# Globe’s Twelfth Night returns as a music‑fuelled, carnival summer spectacle



Shakespeare’s Globe reopened its Bankside auditorium with a roaring, music-infused Twelfth Night, restoring the theatrical energy that fans have missed during the hiatus. The production, directed by Robin Belfield, leans into a carnivalesque sensibility that feels perfectly pitched to the Globe’s outdoor summer setting. The Standard’s review highlights Belfield’s party-like approach and centres Ronkẹ Adékoluẹjo’s Viola, whose cross-dressed incarnation anchors the comedy with a bristling mix of wit and vulnerability. Time Out London, meanwhile, frames Sean Holmes’s staging as a buoyant, cabaret-like voyage where the Love Boat-inspired set, SS Unity, and amplified sound create a live, festival-friendly atmosphere that keeps the audience in rhythm with the action. Taken together, the prevailing impression is of a joyous, communal experience that makes Shakespeare’s merriest comedy soar in the open-air space.

The Globe’s official page for Twelfth Night reinforces the production’s lush, collaborative scope: a rich company—Viola, Sebastian, Orsino, Olivia, Malvolio, Maria, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste and Antonio—brings the Illyrian world to life, while the 2021 incarnation under Sean Holmes is described as Americana-infused, lively and flirtatiously exuberant. Critics’ accounts pick up these threads: the Guardian praises the show’s infectious energy and carnival atmosphere, singling out Nadine Higgin’s Sir Toby Belch, Sophie Russell’s Malvolio, and Michelle Terry’s Viola in her cross-gender majesty as standout elements; the design juxtaposes Elizabethan textures with contemporary movement, and the production’s brisk pace is noted for its brisk, witty momentum. Alexandra Coghlan’s Arts Desk review complements this picture, lauding a high-energy revival built around a bright, Love Boat–style ship and an ensemble whose mischief and musicality underpin the entire show, even as it acknowledges moments when spectacle temporarily eclipses Shakespeare’s poetry.

Critical consensus across the season leans into the same core strengths: infectious energy, fearless staging, and a palpable rapport with Globe audiences, while prompting questions about balance. The Guardian’s perspective foregrounds the carnival mood and the strength of individual performances, yet observes that the pace can outpace dramatic subtlety at times. The Standard’s review, in its turn, celebrates the riotous joy and the cohesion of the company, insisting the production remains a fitting, celebratory interpretation of the merry comedy staged at the Globe. Taken together, these evaluations sketch a production that is as much a celebration of communal theatre as a faithful Shakespearean romp, with a performance vocabulary that leans into music, movement and spectacle to spark laughter and delight.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeare-s-globe-review-b1243707.html), [[4]](https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/twelfth-night-40)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeare-s-globe-review-b1243707.html), [[2]](https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/shakespeares-plays/twelfth-night/), [[5]](https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeares-globe-review-foot-stompingly-good-fun)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2021/aug/08/twelfth-night-review-shakespeares-globe-theatre), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeare-s-globe-review-b1243707.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeare-s-globe-review-b1243707.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.shakespearesglobe.com/discover/shakespeares-plays/twelfth-night/> - Shakespeare's Globe presents Twelfth Night, a dizzying comedy of disguise and desire staged at Bankside. Viola, shipwrecked in Illyria, disguises herself as Cesario to serve Duke Orsino, who is in love with Olivia. A web of mistaken identities and romantic longing follows as Olivia falls for Cesario and Malvolio endures a celebrated humiliation. The production interweaves music with the action and assembles a rich cast including Viola, Sebastian, Orsino, Olivia, Malvolio, Maria, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, Feste and Antonio. Past Globe productions chart the play's history, with the 2021 version directed by Sean Holmes described as Americana-infused, lively and flirtatiously exuberant.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2021/aug/08/twelfth-night-review-shakespeares-globe-theatre> - Sean Holmes's Twelfth Night at Shakespeare's Globe arrives with infectious energy and a strong sense of carnival. The production blends music, song and swift humour to celebrate Shakespeare's merriest comedy in a post-pandemic context. Standout performances include Nadine Higgin's Sir Toby Belch, Sophie Russell's Malvolio, and Michelle Terry's Viola, whose cross-gender performance anchors the piece. The design juxtaposes Elizabethan texture with contemporary movement; Olivia's household is packed with vivid characters, and the set evokes a down-at-heel holiday town, with surreal touches that sharpen the theme of mistaken identities. The pace is brisk; dramatic depth is occasionally sacrificed to spectacle altogether.
4. <https://www.timeout.com/london/theatre/twelfth-night-40> - Time Out London's Twelfth Night at Shakespeare's Globe is a buoyant, music-filled voyage directed by Sean Holmes. Michelle Terry stars as Viola, delivering a magnetic cross-gender performance that anchors the show. The ensemble is lively, with songs and comic routines driving the action and creating a cabaret atmosphere. The production is staged outdoors, using amplified lighting and sound to vibrant effect, a design choice that suits the Globe's summer ethos. Lez Brotherson’s set—a large boat named SS Unity—channels maritime adventure and spectacle, while the cast delivers rapid-fire banter and heartfelt moments. It feels like a heartfelt farewell to Globe audiences.
5. <https://theartsdesk.com/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeares-globe-review-foot-stompingly-good-fun> - Alexandra Coghlan's Arts Desk review notes Twelfth Night at Shakespeare's Globe as a buoyant, high-energy revival under Sean Holmes, with Michelle Terry's Viola at its centre. The production pumps the text through song and dance, embellishing the comedy with nightclub energy and nautical imagery. The design features a bright set and a Love Boat-style ship, the SS Unity, around which the action orbits. While the performance crackles with infectious joy and ensemble vitality, the piece acknowledges moments when Shakespeare's poetry is eclipsed by spectacle. Overall, it is a fearless, celebratory Globe offering, lively and entertaining throughout from start to finish.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/theatre/twelfth-night-shakespeare-s-globe-review-b1243707.html> - The Standard's take on Twelfth Night at Shakespeare's Globe recognises Robin Belfield's carnivalesque production and a central performance by Ronkẹ Adékoluẹjo as Viola. The piece highlights the strong rapport with Globe audiences, the orchestral bustle of the comedy, and a set that contrasts Illyria’s garish costumes with a lively festival atmosphere. Supporting roles from a vivid ensemble amplify the energy, with Climax moments delivered through nimble timing and musical accompaniment by Simon Slater. The review contends the show is riotous and joyous, a fitting, celebratory interpretation of Shakespeare’s merriest comedy staged at the Globe.
7. <https://uk.style.yahoo.com/twelfth-night-shakespeare-globe-review-092011203.html> - Yahoo's UK edition reprints The Standard's Twelfth Night at Shakespeare's Globe review, emphasising Robin Belfield's carnivalesque production and Ronkẹ Adékoluẹjo's Viola. The piece notes a strong rapport with the Globe audience and a tone that blends laughter with moments of pathos. It describes the ship-bound Illyrian world, the Nigerian-inflected Viola in male dress, and the ensemble's brisk, witty timing. It also highlights the musical accompaniment by Simon Slater and the striking set designed by Jean Chan, framed by Belfield's direction. Overall, the article lauds the performance as energetic, inventive, and fiercely entertaining. for contemporary audiences seeking joyful theatre experiences worldwide.