

Magical maritime ‘Twelfth Night’

By Examiner Staff
Sep 13, 2012

1 of 2



Courtesy PhotoCharlie Gurke
By Examiner Staff

From the opening scene of We Players’ site-specific “Twelfth Night” on the Hyde Street Pier, it’s clear this will be a unique rendering of one of Shakespeare’s most delightful comedies.

Welcomed to the seaport town of Illyria from a balcony, we then traipse down to a beach to see the shipwrecked heroine, Viola (director Ava Roy), being rowed frantically ashore.

Viola, in a muddy white dress, golden curls in disarray, leaps out of the rowboat, wades through the frigid Bay waters and collapses in shrieking hysteria onto the sand, weeping for her lost-at-sea brother, Sebastian, and her fate in this strange place.

#link_box { width: 150px; height: auto; margin: 0; padding: 0; margin: 10px 20px 10px 0px; padding:

```
10px; background-color: #fbfade; /* ecru – light yellow */ border: 1px solid #343a25; /* green – for
summer arts */ float: left; font-family: arial, sans serif; font-size: 11px; } #link_box img, #link_box a {
border 0px; border-style: none; outline: none; } #link_box h1 { margin: 0; padding: 5px; border-
bottom: 1px solid #ddd; text-transform: none; color: #8A0808; font-family: arial, sans serif; font-
weight: bold; font-size: 12px; text-align: center; } #link_box h2 { margin: 0; padding: 5px; border-
bottom: 1px solid #ddd; text-transform: none; color: #000; font-family: arial, sans serif; font-weight:
bold; font-size: 10px; text-align: center; } #link_box ul { list-style: none; margin: 0; padding: 0;
border: none; } #link_box li { margin: 0px padding: 0px; border-bottom: 1px solid #ddd; border-
bottom-width: 1px; } #link_box li a { display: block; padding: 5px 5px 5px 15px; /* Padding for bullet
*/ /* border-bottom: 1px solid #ddd; border-bottom-width: 1px; */ color: #000; width: 100%; width:
auto; /* height: auto; */ /* border: 1px solid blue; */ margin: 0px; font-family: arial, sans serif; font-
size: 11px; line-height: 14px; text-decoration: none; } #link_box li a: before { /* background-position:
top left; */ } #link_box li a: hover { background-color: #ddd; color: #000; }
```

Twelfth Night

Presented by We Players

- **WHERE:** Hyde Street Pier, S.F.
- **WHEN:** 5:30 p.m. Fridays, noon and 5:30 p.m. Sat.-Sun.; closes Oct. 7
- **Admission:** \$45 to \$80
- **CONTACT:** (415) 547-0189,
weplayers.org

When she regroups and announces her intention to pass herself off as a boy to serve the local authority, Duke Orsino, we're ready to follow her, and the rest of the players, anywhere.

This "Twelfth Night" — in which Viola, fetchingly disguised as a page, falls in love with the Duke (Charlie Gurke), who is himself hopelessly enamored of the grieving Olivia — is set in the Jazz Age, complete with a traveling jazz band (original music by Gurke).

The mix of detailed period costumes by Julia Meeks, catchy tunes and occasional dancing, not to mention the nautical ambiance, is a perfect fit for this tale of mistaken identities and unrequited love (including Olivia's for the disguised Viola, and Malvolio's for his mistress, Olivia).

Over the course of about three hours, we follow the players from the beach to the pier to the deck of the 1890 ferryboat the Eureka (Olivia's residence) to the Eureka's inner chambers.

The acting is uneven, but many of the players excel, including John Hadden as snarky Feste, Clara

Kamunde's lovelorn Olivia, Caroline Parsons' saucy Maria, Benjamin Stowe as a Jim Carrey-like Andrew Aguecheek (he's also the show's fine fight choreographer) and Dhira Rauch as Sir Toby Belch.

Some nuances of text and relationship are lost in this expansive production, especially scenes projected across the pier from the upper deck of the 1886 sailing vessel the Balclutha, Orsino's abode.

But the comedy sparkles. Funniest fight scene ever: the swordfight between two timid opponents, Aguecheek and Viola.

That, plus the antics and malevolent playfulness of Aguecheek, Belch, Feste and Maria; Steve Ross' churlish Malvolio, and the multitalented Roy's magnetic Viola — not to mention natural scenery with ambient sounds of creaking boats, screeching gulls and barking seals — make up for any minor weaknesses in this boldly imaginative production.