



BROWN

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## PRESS RELEASE

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Tuesday, February 3, 2015

### **Brown Theatre Brings 1930s Romance to Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night***

Brown University Theatre is warming up the winter season with a new take on Shakespeare's comedy, *Twelfth Night; or What You Will*. Set in the jazz-fueled era of the 1930s, this production will bring a sense of romantic whimsy and yearning to the coastal region of Illyria. Comedic mistaken identity and subterfuge abound, as the party rages, the laughter flows, and the live jazz band plays on.

*Twelfth Night* is a story of mistaken identity, concealed truth, and comic revelation. When siblings, Viola and Sebastian, are shipwrecked off the coastal region of Illyria, each believes the other to be dead. Viola disguises herself as a man to find employment but unintentionally catches the eye of Olivia, the beloved of her new employer, Duke Orsino. To make matters worse, Viola has fallen for the Duke. The situation gets no less complicated when Sebastian arrives on the scene and is quickly mistaken for his sister, the disguised Viola, and finds himself married to Olivia. Meanwhile, Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek are wreaking havoc among the servants with no less need for illusion, confusion, and concealment. In the end, most things work out and everyone at least gets their just deserts.

Seattle-based director, Jane Nichols, is a renowned expert in theatrical clowning and brings this experience to bear in her work with the Brown University student cast. Nichols said of this production:

“When thinking about this piece, I was inspired by the work of Edward Hopper, in particular his painting, *Soir Bleu*. It was the Pierrot figure that drew me initially to the piece. A clown, smoking a cigarette and playing poker, is at a party. He is completely isolated from everyone else, yet he's sitting at the center of the table. Then I realized, wait! Everyone is isolated. They're all gathered around the same table but no one is talking, or even looking at one another. They're all listening to the same music, but no one is dancing. This is a world of people at a party, but nobody's partying.

*Twelfth Night* is a play of people looking for the party, for home, for connection, for love. Shakespeare's genius is that the impossibility of all of these lonely, misguided people finding 'home' is funny - really funny - even as it is tragic. And then there's the music. It's jazz! Live! Buoyant! Virtuosoic, optimistic, upbeat, life-affirming! It's also full of yearning, with a hint of loss. Yes, indeed, "if music be the food of love, play on!" Dance while the party's raging for, as Feste (*Twelfth Night's* Poirrot character), reminds us, 'Youth's a stuff will not endure ... and the rain it raineth every day.' ”

As part of its commitment to community engagement and engaged scholarship, the Department of Theatre Arts & Performance Studies at Brown University will also host several free workshops for local middle and high schools in Rhode Island, based around the production of *Twelfth Night*. Workshops are delivered by students and faculty from the department and offered in partnership with *Shakespeare in the City*, a unique, award-winning program from the Lincoln School, bringing students and teachers from around Providence to perform in a Shakespeare play together. In addition, all school groups in the local area are being offered reduced price tickets to see the show, with a chance to meet the cast and director after performances.

*Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will* is produced by the Brown University Department of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies and by Sock & Buskin, the student-staff-faculty board that selects and runs the mainstage theatre season at Brown University. *Twelfth Night; Or, What You Will* runs February 26th until March 8th, performances at 8pm, Thursday to Saturday. Sunday matinees at 2pm. Tickets: \$15 (\$12 seniors, \$7 students). For ticket sales and more information: call (401) 863-2838, or visit the Box Office in the Leeds Theatre Lobby (83 Waterman St, Providence), Tuesday - Friday from 12pm - 4pm, or email [boxoffice@brown.edu](mailto:boxoffice@brown.edu). To book online, visit: [brown.edu/tickets](http://brown.edu/tickets).

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