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## Twelfth Night

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equally simple, but effective so the pace of the comedy was not slowed down by the scene changes.

Clifford made good use of the setting without overloading the play with business. In the final scene Kate and Marlow were center stage and the two old men were behind the screen with their heads bobbing up and down. At one point Marlow threw his cloak over the screen, nearly knocking it down and discovering them. When he revealed his love and his humility to Kate, he was down on his knees and as Hardcastle and Sir Charles appeared and Kate burst into laughter, he fell face down on the floor.

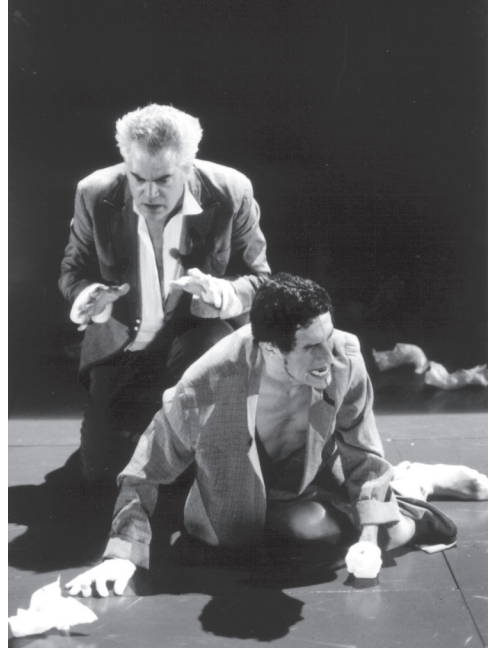
For many years the Folger Theatre has had its ups and downs, so it was a pleasure to see the theatre used so well to a responsive full house. Goldsmith still has charms for a modern audience if the director knows how to reveal them.

**YVONNE SHAFER**  
*St. John's University*

**TWELFTH NIGHT.** By William Shakespeare.  
Holderness Theater Company, Clark Studio  
Theater at Lincoln Center, New York City.  
4 January 2002.

At the opening of Rebecca Holderness's production of *Twelfth Night*, one saw on the stage floor an elongated pile of crumpled sheets of paper. Over the course of the show these were variously kicked at, danced over, scattered, rearranged, and blown away. Given the plot of *Twelfth Night*, the papers suggested the detritus of sea-storm and shipwreck, seaweed and shells, also rejected and lost letters, even discarded scripts and newspapers. Mere litter at one moment, at the next they could be carefully arranged into a circle to create the sad, enclosed garden of Olivia. (Other props were scarce: a stool, a fishbowl, some umbrellas.) Without calling too much attention to the idea, they might have made the New York audience think of the chaos of paper that filled lower Manhattan in the weeks after the World Trade Center disaster—the snow of pages from destroyed offices as well as the innumerable messages, memorials, and photographs affixed to walls in the surrounding neighborhood, fading and tearing over time. This was a *Twelfth Night* after the Eleventh, alive to the sense of mourning and disaster, the feeling for the fragility of things, that sifts through Shakespeare's comedy.

In this minimalist setting (designed by Christine Jones) the words of individual actors could carry a



Kevin Kuhlke (Feste) and Randolph Curtis Rand (Malvolio) in *Twelfth Night*, directed by Rebecca Holderness at the Clark Studio Theater, New York City. Photo: Martha Granger.

peculiar weight. Shakespeare's text overall came through with great clarity, with a sense of each moment being open to a new thought. One felt a quick, ferociously direct confrontation between speakers, which was by turns comic, seductive, mocking, and aggressive. The disguises so many of the characters assumed heightened rather than blocked this directness, as if their own masks betrayed them, making them speak their minds more clearly and dangerously. This suggested the director's stark reading of the play: that in a world so endangered, the only community worth having is one in which people are ready to challenge each other, to risk offense, if it compels others to reveal their hearts.

Close attention to the text was combined with a more postmodern interest in layers of performance and choreographed movement. Multifaceted forms of music and dance that took their cue from the original text's preoccupation with the erotic and oceanic power of music connected the action of the play. The young, punkish Sir Toby (Jared Coseglia) danced to raucous and noisy techno-music from his boom box. The court of the youthful and melancholy Orsino (Bob Airhart) included a lounge singer

(Andrea Haring) who serenaded the duke with old torch songs, including Peggy Lee's "Perhaps." Feste (Kevin Kuhlke), alone on the stage at the beginning of the second act, strummed Bach on his guitar. And when Viola (Jocelyn Rose), disguised as the boyish messenger Cesario, told the mourning Olivia (Christianna Nelson) how he/she would woo her, she (Viola) broke into a brief impromptu aria, as much to her own surprise as to Olivia's.

A corps of dancers on stage (guided wonderfully by Dan Weltner) also formed an ever-changing, secondary world of bodily motions, picking up on hidden energies in the plot. In the show's opening scene, for example, two groups of dancers faced each other, moving in wave-like, advancing and retreating masses to create onstage the sea-storm that divides the fated brother and sister—a storm described but never shown in the original text. In Orsino's house, the torch singer seemed to draw dancers onto the stage for an impromptu tango. And following Olivia's speech acknowledging her fearful love for Cesario, a solitary dancer (Ellie Dvorkin) moved with slow, meditative simplicity across the stage, translating the note of Olivia's love into a different key. Another lone dancer (Brendan McCall), moving behind a scrim, imaged for us the menaced, isolated feelings of Antonio (Craig Bacon), apparently betrayed by the young man he had saved from drowning.

These elements of movement and music—supported by Loren Bevan's sparely elegant costumes, a subtle score of storm-noises and melodies by composer Elizabeth Stanton, and lush, shifting lighting by Matthew Adelson—did more than just provide a symbolic accompaniment or underscoring for the action. It reinforced the intense, sometimes mysterious sense of complicity that marked the work of the ensemble cast and produced such unexpected turns on the text. A single example will suffice here. Kevin Kuhlke's volatile but reflective, brooding Feste was protective of Olivia, and often distrustful of the work of amateur fools. He could even at moments show a strange solicitude for the very man he had helped to gull, the steward Malvolio (strongly and scarily played by Randolph Rand). This was especially marked in the cellar scene, as the abject, imprisoned servant lay half-naked on the ground, staring into the fictive darkness with wide open eyes. In the original text, Feste, having agreed to convey a letter from Malvolio to Olivia, departs the stage singing a song that invokes the comic Vice of the morality plays, fighting the devil with a wooden sword. At the end, the "old Vice" cries "like a mad lad, 'Pare thy nails, dad / Adieu, goodman devil!'" In this production, while Feste began the song, it was com-

pleted by the imprisoned Malvolio as he rose and walked slowly offstage, half stealing the song for himself, half accepting it as a gift. Sung with restrained, dream-like menace, the ditty became both a token of some shifted self-knowledge in Malvolio and an expression of his wished-for (if still comic) revenge against those who had so notoriously abused him.

**KENNETH GROSS**  
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**SALOME.** By Richard Strauss and Hedwig Lachman, after the play by Oscar Wilde. Directed by Atom Egoyan. Canadian Opera Company, Hummingbird Centre, Toronto. 5 February 2002.

In an article in Toronto's *The Globe and Mail*, just before this revival of his 1996 production opened, Atom Egoyan recorded his renewed sense of liberation in stripping away the extraneous imagery that is often associated with Strauss's *Salome*: "I became really thrilled by this almost lost piece of text by Oscar Wilde . . . I think we forget that it is a psychodrama, almost Strindbergian with this focus on a dysfunctional family" (19 January 2002: R4). While his claim that Wilde's text is almost lost is debatable, the success of Egoyan's production depended primarily on his reexamination of the libretto and bold discarding of its production traditions. Staged in Derek McLane's claustrophobic, tilted chamber, overlooked by mysterious sentries on a covered bridge and upstaged by video and film projections that at times disrupted the characters' pretensions, the Herod family's battle was enacted in modern dress by a cast that made the opera's depiction of overheated eroticism very credible.

Egoyan's production seemed to be particularly inspired by his reading of the final scene, in which Salome's predatory desire for Jochanaan's body climaxes in triumph over his severed head and Herod's equally predatory desire for Salome's body climaxes in his having her crushed by his soldiers' shields. Egoyan changed the ending in a small but radical way: no soldiers responded to Herod's command, and he himself strangled her with the blindfold that had belonged to Jochanaan and had become a kind of fetish for Salome. The strangulation not only signified the silencing of Salome's monstrous sexuality, but brought together references to the two bodily images that dominate the text and had visually dominated Egoyan's production—eyes and mouths. As Slavoj Žižek observes,