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Twelfth Night at Middle Temple Hall and the London Globe, 2002

Paul A. S. Harvey

Twelfth Night was performed in London with an all male cast at the Middle Temple Hall in February 2002, and again at the Globe Theatre during the summer season. Cast and production details are given at the end. The occasion was the four hundredth anniversary of the performance seen by the law student John Manningham in the same Hall (the feast of Candlemas, February 2 1602), and about which he wrote a short account in his diary. It was fairly common for plays to be put on in the Inns of Court on festival days. The date of the play's composition is uncertain, but it is likely to have been written some time before it was first seen by Manningham. It used to be argued (by Leslie Hotson) that it was written to coincide with the visit of an Italian nobleman, Don Virginio Orsino, to Court, who was entertained at a play (intriguingly, on January 6, 1601) but the time between the notice of his arrival and the necessary preparation of the script was very short, and the portrait of Orsino in the play is not very flattering. It seems more likely that the script was prepared after an impression of the Italian nobleman had been taken (as perhaps a somewhat vain individual), allowing a courtly audience to enjoy the joke. The title of the play actually refers to the twelfth day after Christmas (January 6), which brought the Christmas celebrations to an end.

Mark Rylance, the artistic director of the Globe, had been approached by Anthony Arlidge QC of the Middle Temple, with the proposal to turn the Hall into a playing space again. Rylance accepted with alacrity. The Hall itself is a magnificent building. It was built between 1562 and 1575, and was therefore still rather new in 1602. It was very costly to construct, with money being levied on all the students. It measures about 30 m in length and 13 m wide. The side walls are of brick with a glazed clerestory above, and oak-paneling below. Above there is a magnificent double hammerbeam roof, supported by external buttresses. At the time of construction, the roof would have been one of the finest of its kind in England. At the east end there is a fine carved screen, shattered during the Second World War, and painstakingly reconstructed. In Shakespeare's time,

seating for a play would have probably involved rows of benches, with perhaps a temporary trestle stage at one end. For this performance, a better solution was found by placing tiered seating for 450 along three sides of the Hall, with the east end left free for entrances. The dining table was moved out, and the play was performed in the centre aisle of the Hall. The audience were thus all very close to the players, and this was undoubtedly a strong feature of the production. The floor itself was oak, and to judge by its condition, had been relaid in the recent past. It was beautifully sprung, and responded very well to the dancing by the cast. The beauty and dignity of the Hall itself made it a superlative venue; and the sense that it was exactly contemporary with the work, and with the style of the costumes worn, gave one a powerful sense of the continuity of English culture.

In tune with this sense of English tradition, Rylance gave us a fairly orthodox *Twelfth Night*, returning to the interpretation favoured earlier this century, in which the various elements balance one other. In the last half century or so, a more textual interpretation of the play has been usual, with the result that the play becomes markedly less festive —with a very unsympathetic Sir Toby, and a positively tragic Malvolio. The lighter touch visible at Middle Temple Hall was encapsulated by a gesture made by Sebastian at the end. He turned and beckoned to Antonio (so often forgotten) to come and join the festivities. Despite Malvolio's discomfiture, it was an ending with an extended circle of happiness.

Undoubtedly Jenny Tiramani's costumes took the spotlight at Middle Temple Hall. From our vantage point seated a few feet above the playing area, we could examine them at leisure, and consider how they affected movement in the playing area. They were indeed superb. Research had been conducted at the V & A, and period materials only were used: linen, silk, wool and leather. Great pains had been taken in reproducing period stitching and patterns, all of which is important to the final look of the costume. The Tudor Group (a society conducting research into the Elizabethan way of life) was consulted about Elizabethan etiquette and movement, giving advice on such things as the fact that it was rude when doffing one's hat to reveal the lining. Symbolic colours were used: the twins' (Viola, Sebastian) doublets were lined with pink, a colour believed to protect from harm. Emblems were used in Orsino's costume: his night-cap was decorated with rain clouds for melancholy; his richly embroidered gloves featured gillyflowers which symbolized love and security. He had a floppy lace colour, brown doublet and

hose, with puffed pants. Orsino, quite rightly, was the best dressed. Maria's dress was sombre(since the household is in mourning), but she was given a yellow petticoat to wear beneath as a hidden key to her mischievous nature, (and also forming a hidden tie with Malvolio, who puts on yellow stockings).

Rylance, who played Olivia, made sure that we were conscious of costume-in-performance by moving as though on smooth oiled wheels, like a graceful Kabuki *onnagata* (female part played by a man), sweeping the train of his black silk and cotton skirts across the floor (one should say that the smooth gliding movement is more often found in Noh). Antonio's buff Venetians (loose breeches), and the capes, stocks and doublets (light green fabric) worn by the twins were exquisite. The soft pillbox hats (copotain) worn by various characters, and Toby Belch's gorgeous cape were also very striking. We were close enough to note the quality of the stitching, and in my case, in the front row, to marvel at the period cut of the shoes worn by Viola, with real leather cut away decoratively to show the stocking on the foot. Whereas in Japan, there is an unbroken tradition of male actors wearing women's clothes on stage going back (in the case of Kabuki) about 360 years, in England there is no such tradition. How should men wear Spanish farthingales on stage? Paul Chahidi as Maria provided a good model for future reference: he bustled about with small rapid steps, and managed to do so without parody. Clearly, the English *onnagata* must be unselfconscious and the movement must appear natural. Rylance's ghostly shimmer across the stage, while technically most impressive, drew too much attention to Olivia's movement. It is interesting to note how appreciation of costume and stage blocking altered on the transfer to the Globe. Viewed from the back of the middle gallery, one could appreciate the silhouette shape of the costume better, and enjoy the visual aesthetics of the different costume-shapes (the slender masculine tights and swollen doublet, the large female skirts and tight bodice) interacting together, triangular and rectangular shapes. Olivia had a memorable silhouette on stage, with the black veil over the coronet and the huge skirts of the farthingale.

Characterisation in the production was well-balanced, and the ensemble was strong. Sir Toby (Ian Talbot), who can be a ruthless exploiter, remained comparatively sympathetic throughout. Talbot conveyed a sense of infectious enjoyment. His final dismissive comments to Sir Andrew were not overplayed, as they can be. Sir Andrew, who can appear devastated, simply moved off very quickly. Talbot was taking us back to a Ralph Richardsonian Sir Toby, a disreputable rascal but always good company. In the Middle

Temple Hall production, Toby and Maria eschewed intimacy, but in the Globe Toby gave Maria a rather passionate kiss. Can one could object to this on the grounds that there would have been no male/male kissing on the Elizabethan stage (of a passionate kind)? There was some earthy humour on "A plague of these pickled herring!" played as Toby passing wind, rather than belching, with Olivia and others retreating sharply, waving their hands in front of their noses. It got a good laugh. The revels scene (2.3) was indeed good humoured. One realized that it would be even more so if one was watching the play after a good dinner in the same hall: the venue and the play seemed made for each other. There was good natured chorusing together, and dancing on the central table. At the Globe, Toby retrieved flasks of drink from foliage hidden in various places around the stage—this provided a good running gag. Later in the play, the lines "Come by and by to my chambers"—spoken when Toby decides to leave off baiting Malvolio, "I would we were well rid of this knavery"—are addressed to Feste, as they should be, rather than to Maria (in the Globe performance these lines were addressed to Maria). Toby and Maria went off together anyway, which is sufficient. These lines are used to account for the sudden announcement of their marriage at the end, but the whole effect of this should be surprise. Maria is not as inappropriate a match as one might think nowadays: she would have been lower gentry, perhaps Olivia's distant relative. Sir Toby's marriage to her is a mark in his favour—he marries her for her wit, for she would have been without much inheritance. It is a curious inversion of Malvolio's fantasy of marrying the wealthy Olivia.

Paul Chahidi was a charismatic Maria. He bustled about the stage, fussing here and there. He gave the part more humour than usual—on being kissed by Sir Toby (Globe production) he turned to the audience with a slow, delighted grin, and won a huge laugh. There was malice towards Malvolio, which was expressed by dripping hot candle wax onto him through the dungeon grill (Globe), which Toby put a sharp stop to. This was a good moment, softening Toby's portrait and highlighting a viciousness in Maria. Chahidi was greatly appreciated by the Globe audience. Angus Wright's Sir Andrew was in general rather subdued, despite the fact that in some productions it can be a star part. He was tall with the prerequisite straw-like hair, (about which jokes are made during the play). His famous line "I was adored once too," which is a surefire laugh in most productions, and is usually played up to accentuate the pathos, was here played down, in keeping with Sir Andrew's role in general—the less we sympathize with him,

the less despicable Sir Toby appears at the end. Orsino (Terence Maynard) strode on dramatically for scene one, planting his legs firmly apart, staring boldly round and delivering "If music be the food," with an edge of aggression. Cast against expectation (Orsino being generally rather effete), Maynard is tall and powerfully built and is also ethnically Black British. The production was following a "colour-blind" policy, in which ethnic origin is ignored. He tended to heave out the lines instead of letting the music sing. He made a strong physical impact in the narrow setting of the Middle Temple Hall, but the lack of finesse with the important lines was a problem. This was shown up when he was paired with Viola, who was so sweetly articulate. Maynard is a Globe veteran, having played Demetrius and Agrippa in *Antony and Cleopatra* in the 1999 season.

Rylance's Olivia was an intense, careful portrait. She was withdrawn and wintry, affected deeply by loss, melancholic and self-absorbed, perhaps even slightly neurotic. She had a drawn white face with closely cropped hair and a small wig. She was a good few years older than Viola (reversing the tendency in recent years to make Olivia and Viola the same age). She was stiff and awkward to Viola's agility. Her contact with Viola served to bring her out of her enclosed shell. She had a good working relationship with Malvolio, and her first scene established a sense of her daily routine, seated at the large wooden table placed in the centre, signing the documents that Malvolio handed to her, looking rather like Elizabeth I. Rylance was good at conveying a sense of social distance between Olivia and her servants. There was some comic business, the most notable of which was handing the ring to Malvolio, to be given to Viola. This was a spontaneous decision, and she took the ring from her own finger, saying that Viola had given it to her, an absurdity since she simply could not at first get it off her finger. Here, one noted how differently the audience reacted; in Middle Temple Hall he got a good laugh, but at the Globe the laughter was louder and more prolonged. One felt that in general Rylance's Olivia was rather cold, and yet there were passionate embraces, an impulsive kiss for Viola and later, Sebastian acceding to her request, a very passionate kiss. The production seemed to be making a statement about the acceptability of the manifestation of gay sexuality.

Rylance had spent time at the Kabukiza in Tokyo when the company was in Japan on tour (September 2001) studying Tamasaburo Bando's skill as an *onnagata*. This was where his stage movement came from. In the context of this performance it served to underscore Olivia's eccentricity and strangeness, floating about in such a ghostly manner.

Although I applaud Rylance's skill, I found that it was inappropriate. How should one move in a farthingale? Perhaps the only rule would be that one does not move very much; one allows the men more mobility. Rylance's movement also brought to mind another issue important in Japanese theatre. This is the sound that is made by the performer on the stage itself. Depending on the nature of the surface (the polished oak floor of the Hall, or the rough oak planks of the Globe) and the hollowness beneath, a different sound will be made; and this will differ according to the footwear, and whether it is muffled or not. Olivia could enter with a series of sharp clacking sounds made by fashionable wooden heels, or more quietly, with soft leather shoes.

Eddie Redmayne's Viola, of all the parts played in a balanced ensemble, came closest to stealing the show. His first entry was dramatic, a table having been placed at the east end of the hall, with a cloth over it. When the table was lifted up, Viola tumbled forward—"What country friends, is this?" Redmayne (at the time a second-year student at Cambridge) was tall and elegant, with a wig, and with pastel pink lipstick smeared on. He was an attractive, convincing English *onnagata*. He had sculpted a real personality, a jittery, nervous, delicate Viola. We saw this in the way that she would unself-consciously become lost in thought, almost distracted by her own thoughts, and also in her shyness. He was restrained in the "willow cabin" speech (with little emphasis on "Olivia!" as sometimes happens) and also "patience on a monument"—perhaps these pieces needed more passion. Following the recognition scene, Orsino proposed to the wrong twin: to Sebastian rather than to Viola, and laughing, Viola took his hand. The mistake also highlighted the shallowness of Orsino's love, and mirrored the mistake made by Olivia. Sebastian (Rhys Meredith for both performances), in his major speech, "This is the air, that is the glorious sun" (4.3.1) showed that it can be a moving speech when spoken well. Meredith was a consistently strong Sebastian, with a gift for speaking verse well.

The relationship between Antonio (Patrick Brennan) and Sebastian was somewhat underplayed, and perhaps in this alone the production lost an opportunity. The Shakespearean Antonio figure, willing to sacrifice self for his loved friend (whether homosexual or not), is very important. In *The Merchant*, willing to lay down his life for Bassanio, he calls to mind the sacrifice of Christ—the ultimate example of selfless love. In *Twelfth Night*, Antonio the sea captain plays a similar role, putting himself in danger for Sebastian. Antonio's love for Sebastian is important because it provides a yardstick

against which to measure the quality of love shown by Orsino, Olivia, Sir Andrew (for Olivia), Malvolio (for Olivia), and of course Viola. All these are self-seeking; the exception, the love that denies its own self-interest, is Viola's, who woos Olivia on behalf of Orsino, when she herself would be his wife. Antonio, in a sense, is the same: acting against his own self-interests, he intervenes to save the man he thinks is Sebastian, and is captured and sentenced to death.

Feste, (Peter Hamilton Dyer) who often contributes a note of melancholy, (past productions would hint that he was secretly in love with Olivia, a sad, unspoken and unrequited love) was a rumbustious semi-clown, with a good (if slightly cracked) voice. He was more of a musician than a clown. He limped for most of the Middle Hall production, dragging his leg. When we came to the final jig, he shook his bad leg, it loosened up and he leapt and danced as nimbly as the others. Within the context of the play his symbolic bad leg suggested perhaps that the spirit of festivity was somehow disabled; it also drew our sympathy. Feste thus became a clown who was merry in spite of circumstance, whose melancholy and occasional wryness found an explanation in his own difficulties. His rendition of "Come away, come away death," which was given solo in the playing area was well-received, winning applause. At 3.1, which Viola introduces with "Save thee, friend, and thy music! Dost thou live by thy tabor?" Feste entered, playing very capably on a tabor (drum) and a pipe. Feste's confrontations with Malvolio were not pointed as strongly as they sometimes are. Malvolio's dismissive comments to Feste early on were clearly registered by Feste moving aside; but Feste's later riposte, "the whirligig of time," lacked the viciousness that it sometimes has. Malvolio's "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you," was a reasonable retort by a very angry person, with good reason to be angry, but not mad by any means. In the Globe production, Hamilton Dyer did away with lameness. He was in very good voice, and succeeded in reducing the amphitheatre to complete silence with "Come away, come away death."

Malvolio (Oliver Cotton) was a serious, priggish individual, but not particularly dislikeable. It was an unforceful characterization. In general, in the Middle Hall production, there was a shortage of laughs. In order to make Malvolio amusing, resort must be had to stage business, since the play itself does not really allow him to be funny for a modern audience. For the original audiences, one can speculate that added humour would have been found in the fact that Malvolio probably represented a hated public figure. Guy Henry RSC 2001 made comic capital out of his long spindly legs; and also Donald

Sinden in the celebrated Barton production from the end of the sixties, famously corrected a sundial on the stage after consulting his wristwatch, which got a huge laugh. In this production stage props associated with Malvolio were ingeniously constructed: the dungeon was a large trunk-like box with a grill on the top through which his fingers could be seen. The boxtree was a conical structure built of green box-like hedging through which the heads of the three characters poked out, with Sir Andrew getting stuck at the top, and having to be helped out. All props had to be very portable. There were plentiful laughs from the audience at the comments made by the three conspirators. When Malvolio was reading the letter he left the stage as he finished, and came back with, "And there's a postscript," which got a good laugh. Justification for the trick played on him was supplied in his scornful and dismissive treatment of Maria, but, as noted above, his dismissal of Feste was not heavily accented. Indeed, in terms of austere puritanical sobriety, Olivia and Malvolio were more notably of the same mould in this production than is usual.

Music was a key aspect, as it has to be if the production is to be any good. It is something that the Globe does very well, performing live from the Gallery above the entrance to the Hall. There were some musical interpolations, with "Jolly Robin," which is the song that Feste sings to Malvolio in prison, sung by the whole cast at the beginning of Act 2, as they carried on the box-tree and left it close to the entrance. The music was light and up-tempo, and accentuated the festivity. The play concluded with a jig, an Elizabethan dance with well coordinated jumps, all the feet landing on the boards at the same time, striking a most pleasing rhythm; this was a triumphant ending, the costumes and music all blending to make a powerful statement about love achieved after trouble (the comic message) and symbolized in the harmony of the dance, which is the reason for having the dance there in the first place.

In general, the Globe performance was broadly the same as the Middle Temple Hall, with similar props and costumes. There were a handful of substitutes for some of the parts: Liam Brennan replaced Maynard as Orsino, Timothy Walker replaced Cotton as Malvolio, Michael Brown replaced Redmayne as Viola. However, after seeing the Globe performance, the Middle Temple Hall production suddenly appeared to have been rather dull. Such can be the impact of a single talented performer.

This was Timothy Walker, a flamboyant Malvolio, who showed us what happens when a gifted comic takes on the role. He had chalk-white make-up, and was dressed in black

with a Puritan pill-box hat, (recalling Olivier from the celebrated Gielgud production in Stratford in 1955). He put down the fool with bitter incisiveness. When he gave Olivia's ring to Viola, he threw it at her, and it bounced against her chest and fell to the stage: this petulant nastiness got a good laugh. As he read the letter he sidled comically across the stage from left to right; delighted, he positively skipped and danced in his excitement. In his interaction with Olivia, his excessive kissing and twirling of his hands was very funny indeed. Before the line "play with some rich jewel," he gestured towards his crotch, paused, let the audience laugh, delivered the line, and got a further laugh—he was taking every laugh that was going. Later, shut in the large wooden trunk, his white hand waving forlornly was very poignant. There was an interesting effect achieved here: in Middle Temple Hall this same trunk had seemed rather large, on the spacious Globe stage it seemed pitifully small, especially when viewed from the galleries. As the revelation of the plot occurred he clasped his head in pain and misery—certainly by this point there was sympathy for him, but he had got so many laughs that he was never really unsympathetic anyway. We did lose sight of Malvolio the mean-spirited steward; he became a Sindenesque clown. There was a sense that Walker had studied his Malvolian forebears very carefully, and revived a whole gamut of stage business. His success slightly unbalanced the production, since it became Malvolio-centred. This did not matter, since abundant laughter is most appropriate for a summer afternoon.

He did not, however, eclipse Rylance, who had (like Chahidi) gained in strength since the Middle Temple. Rylance managed to get many more laughs than in the earlier production. It was a rich interpretation, so that seeing Olivia again one noted new things. After Viola's delivery of the willow cabin speech, he made good use of a stutter to show the intensity of his feeling. Good sense was made of the difficult line "Even so quickly may one catch the plague," which he gave with a sense of shocked revelation. Later (3.1), in order to keep Viola longer with her, Olivia deliberately slips off her shoe, which Viola picks up and is left holding this incongruous love-token as she gives the lines "that you do think you are not what you are," and then casts it to the ground to emphasize, "Now I am your fool." This business with the shoe gave an added absurdity to the scene.

Liam Brennan was an improvement on Maynard, but he also needed to discover more musicality in the verse. Although more slightly built than the barrel-chested Maynard, he was not an obvious Orsino, if only for the fact that his dour Glaswegian accent

seemed a long way away from Orsino's effete volatility. He was particularly good, however, at conveying a half-perceived and burgeoning love for Viola, in 2.4. Feste sang from the balcony accompanied by period instruments, and Orsino sat facing us, and Viola sat with her back to us, on a bench close to the front of the stage; symbolically, they were facing different directions. His hand stole tentatively toward her, contemplating an approach, his face declaring a sensitive and tense vulnerability. The scene ended with an embrace between them, and from the yard we could note the firm pressure with which Viola pressed her hand to his back, admitting her love.

Good use of the Globe stage was made in the recognition scene. Viola and Sebastian entered from the doors either side, SL and SR. Viola moved to the pillar SL and Sebastian to the pillar SR, and recognition took place across the breadth of the stage. This was moving use of the dramatic space, the two coming together again across a wide symbolic space. The recognition concluded with a warm embrace.

Given this was a sunny production the edge of satire was blunted. This is welcome. Perhaps one would have liked a bit more satire, in particular making Orsino a bit more questionable as a character, i.e. pointing up his solipsism. Olivia was very good but perhaps Rylance could have given the lines a bit more music. The ensemble was a great strength. The thing about *Twelfth Night* is that one cannot have it all—but this is also its beauty. Vary the elements and one moves from summer to autumn and back again. Vary the venue, as we saw between the Hall and the Globe, and the play seems different again. However, there was a sense with Rylance and his team that we are beginning to have veterans on the Globe stage. There was an increase in craft, and easiness with the place and method—this is very good. We are now getting a particular style, a unique style—this is certainly something to look forward to in the years to come.

Cast and Production for January 29, 30 at Middle Temple Hall (MTH) /July 25, August 7 at the Globe, 2002
Details are taken from the programmes for both productions.
Notes in parenthesis imply that involvement was with that production only.

Master of Play: Tim Carroll
Master of the Words: Giles Block
Master of Voice: Stewart Pearce

Master of Movement: Glynn Macdonald (Globe)

Master of Clothing and Properties: Jenny Tiramani

Master of Music: Claire Van Kampen with Keith McGowan

Master of Dance: Sian Williams

Master of Light: Paul Anderson (MTH)

Production Managers: Richard Howey, Gerry Jeatt (MTH)

Artistic Director: Mark Rylance

Executive Producer: Greg Ripley-Duggan

Company Manager: Sid Charlton

Casting: Siobhan Bracke

Head of Research: Jaq Bessell

Programme: Nick Robins, Zoë Gray, Jessica Ryan

Musicians (MTH)

Flute/Recorder: Keith McGowan

Violin: Sharon Lindo, Helen Orsler

Bass viol: Jo Levine, Emilia Benjamin

Lute: Taro Takeuchi

Cittern: Robin Jeffrey, James Bisgood

Bandora: Kaz Michalak

Musicians (Globe)

Curtal/recorder/shawm: Keith McGowan/Keith Thompson

Theorbo/cittern/percussion: Robin Jeffrey/Doug Wotton

Rauschpfeife/curtal/bombard/recorder/violin: Sharon Lindo/Emily White

Rauschpfeife/curtal/bombard/recorder/lizard: Nick Perry/Keith Thompson

Rauschpfeife/curtal/bombard/recorder/flute: William Lyons/Belinda Sykes

Sackbut/recorder/trumpet: Tom Lees/Paul Bevan

Viola: Eddie Redmayne (MTH) /Michael Brown (Globe)

Sebastian: Rhys Meredith

Antonio: Patrick Brennan (MTH) /Colin Hurley (Globe)

Olivia: Mark Rylance

Maria: Paul Chahidi

Feste: Peter Hamilton Dyer

Malvolio: Oliver Cotton (MTH) /Timothy Walker (Globe)

Toby Belch: Ian Talbot (MTH) /Bill Stewart (Globe)

Andrew Aguecheek: Angus Wright (MTH) /Albie Woodington (Globe)

Orsino: Terence Maynard (MTH) /Liam Brennan (Globe)

Fabian/Captain: Richard Attlee (MTH) /Jan Knightley (Globe)

Valentine/Priest: Roger Gartland (MTH)/Peter Shorey (Globe)

Curio: Simon Hyde