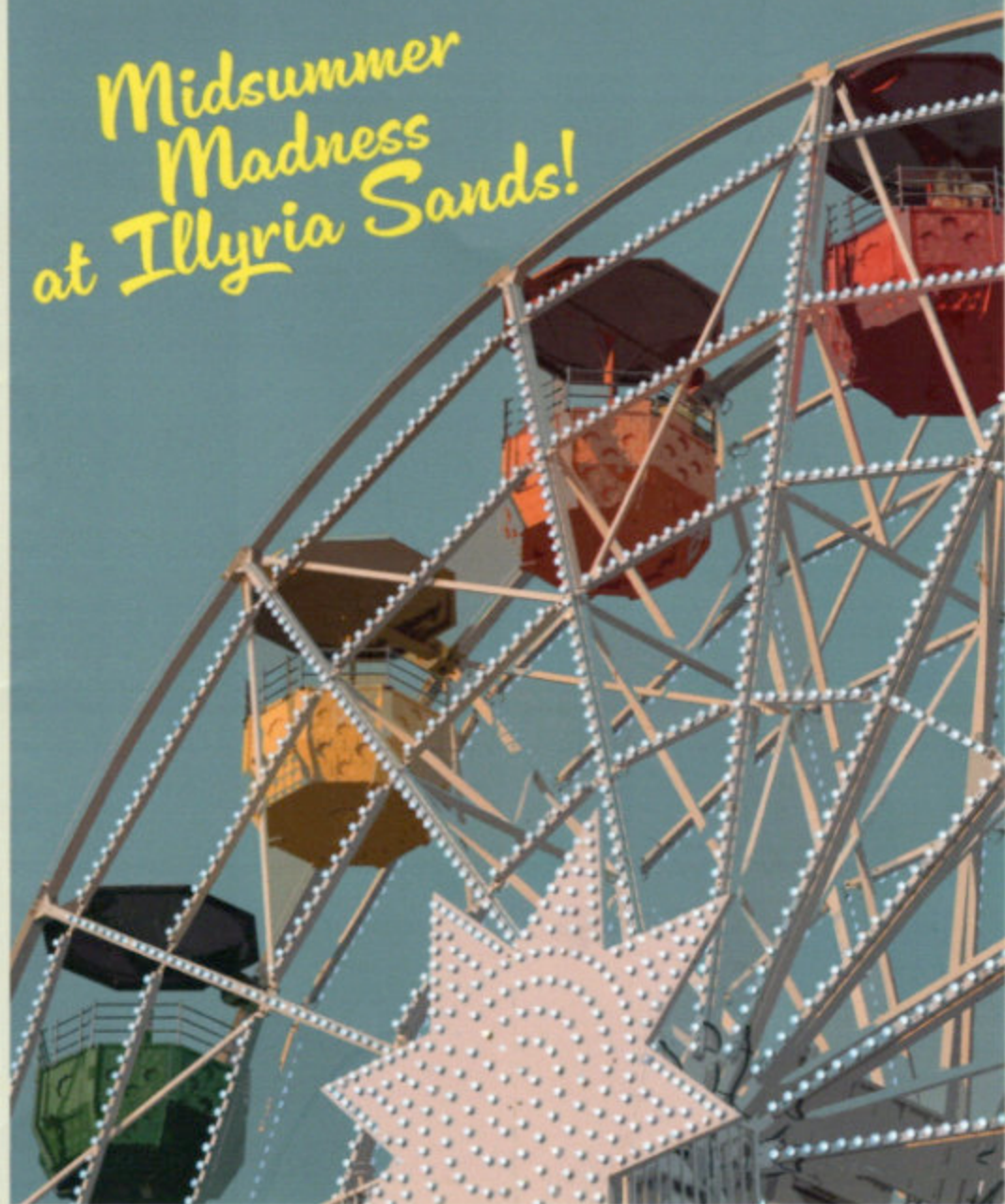


*Midsummer
Madness
at Illyria Sands!*



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S

TWELFTH NIGHT

- OR "WHAT YOU WILL" -

THU 24 JUL - SAT 2 AUG 2025 - 7.30PM

ABINGTON PARK MUSEUM COURTYARD

**MASQUE
THEATRE**





DIRECTORS' NOTE

Twelfth Night being staged in the summer? My masters, are you mad?

If so, there is method in our madness – despite the title, the play makes no reference whatsoever to the “festive period” anywhere within the text, but does make specific references to being in late spring or early/mid – summer. We have “More matter for a May morning” and “Why, this is very midsummer madness”, and the play seems to us to have the feel of a summer seaside resort. For that reason our version imagines Illyria as a Brighton or Blackpool of the late 1950s, with holiday camps, casinos and the kind of licence to misbehave a seaside trip seems to grant - as seen in day trip scenes in *Carry On At Your Convenience* when stuffy bosses and downtrodden workers are suddenly all on a level and having fun together.

This is where the real connection to the traditional *Twelfth Night* comes in, as in England it was, for many years, a festival celebrating topsy-turviness and role reversal - a tradition stretching back at least as far as ancient Rome and their Saturnalia when (moderately) transgressive behaviour was tolerated or even encouraged, and there are many such festivals around the world set at many different times of the year. Sometimes there would be a Lord of Misrule or a King of Fools (interestingly rarely a Lady or Queen!) and the swapping of genders and stations was commonplace, though again more commonly men dressing as women rather than the other way around.

Twelfth Night the play has many such inversions and swaps, transgressions and confusions, with more than a hint of same-sex attraction and plenty of Feast of Fools type pranks: a woman pretends to be a man; a servant pretends to be her mistress (in letter form at least); another servant aspires to marrying his mistress; and there is plenty of drinking, dancing and revels throughout. Antonio proclaims his love for Sebastian, and both Orsino and Olivia find themselves attracted to someone either of the same gender as them or pretending to be so.

Whilst this “confusion” is seemingly resolved at the end of the play, it is easy to wonder if all is really settled?

We have completely bought into the spirit of the feast of fools by leaning in to the silly, and celebrating gender fluidity in our casting and our costuming - we hope this all adds to the fun.
There will be cakes and ale...



**ORSINO - Jonathan Ellson**

This production marks Jonathan's debut with **Masque Theatre** and only his second Shakespeare production in almost thirty years in the amateur theatre. In recent years, he has performed leading roles in both plays and musicals including Pop Larkin (*Darling Buds of May*) and Seymour (*Little Shop of Horrors*) for which he received an Outstanding Individual Performance award from NODA. A professional musician and composer, he is an in-demand musical director having recently worked for **Wellingborough Pantomime Society** and **Tingdene Entertainers** (Finedon) and is Director of Music of **The Melody Choir** (Kettering) in addition to teaching private piano and singing lessons.

**CURIO - Carmen Simoni**

Last seen playing scatty servant girl Ruby Birtle in *When We Are Married*, Carmen rejoined **Masque Theatre** as tragic Lady Anne in 2022's *Richard III*, having previously been part of the Youth Theatre. She has since played mischievous Rupert in *Sleepy Hollow*, the titular do-gooder Daisy in *The Playhouse Theatre's Daisy Pulls It Off* and can be heard as dizzy Charlotte Palmer in *Nothing But Roaring's* audio adaptation of *Sense & Sensibility* this summer.

**VALENTINE - Maggie Holland**

Maggie has been acting for nearly half a century, covering a wide range of genres mainly within the "Am Dram" world. Favourite roles are as diverse as Ma Larkin (*Darling Buds of May*), Sister George (*The Killing of Sister George*) and Agrippa (*Antony and Cleopatra*). Celebrating 20 years with Masque, this current role is the third time John has cast her as a Shakespearean Man (a good director sees beyond the DD cups! or perhaps he needs to go to Specsavers?) Maggie is also catering manager for the group and is responsible for the home bakes on the refreshments stand.

**VIOLA / CESARIO - Holly Hughes-Rowlands**

Holly is delighted to be playing both Viola and Cesario (who are definitely not the same person, why would you think that?) in this production of *Twelfth Night*. This is her first time doing Shakespeare, and marks her second show for **Masque Theatre**, after having made her debut earlier this year playing Carol and Claire in Jim Cartwright's *Road*. When she is not acting in local theatre, Holly can be found with a harp, guitar or banjo in hand, performing as a folk singer-songwriter.

**CAPTAIN / GUARD - Peter Collins**

Peter has been with **Masque Theatre** since 2011, with his first production being *The Tempest*, where he played the role of Caliban. He has been in many productions since then, with **Masque** and **Moulton Theatre** being his main groups, and he recently also joined **Duston Players**.

His roles have been a varied mix of comedic or serious roles. Peter's last role for Masque was playing Lucius in *Titus Andronicus* and he hopes that *Twelfth Night* will be a lot more comedic!

**MARIA - Gemma Knight**

Gemma has been a member of **Masque** for 29 years but may have occasionally forgotten to renew her membership during that time so that honorary lifetime membership is still a little way off. As a performer, she has been seen as Paige in *Dinner*, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Boyet in *Love's Labour's Lost* and was last seen as Marianne in *Constellations*. Gemma has also had her sticky mitts on Directing and creative roles over the years. Always a fan of performing in Masque's outdoor Shakespeare productions and having had a few years off, Gemma is excited to return to a summer spent in the courtyard as part of a band of talented idiots.

Away from the stage, Gemma runs a youth arts programme providing opportunities for young people to gain experience of creative careers.

**SIR TOBY BELCH - Graham Breeze**

This is Graham's fifth year at Abington Park. Since playing Polixenes in last year's *The Winter's Tale*, he has appeared as John Cox in *Cox & Box* (Felice Opera), Gerald Bolingbroke in *Me and My Girl* (Putteridge Bury G&S), the Monseigneur in *Sister Act* (Company MK), Jackson in *The Ghost Train* (Duston Players), Noah/God in *Captain Noah & His Floating Zoo* (Flitwick), Mr Bald/Brian in *Road* (Masque), and Kenneth Grahame in *Wind in the Willows* (Rushden). He also directed *Nonsense* (Vestry Productions for The Arches, Olney), *Cox & Box* (Pirton) and *A Bunch of Amateurs* (The Playhouse, Northampton).

**SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK - Rik E. Dean**

Rik is positively titillated and delighted to be making a fool of himself as Sir Andrew Aguecheek. A connoisseur of fine (and not-so-fine) wines himself, Rik finds a particular kinship with Sir Andrew's dedication to a good vintage – though thankfully, his own wit, he hopes, is a shade sharper. Previous theatrical adventures for **Masque** include *Blackadder*, Autolycus in *A Winter's Tale*, and Death from *The Christmas Spirit*.

He hopes you enjoy the revelry and pray for Sir Andrews' liver and its continued resilience.

SCENE LIST

Location: Illyria, a British sea-side town, some time at the end of the 1950s

Scene 1 - Duke's Casino
Scene 2 - The sea front
Scene 3 - Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 4 - Duke's Casino
Scene 5 - Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 6 - The sea front
Scene 7 - Somewhere between Illyria Sands and Duke's Casino
Scene 8 - Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 9 - Duke's Casino
Scene 10 - Illyria Sands Beach
Scene 11 - Outside Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 12 - Illyria Sands Holiday Park

Interval - 15 minutes. Refreshments are available.

Scene 13 - A street near Duke's Casino
Scene 14 - Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 15 - Outside Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 16 - Illyria Police Cells
Scene 17 - Outside Illyria Sands Holiday Park
Scene 18 - Outside Illyria Sands Holiday Park, Evening

MASQUE'S 2025/2026 SEASON

EDWARD II by Christopher Marlowe

Church of the Holy Sepulchre
7-11 October 2025

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP by Charles Dickens

Church of the Holy Sepulchre
9-13 December 2025

HABEAS CORPUS by Alan Bennett

Christchurch Hall
17-21 February 2026

A NEW DEvised PIECE by the team that brought you A GRIMM TALE

Church of the Holy Sepulchre
28 April - 2 May 2026

CAST

in order of appearance

ORSINO, lovelorn owner of Duke's Casino ----- Jonathan Ellson
CURIO, one of Orsino's lackeys ----- Carmen Simoni
VALENTINE, another of Orsino's lackeys ----- Maggie Holland
VIOLA / CESARIO, a shipwrecked woman in disguise ----- Holly Hughes-Rowlands
CAPTAIN, at a loose end having sunk his ship ----- Peter Collins
MARIA, employee at Illyria Sands and "friend" of Olivia ----- Gemma Knight
SIR TOBY BELCH, used to be famous, now he's broke and drunk ---- Graham Breeze
SIR ANDREW AGUECHEEK, gullible hanger-on of Sir Toby's ----- Rik E. Dean
FESTE, roving musician, and Illyria Sands entertainer ----- Helena Enright-King
OLIVIA, manager of Illyria Sands Holiday Park, in mourning ----- Kate Morris
MALVOLIO, middle manager at Illyria Sands ----- Alex Rex
ANTONIO, pirate turned romantic action hero ----- Anderson North
SEBASTIAN, twin brother of Viola, here for a good time ----- Hari Turner
FABIAN, Illyria Sands employee and friend of Sir Toby ----- Bea Thomas
OFFICIAL, the local Neighbourhood Watch ----- Salli Belsham
GUARD, assistant to the Official ----- Peter Collins
PRIEST, a priest ----- Owen Warr

CREATIVES & CREW

DIRECTOR ----- John Myhill
DIRECTOR ----- Rebecca Cockcroft

MUSICAL COMPOSITIONS ----- Antony Newby & James Burgess
LIGHTING ----- Richard Walker
SOUND DESIGN ----- Rebecca Cockcroft
SOUND TECHNICIAN ----- Alistair Way
SET CONSTRUCTION ----- Mark Mortimer

POSTER & PROGRAMME DESIGN, AND PHOTOGRAPHY ----- Rebecca Cockcroft
RADIO DJ VOICE ----- John Myhill

BOX OFFICE ----- Masque Members
FRONT OF HOUSE ----- Masque Members
LIASON TO ABINGTON PARK MUSEUM ----- Robert Kendall
REFRESHMENTS ----- Maggie Holland

With thanks to the team at Abington Park Museum, Ian Allan, Robert Vaughan,
Xander Cockcroft, Jo Myhill, Philip Welsh and Beverley Webster



FESTE - Helena Enright-King

Helena is overjoyed to be playing the mischievous Feste in *Twelfth Night*. She is currently studying how amateur theatre might improve psychological wellbeing as part of a Master's in Positive Psychology. Her favourite roles include Doctor Kemp in *Duston Players' The Invisible Man*, Annelle in *Steel Magnolias* with Click Productions and Meg in *Masque Theatre's Little Women*.



OLIVIA - Kate Morris

Kate made her first appearance in an open air Shakespeare production aged 10 as a Baby Sprite in *The Tempest* at Polesden Lacey in Surrey, and has been hooked ever since. She spent several years performing as part of the *Oxford Shakespeare Festival* at Oxford Castle and has performed at many other venues including the Buxton Opera House, Edinburgh Fringe and village halls all over the south east. Kate is an award winning public speaking coach and for five years directed the student performances for the Oxford Shakespeare birthday celebrations. This is her third time doing *Twelfth Night* and she is thrilled to finally be playing Olivia, having previously played Antonia, the Captain and the French Narrator!



MALVOLIO - Alex Rex

Alex first joined *Masque* through the Youth Theatre many years ago and has since taken on a variety of roles both on and off stage.

Recent highlights include directing *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2023—while also appearing as a fairy. Alex is delighted to return for another summer Shakespeare production.



ANTONIO - Anderson North

Anderson is excited to be a part of his first summer Shakespeare production within *Masque Theatre*, previously working as John Brooke in *Masque's* production of *Little Women* and Edward Lyons in the tragic comedy of *Blood Brothers*.

He is excited to be working with so many talented people in a play that is full of midsummer madness.



SEBASTIAN - Hari Turner

Hari is very excited to play Sebastian in *Twelfth Night*, which is one of their favourite Shakespeare plays. This is somehow their tenth production in Northampton since moving here in November 2022, and what can they say? Acting with their friends is the highlight of their week. Previous roles include Jo March in *Little Women*, Lavinia in *Titus Andronicus*, Tobias in *Sweeney Todd* and Ichabod Crane in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. They also played Chad in *High School Musical* one time which is their "fun fact" when asked at various events.



FABIAN - Bea Thomas

Twelfth Night is Bea's first performance with *Masque Theatre* and she is thrilled to be playing the role of Fabian. Having studied Drama and Performance at University, Bea fell in love with the magic of theatre and performance; a love which has led her on to writing and performing her own poetry at local events across Northamptonshire (*Northampton Pride 2024*, *Umbrella Fair 2024*, *Kettfest 2025* to name a few!) Bea has always been an advocate for the transformative power of theatre, and takes this deep into her professional life as an English teacher.



OFFICIAL - Salli Belsham

Salli enjoyed last year's Shakespeare with *Masque Theatre* at Abington Museum so much that she has come back for a second helping. This is one of her favourite Shakespeare plays and the 'silliness' quotient of this version has made the whole rehearsal process a real treat. Salli has acted with other companies around Northampton and Milton Keynes for the last twenty-five years after retiring from tap dancing and musical theatre. She writes both poetry and plays when not 'treading the boards' and spends as much of her spare time as she can in the theatre.



PRIEST - Owen Warr

Having made his debut in "The Bard In The Yard" at Abington Park Museum in 1969, Owen is grateful for the opportunity to reprise this character after 56 years!

Now - as then - he will "strive to please you everyday" and he craves your pardon for any shortfall attributable to age or infirmity



DIRECTOR - John Myhill

This will be John's third time (co-)directing a summer Shakespeare for **Masque Theatre**, after *Antony & Cleopatra* (2017) and *Richard III* (2022, with Rebecca Cockcroft), as well as directing *Our Town* (2015 - Thornton Wilder), *The Duchess of Malfi* (2019 - John Webster) and *Little Women* (2024 - Louisa May Alcott, in his own adaptation). He has acted for Masque in roles such as Salieri in *Amadeus*, Toad in *Wind In The Willows* and Benedick in *Much Ado About Nothing*, as well as roles for other groups, especially **Duston Players** with whom he has directed many of his own pantomime scripts. He will next be seen in his first foray into musical theatre as a priest in **NMTC's** production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* to be staged at **Royal & Derngate** in October.



DIRECTOR - Rebecca Cockcroft

Rebecca joined **Masque Theatre** for *Defying Gravity* in 2018 as Production Assistant, and has since played Julia in *The Duchess of Malfi*, Dr Livesey in *Treasure Island*, and was Assistant Director for 2022's *Richard III* with John Myhill. Other credits include Director/Beatrice in *Much Ado About Nothing* (*Nothing But Roaring*), Fabian in *Twelfth Night* (*White Cobra*) as well as many voice characters for podcast *Theatrical Shenanigans*. As a writer, her debut play, *The Cabin On Deer Hill*, was performed at **The Playhouse Theatre** in 2019, and her short audio play, *Promises*, was part of **Royal & Derngate's GenFest** in 2024. Her audio adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense & Sensibility* for *Nothing But Roaring* and *White Cobra* is out now! @nothingbutroars



Jean McNamara



Doreen Wright

IN MEMORIUM

Masque Theatre would like to dedicate this production of *Twelfth Night* to the memory of Life Member, **Jean McNamara 1926-2025**, who became a member in 1947, and also to **Doreen Wright d.2025**.



Volunteers Needed

Ever wondered what it's like to be part of a theatre production — but without the spotlight? At Masque Theatre, not all stars are on stage!

Since 1931, our productions have thrived thanks to an incredible team of volunteers working passionately behind the scenes. Now, we need you!

Whether you're a whizz with a paintbrush, handy with a hammer, or love the buzz of organising things, there's a place for you in our backstage family. We're looking for **lighting and sound operators, stage managers, wardrobe assistants, prop makers, set painters, set constructors, and even helping hands for show-night catering.**

No experience? No problem.

Enthusiasm and a willingness to learn go a long way—and our friendly, experienced team will support you every step of the way.

Volunteering with Masque isn't just about putting on a great show (though we do that brilliantly). It's about being part of a creative community that's been entertaining Northampton for over 90 years. You'll make new friends, learn new skills, and bring live theatre to life.

So if you love theatre but don't fancy the spotlight, join us backstage — where the real magic happens.

Get involved today - we can't wait to meet you!

Contact productions@masquetheatre.co.uk for more information.