

Director's Note:

Frank Kermode described *Twelfth Night* as “A comedy of identity, set on the borders of wonder and madness.”

Our production is set within the framework of a masque, a renaissance entertainment mounted to please the men and women of the ruling class. Music, dance, and verse all play a part. Yes, it's a play but much more and yet, not quite the same.

Masques were not played in theatres but in grand halls, often in palaces. There is evidence to say that Twelfth Night was first presented in such a hall, and you will see that Brian Jones' wonderful set represents the features of such a building while incorporating the thrust stage that was so much a part of Shakespeare's theatre.

So our play does not attempt to achieve spatial realism. The space in which we play is nowhere, and everywhere, too. It is an empty space, now here, now there, now rich, now spare, an empty hall where we create our reality by virtue of the manner in which we elect to behave.

Because the play requires the presence of a noble class, but also a sense of changing order, we have chosen to set it in that period of time now known as Empire...the time that Napoleon was the driving and turbulent force in Europe, roughly the first decade of the nineteenth century. Kate Twilley's exciting and colorful costumes reflect that period and at the same time serve admirably to support our memorable individual characters.

In addition to Brian and to Kate, I am grateful to a number of other talented collaborators and in addition to faculty members appearing in acting roles, wish to acknowledge David Martynuik for his original music, Joan Van Dyke for choreography, alumnus Forrest Trimble for his lighting, and Darrel Rushton, visiting artist from Frostburg State University for his fight choreography. All have been more than generous in their contributions to our professionally-modeled production program and in doing so have set terrific examples for our students to emulate.

Understanding that we are staging a Masque, our approach to *Twelfth Night* will be unapologetically presentational. We are not attempting to represent any naturalistic reality. Instead, in a spirit of celebration of the human condition we will don and fill the masks of Shakespeare's characters with the sure knowledge that in doing so we can best reveal their truth.

The subtitle of Twelfth Night is “What You Will,” that is “Please yourself.” We are celebrating freedom from convention...we understand that one of the lessons of the play is that we should be *who we are* rather than *whom we may be expected to be*. And we expect our audience, whom we know well, to want to celebrate that freedom with us!

Welcome to Theatre by the Grove and welcome to Twelfth Night

– Michael Hood

Associate Member Stage Directors and Choreographers (SDC)

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