

Shake review at Edinburgh International Festival – ‘inventive and insightful’



Vincent Berger in Shake. Photo: Mario del Curto

by Gerald Berkowitz - Aug 13, 2016

Eat A Crocodile's antic deconstruction of *Twelfth Night*, performed mostly in French, is respectful to the play's festive spirit if free with the application of comic filigree around the core.

The character list is cut to accommodate a cast of five, with the editing and doubling actually raising interpretive insights.

Doubling Viola and Sebastian has been done before. However, having the same actor, Antonio Gil Martinez, play Orsino and Malvolio reminds us that both are somewhat foolish lovers, and reducing Sir Andrew to a ventriloquist's dummy operated by Vincent Berger's Sir Toby is a vivid assessment of their relationship.

A vaguely modern setting in front of a row of beach huts suggests that Viola is not the only one dressing up. Valérie Crouzet's supposedly mourning Olivia appears in a new elegant gown and wig for every scene. This also lets Orsino's musical tastes run comically to 1950s lounge music.

Geoffrey Carey's languid Feste is a beach attendant who has seen it all and occasionally exposes his attitude by choosing the music on the record player, or pausing things for a string of music hall jokes in English.

Malvolio is more a socially inept nerd than a stiff-necked prude, which makes the practical joke on him seem particularly cruel. Delphine Cogniard plays Viola with a hangdog expression and narrow range of emotions for too much of the play, but her gamin quality – she is a head shorter than the rest of the cast – carries her smoothly through the role of romantic heroine.

Verdict

Inventive, insightful and, above all, fun Gallic take on Twelfth Night



Shake

at Royal Lyceum Theatre



Photo: Kenny Mathieson

Shake Irina Glinski | 13 Aug 2016

French company Eat A Crocodile, led by Dan Jemmett, have gone a little bit further than merely “reimagining” Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*: they have chopped it up, cut a whole bunch of subplots and the odd character, and shared the remaining characters amongst the five-strong cast (and a ventriloquist’s dummy). A row of five weathered beach-huts play home to the respective worlds of the lovestruck fools in this offbeat and original production. Performed in French with English surtitles, *Shake* definitely doesn’t underestimate its audience’s capacity to follow a ruse or two; Viola, besotted by the suave, velvet-lapelled Duke Orsino, quickly dons a particularly hairy looking brown 70s suit to become Cesario, Orsino’s servant. Olivia, the object of Orsino’s affections is played with superstar panache, and her steward Malvolio is played with odious creepiness.

Feste, the resident fool in the Countess’s household, is disaffected and generally uninterested in any of the jaunty frolics and double bluffs. Decked out in a burnt orange flannel dressing gown, he sips tea on his front porch and tinkers with vinyls, occasionally blasting out a bit of Velvet Underground or a crooning love song. Occasionally he is animated

in to reeling off a series of ragged one-liners that are delivered with an almost alarmingly straight face and world-weary demeanor.

In the hollow moments of silence that follow each off-kilter joke the show takes on a whole new tone. Whereas the slapstick scenes play to raucous laughter, there is a palpable tension that builds with each passing “doctor doctor” joke. The uncomfortable absence of humour gives rise to a gentle, almost undetectable melancholia; smatterings of laughter serve to highlight the absence of the roar of the masses, in a way that is strangely reminiscent of the death of vaudeville. After the crowd-pleasing frenzy of role-reversing, cross-dressing and gender-switching, these purposeful moments are evidence of something more substantial beneath the skin of the production’s retro aesthetic.

Review: Shake at The Lyceum

Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh ♦ 11th - 13th August 2016

Change and confusion: Nicole Serratore reviews Dan Jemmett’s update of *Twelfth Night* at the Edinburgh Fringe.

Nicole Serratore



Shake at The Lyceum, Edinburgh.

Dan Jemmett's production of *Shake*, which is a loose adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* set in a 1970s seaside resort, takes the gender-bending comedy and boils it down to a cast of five actors and one set. Performed mostly in French with English subtitles, the play relies on modern music (via a record player with some lip syncing and singing) for setting the mood and tone. Though the production has the outward mannerisms of slapstick farce, it rarely connects with the comedy. Rather, the endeavor is flattened by the chosen style of vaudevillian melodrama.

The core of the *Twelfth Night* story remains unchanged even if some subplots are simplified, happen off-stage, or are dropped all together—shipwrecked Viola (Delphine Cogniard) washes ashore in Illyria. Thinking her brother Sebastian has drowned, she doesn't know what to do, but knowing the reputation of the local Duke Orsino (Antonio Gil Martinez) she decides to dress as a manservant, Cesario, to serve him. Once employed by the Duke, Viola discovers she has feelings for the Duke who has been trying to woo the wealthy, reclusive Olivia (Valérie Crouzet). Viola (as Cesario) is sent by Orsino as emissary to Olivia to make another plea for his love. Olivia falls for the romantic and earnest Cesario, not knowing her true identity is that of a woman. When the not-drowned Sebastian returns and is confused for Cesario, he sets into motion the revelation of Viola and the confession of her love for Orsino.

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Shake at Edinburgh festival review – Shakespeare hits the seaside

4 / 5 stars

Lyceum theatre, Edinburgh

This end-of-the-pier retelling of *Twelfth Night* is a charming mix of humour and heartbreak, steeped in the traditions of vaudeville

Sun, glee and sand ... Shake. Photograph: Brian Anderson/Barcroft Images

Lyn Gardner

The illusions of love and theatre become entwined in Dan Jemmett's delightful and crackingly funny staging of *Twelfth Night*, which is offered up as a failing end-of-the-pier show. It's performed by a troupe who clearly couldn't afford the extra actors needed to play some of the characters and don't just have to double – which they do with a studied ineptitude that points up the absurdities of theatre – but they have also excised Maria entirely from the play and have Sir Andrew Aguecheek as a chinless wonder of a ventriloquist's dummy operated by Sir Toby.

Jemmett is a British director based in France, best known in the UK for co-founding the experimental company Primitive Science in the early 1990s. He is clearly steeped in the

traditions of vaudeville and music hall. This is a show full of bad wigs, bad teeth and even worse jokes (often about death) delivered by Feste, who also spins records on the turntable before dabbling in a little murderous stage sorcery – much to the discomfort of Malvolio, who with his white gloves not only suggests a clown or mime but also possibly a mortician too. There's even a little moment that recalls Morecambe and Wise.

Orsino is a flashy crooner and Olivia is the troupe diva playing to men's fantasies in a show performed in front of five beach huts, all peeling paint and weather-beaten pastels, which double as dressing rooms. This is a show suffused in both music and silence, in love and hate, the tragic and the side-splitting. When Antonio Gil Martínez's Malvolio fantasises about taking his revenge on Sir Toby and cutting him down to size it is both horrifying and hilarious. The ambiguities and erotic possibilities of Viola's disguise as a boy are magnified by the fact that everyone here is playing a role.

"I shall have a share in this most happy wreck," declares Orsino at the end. A happy wreck sums up this evening of retro charm, vaudevillian clowning but genuine heartbreak too.

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Festival Theatre review: Shake at Royal Lyceum Theatre



Shake by the great Mario del Curto

12 Aug 2016 / Neil Cooper, Theatre critic

Festival Theatre

Shake

Royal Lyceum Theatre

Neil Cooper

four stars

LIFE can initially appear terribly tame in Dan Jemmett's end of the pier reimagining of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, performed in French with English surtitles by Jemmett's Eat A Crocodile company. It opens on Illyria's hut-lined beach-front where Viola has just been washed up without her missing presumed drowned brother Sebastian. After an opening plea to the audience, she's soon flattening her hair and donning vintage tweed to become Duke Orsino's houseboy Cesario.

Wigs, hats, comedy glasses and joke shop teeth are well to the fore in a show where Sir Toby Belch is a tartan-suited comic turn who carries a ventriloquist's dummy version of Aguecheek around in a suitcase. Orsino is a smoking-jacketed crooner, who takes the play's "If music be the food of love" speech to new heights as he gets Feste to play a selection of charity shop classics on a portable turntable, in a way that recalls Noel Coward's line in Private Lives about the potency of cheap music. Object of their affections Olivia is a big-haired fantasy starlet and Malvolio a creepy Thunderbirds villain lookalike. A dispassionate Feste, meanwhile, cracks bad gags in English with a deadpan delivery that borders on loucheness.

In appearance, at least, the whole thing resembles the sort of retro-styled cheese-fest designed for post-millennial loungecore clubs. Having one of just five performers play both Viola and Sebastian takes the cross-dressing to new heights in the romantic reconciliation scenes, where s/he gets to have his/her inter-gender flavoured cake and eat it, quite possibly with tongues. In delivery, however, a languid pace invests things with the exquisitely tragicomic melancholy of out of season vaudevillians playing to a half empty house.

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Shake

Dan Jemmett after William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night

Eat a Crocodile

Royal Lyceum Theatre

From 11 August 2016 to 13 August 2016

Rating: ***

Review by Philip Fisher



It seems obligatory to have a weird foreign version of Shakespeare somewhere in the Edinburgh International Festival.

Strangely for a festival that can draw on and commission work from any company in the world, this take on *Twelfth Night* is 15 years old.

The usual measures of a wacky or modern look at a familiar play are their success in making one see or understand the original afresh and/or the pleasure that the piece generates in its own right.

So far as this supertitled, two-hour French presentation is concerned, there are so many excisions from Shakespeare's text that few could score it highly on the first count.

That leaves *Shake* to live or die on entertainment value alone.

This is certainly an eccentric vision from director Dan Jemmett, set on a beach in front of five dilapidated huts. The cast consists of only five actors, four francophone and the last, Geoffrey Carey as Feste, North American.

That means no Maria while, as a novelty, Sir Andrew Aguecheek is literally a puppet in the hands of Vincent Berger's Sir Toby Belch.

The Bard introduced doubling with Viola/Sebastian almost identical. He didn't think of pairing Orsino and Malvolio, Antonio Gil Martinez challenged by doing so but getting some good wig laughs.

Like almost all of the aforementioned, Valérie Crouzet's Olivia is a lady of extremes, a veritable drama queen. That leaves Delphine Cogniard playing the twins as the only straight man/woman on stage and doing the job well.

With much modern slapstick replacing Shakespeare's poetic language and rich comedy, one fears that *Shake* is likely to be regarded as an eccentric light entertainment rather than an unforgettable tribute in the Bard's anniversary year.

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Edinburgh review: *Shake* (Lyceum Theatre)

Eat a Crocodile's take on *Twelfth Night*, performed as part of the Edinburgh International Festival, is whimsical and flawed

Daisy Bowie-Sell • Edinburgh • 12 Aug 2016



Vincent Berger in *Shake*

© Mario del Curto

French company Eat a Crocodile take Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* and refashion it into a whimsical retelling, played out of five scrappy red beach huts positioned at the back of the stage. It's a sweet, if flawed production that doesn't ever quite tap into the poetry or raucous humour of the original.

Performed in French with English supertitles, there are glimpses of Shakespeare's text in the translation, but the play has been cut and rearranged to whizz through in a run time of two hours with no interval. A cast of five play all the characters, with Andrew Aguecheek being a ventriloquist's dummy manipulated by Toby Belch (played by Vincent Berger). Antonio Gil Martinez plays Orsino and Malvolio and is hilarious as both – he's a slimy, romantic ballad-loving Orsino, while his jutting jawed, thinning haired Malvolio is a total hoot.

Elsewhere, the fool is played by Geoffrey Carey, who does nothing but offer up tacky jokes in English, which Olivia thinks are hilarious. Carey is more like a sage than a fool, often sitting in the front of his beach hut with a cup of tea and simply observing the action.

Ultimately, it's the roles with the laughs – Malvolio, Toby Belch, Orsino – that save the production from feeling a little pointless. The physical humour and slapstick comedy are the most enjoyable aspects to this production. The sheds at the back of the stage feel like a cute but unnecessary quirk. The characters change costume in them, hide, get married in them, and they look very nice, but are not much more than an interesting way of getting the cast on and off the stage.

This is what characterises much of *Shake*; well-executed ideas that are really only ways of making things look good. And even with the running time cut, the production does drag. In its best moments there's things to enjoy in *Shake*, but the production brings little new to Shakespeare's original.

Shake runs at the Lyceum Theatre as part of the Edinburgh International Festival until 13 August.