Lady Olivia whom he adores unrequitedly. Olivia, in turn, falls in love with Viola, thinking her a boy. Viola herself

falls in love with the Duke. At the play's end, Viola marries the Duke, and Olivia marries Viola's twin brother (Sebastian) who has returned, saved, from the sea. The events that lead to these marriages carry a prevailing atmosphere of highly-charged longing, of painful, youthful love in a golden land.

A darker note is touched by the other characters, who are neither young, nor particularly happy, and who have recognisable human vices. Sir Toby Belch is a wit and a gentleman, but he is also a drunken rogue who does not think twice about taking his friend Aguecheek's money in return for falsely promising him Olivia, his niece. Aguecheek himself is good-natured but weak, silly, and a coward. Olivia's steward, Malvolio, the play's central comic figure, is a self-important, cold man 'a kind of Puritan'.

There are no happy ends for them. Aguecheek is fooled and left without his fortune; Sir Toby is badly beaten over the head in a fight and marries a waiting-maid he doesn't love. Malvolio fares worst of all: for the sake of a cruel revengeful joke by Sir Toby and his cronies, he is locked in the dark and treated as a madman.

Standing between ideal romantic comedy and the cold light of day, between the Illyrian lovers and drunken Sir Toby with a bandaged head, is Feste, the clown, the 'allowed fool', who sings of the wind and the rain, and the melancholy passing of time"

David Akenhead (1946 -) Theatre manager, Producer, critic

Compare WS's Feste, with the late Stan Rogers, a sea-merchant and singer:

"In delay there lies no plenty; / 'In Make and Break Harbour the boats are so few
Then come kiss me, sweet and twenty, / Too many are pulled up and rotten
Youth's a stuff will not endure."/ Most houses stand empty Old nets hung to dry
/ Are blown away, lost and forgotten'

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Above part of my legacy to Shakespeare, courtesy of my former wife, Celia Ruth Staunton and her celebrated ancestor Howard Staunton (1810-1874), supreme Shakespearean authority from his Globe Illustrated Shakespeare, and a former English Chess Grand Master to boot! Enjoy my digital Jumbo crossword evolved from two chess supremos: Howard Staunton and Edmund Akenhead former Times crossword editor 1965-1983 via his mother, Myrtle Akenhead nee Nicholson Grant MacGregor, former Ladies Chess Champion of Somerset who I had the audacity to beat aged 10 with hitherto unconventional moves using the Queen's pawn!

David Akenhead, February 2026