

Theatre Review

The Globe Theatre's 2012 production of Twelfth Night is a retelling of William Shakespeare's marvellous comedy. Bursting with a cast of highly memorable personalities, Twelfth Night integrates high comedy with ferocity and the pain of unreciprocated love. This hilarious play of misunderstandings is an award-winning production. The 2012 Original Practices version uses the costumes, dance, music and backdrops feasible at the Globe surrounding 1601. This production of Twelfth Night also did a run on Broadway in 2013; this resulted in the play being awarded two Tony awards and five nominations. The Tony Awards were for Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Play for Mark Rylance's performance as Olivia: and Best Costume Design. The play runs for a lengthy 176 minutes, but every minute is filled with exceptional actors and funny moments.

This enjoyable ensemble consists of Paul Chahidi as Maria, Samuel Bennet as Sebastian, Liam Brennan as Orsino, Mark Rylance as Olivia, Johnny Flynn as Viola/Cesario, Stephen Fry as Malvolio, Roger Lloyd Pack as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Colin Hurley as Sir Toby Belch, John Paul Connolly as Antonio, James Garnon as Fabian, Peter Hamilton Dyer as Feste, Ian Drysdale as Priest/Valentine, Jethro Skinner as the Captain and finally Ben Thompson as Curio.

The creative minds behind the stage of Twelfth Night are Director Tim Carroll, Designer Jenny Tiramani, Composer Claire van Kampen, Choreographer Sian Williams, Directed for the screen by Ian Russell, and Musical Director Adrian Woodward.

Mark Rylance plays the role of Olivia, an attractive young woman who rebuffs Brennan's Count Orsino's advances due to her view of staying in mourning for her father and brother, only to fall for Flynn's Viola disguised as Cesario, a young woman who survives a shipwreck. Rylance's performance must have a dual suspension of disbelief; he is not merely male but also middle age. However, this amplifies the humour. The middle-aged Olivia recites her opening lines with extremely stiff decorum in a complete mourning gown with a veil, which becomes more comical when she throws herself abruptly towards Viola, who seems very frightened by this interaction. While it is difficult to envision the reason Orsino would be infatuated with this version of Olivia, in this fickle society displayed in Twelfth Night, that seems to matter barely.

Rather we view a play delicately designed for comedic relief - and who would not enjoy that?

Johnny Flynn's performance as Viola/Cesario is done incredibly and effortlessly. Flynn's Viola, a male actor playing a woman dressing as a young man, was the most feminine character, ironically. Flynn's loving gaze at Brennan's Orsino was heartwarmingly convincing. The scene with Viola and Orsino listening to Feste singing was a very romantic scene where the audience could feel the sexual tension; It was a perfect display of how to invoke good theatre out of thin air.

This production centres and develops the female characters more than previous productions. Maria is frequently portrayed as merely a sidekick for Sir Andrew Aguecheek and Sir Toby Belch; however, in this production, Maria is the leader and creator of the scheme against Malvolio; and is portrayed as a knowledgeable woman. Mark Rylance's Maria adds a great deal of dry humour and slapstick comedy to duller scenes.

This production of Twelfth Night attempts and succeeds at turning back the clock to display how it would have looked at the time of its premiere by using make-up that beckons to the Shakespearean period. Shakespeare's Globe uses Original Practices, a unique experiment created at the Globe and used historical performances to transform modern theatre practices. The Globe states in an article entitled '*Original Practices at Shakespeare's Globe*' in 2020 that: 'The reconstruction of a Shakespearean amphitheatre was premised on the idea that it would provide the ideal context for testing out what academics knew of early modern playing practices'.

There are many elements to Original Practices; one of these elements is the actor and audience relationship. In modern-day theatres, the audience resides in darkness, so the actors cannot see them; however, at the Globe, everyone sees everyone, leading to special relations with the actors. The actors are able to talk directly to the audience or acknowledge the audience's reaction. This produces a familiar experience in which the audience becomes a crucial part of the performance.

Another element of 'Original Practices' is make-up. The make-up used in this production of Twelfth Night ventured to replicate the look of Shakespeare's era and verification found in portraits from the

Elizabethan era. The production could not use the original ingredients as the Elizabethan era used white lead and vinegar for the white face paint. It was switched out for a white pigment assorted with almond oil and chalk; this was discovered to be a close and risk-free alternative. They also used crumbled-up pink chalk to represent Elizabethan blusher.

Another element of 'Original Practices' is the music. The production hired Claire van Kempen, as Musical Director, to develop original methods of utilising Elizabethan era music in the theatre. Music plays an active role in the production. The musicians were regularly on stage, becoming part of the onstage players, or were positioned in the Musicians Gallery to symbolise the Music of the Spheres. Music was seen and heard, and the production only used imitations of instruments for the period.

Another part of 'Original Practices' is clothing. This production of Twelfth Night had Jenny Tiramani managing the clothing and design of the play. Elizabethan plays concentrated on the actor's clothing rather than the detailed and intricate backdrops we see in today's productions. Mark Rylance, who played Maria, wished to don clothing that had identical integrity as the Globe. The Globe was constructed of oak and plaster, so Rylance requested Jenny to utilise the same principles in the clothing. All the players were dressed in complete Shakespearean clothing, beginning with a smock and ending with being laced up into dresses. The costumes changed the actors' posture and breathing and shifted dynamics. To highlight these costume decisions, this production of Twelfth Night used the Tiring House, so the audience was able to view the actors getting into costumes.

Another component of 'Original Practices' is the all-male cast. In the Elizabethan era, all actors were male, with female characters portrayed by young boys. The Globe chose not to get young boys to play female characters but to have men portray women's roles in this all-male production. Mark Rylance is known for playing predominantly female characters in Shakespeare's plays: he played Cleopatra in Antony and Cleopatra in 1999, Olivia in Twelfth Night in 2002, and again now playing Olivia in Twelfth Night. This play and other 'Original Practices' productions have caused criticism from people who see all-male casts being produced today as misogynistic.

Overall, this version of the Globe's Twelfth Night was filled with

exceptional actors giving outstanding performances. There was distinct chemistry between Count Orsino and Viola/Cesario. The actors take Shakespeare's words from the page to the stage with incredible ease. The most enjoyable scene in this production is when Sir Andrew gets stuck in a box tree that he and Belch had hidden in; sir Andrew ends up walking off the stage with the box tree still trapped around his neck. The production makes a 420-year-old play feel current and fresh - a rare accomplishment for any play. I would encourage people to view this marvellous play.

The website I used and more information on Shakespeare's Globe Original Practices can be found at: <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/blogs-and-features/2020/04/30/original-practices-at-shakespeares-globe/#:~:text='Original%20Practices'%20refers%20to%20a,to%20transform%20modern%20theatre%20practice>.