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INHERITING THE MOTLEY MANTLE: AN ACTOR APPROACHES PLAYING THE ROLE
OF FESTE, SHAKESPEARE'S UPDATE OF THE LORD OF MISRULE

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

Playing role of Feste in William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night presents a complex challenge to the actor. Feste is at once a character in the world of the play and a clown figure with specific dramatic functions having roots in the Lord of Misrule of the English holiday and the Vice of the morality play. How can the actor playing Feste create a believable psychological portrayal that is aligned with the functions Shakespeare assigns the role? And be entertaining as well? I suggest that actor will benefit greatly from an exploration the traditional function of the clown its development in society and literature before Shakespeare, and how Shakespeare's use of the clown developed, culminating in the writing of Twelfth Night. The actor will thereby have a better understanding of what Shakespeare might by trying to achieve with Feste,, and he (or she) may better find the motivations for Feste's sometimes-enigmatic words and actions, which will, in turn, give shape and purpose to the clowning.

I put this thesis to the test in preparing for and playing the role of Feste in Theater Ten Ten's production of Twelfth Night in the spring of 2010 in New York City. My research and preparation will include: a substantial immersion in much of Shakespeare's cannon, and viewing of performances of it (mainly on video); research on the role of the clown, how it developed through history until Shakespeare's time, and how Shakespeare appropriated and developed that tradition, culminating in Feste; a performance history of the role; a structural analysis of Feste's role in Twelfth Night; a character study of Feste; a rehearsal and performance journal documenting my ongoing

exploration, challenges and choices. The main challenge, as I foresee it, is to arrive at my own unique performance of Feste while fulfilling both my director's vision and Shakespeare's intention.

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INTRODUCTION

The role of Feste in Twelfth Night is arguably Shakespeare's quintessential clown creation and as such presents a distinct honor and challenge to the actor who gets to play it. In almost every one of his plays, Shakespeare created roles of varying size for the actor considered the clown of the theatrical company. Of all these roles, Feste has the most lines, the most constant stage presence and most integral function to his play. In Feste, Shakespeare combined the many facets and functions of the clown roles he had been developing. Through Shakespeare, Feste stands at the apogee of the development of the clown in society and art to that point, and as a clown character in a play, he has not been surpassed. The actor may more fully appreciate the honor and approach the challenge of playing Feste by gaining a fuller understanding of Feste's place in the spectrum of Shakespeare's clown creations and the point on the continuum of the development of the clown in art and society he represents.

The challenge of playing Feste has many elements. Not only is Feste a character in a play, he functions as an actual clown, an entertainer with a particular array of talents, including singing, dancing, ability to perform physical humor. Feste, more essentially than the other characters in Twelfth Night, is also a theatrical device serving several functions. He is figure that stands apart from the story itself, who comments on the action of the play; directly, through his words; indirectly, through his very being. He juggles with levels of reality and has a special and direct connection with the audience. Feste fulfills many of the

time honored functions of the clown of Elizabethan culture (as well as cultures prior and contemporary to it) and it will inform the actor's choices to gain an appreciation of how those functions function in the world of Twelfth Night. The most essential of those functions is as a subtle version Lord of Misrule, the leader of festivals of Saturnalia (Twelfth Night among them) and living up to this mantle requires genuine subversive energy. It is also crucial to appreciate that Feste was created for an actual clown whose fame in London was approaching its zenith, the urbane Robert Armin, who had just replaced the rustic clown Will Kemp as Shakespeare's company clown, and that Shakespeare and his audience were mutually aware of this development and the ironies of having such an ascendingly popular clown play a clown in a play.

On top of these considerations, the actor must, in conjunction with the director's vision, determine and arrive at particular balance between the comic and melancholy elements of Feste's character. On the comic side, the actor has to contend with Feste's complex and often obscure brand of humor. As a court fool, Feste's humor based in tricky wordplay, as opposed to the more accessible low humor of the rustic clowns of the first half of Shakespeare's career. He is not even intended to be the funniest character in the play,, as the belly laughs belong to the situation and character-based humor of the other comic characters. It will likely be a frustrating paradox to the actor playing Feste that Shakespeare's quintessential clown has a hard task getting laughs. Perhaps as a partial response to this frustration, as well as to evidence in the text, there has been a trend in recent decades to emphasize the melancholy aspects of Feste's character. In trying to reconcile these elements, I found it helpful to work with the understanding that

Shakespeare intended Feste's humor to be more thought provoking and effective than hilarious. Feste is the wisest guy in the room if not always the funniest. Yet, Feste must still be funny to be effective.

Originally, I set out to create a one-actor performance piece that would explore Shakespeare's clown roles as a collective. In 2007, I played Fool in King Lear (for Northeast Shakespeare Ensemble), Shakespeare's most significant clown role in the context of a tragedy. In 2009, with this thesis idea in mind, I got to play Dromio of Ephesus in The Comedy of Errors (again for NESE), perhaps Shakespeare's earliest rustic clown. While working on that role and in the months after, I prepared for the performance project by reading or rereading the majority of Shakespeare's plays so I could deepen my personal understanding of Shakespeare's oeuvre as a whole and the role of the clown within it.

Although I was greatly informed and inspired by this exploration, I felt the need to narrow my focus. Fortuitously, I was offered the opportunity to play Feste in Theater Ten Ten's production of Twelfth Night in the spring of 2010. It seemed a perfect confluence: a perhaps-once-in-a-lifetime chance to play Shakespeare's quintessential clown role and streamline my thesis topic, utilizing my ongoing research on the clown roles in toto. My work toward a performance piece Shakespeare's clowns should be that much richer for having focused so intensely and intimately on Feste.

As a serendipitous coda to the experience of playing Feste for Theater Ten Ten, I also was cast as Malvolio in very different production of Twelfth Night for Connecticut Free Shakespeare (CFS). I got to watch a very wonderful and very different performer tackle the role of Fesete (from the vantage point of his nemesis) with a director whose vision of the

role was much more in line with my best thinking about the part. This shed great light on the pros and cons of my own performance, helping me to digest my own experience, and refine my thoughts on performing the role. It is my hope that the recording of my research and experience will be the best way to pass the baton to the next Festes and be of interest to anyone studying Twelfth Night.

CHAPTER 2: FESTE'S FOREBEARS IN ART, SOCIETY AND SHAKESPEARE

The creation of Feste is arguably the apogee in the development of the clown, or fool, in literature and history to that point. Feste has his roots in the clown figures that exist in all primitive cultures, the satyr of Greek mythology and drama, the servant clowns of Roman Comedy, the Vice of the Medieval Morality Plays, the zanni of Commedia dell'arte and the rich and varied tradition of amateur and professional fooling in England. Shakespeare was well aware these influences, which is evident in the text itself and in what we know of his sources. Shakespeare acknowledges this continuum when he has the verbal fools of his middle and later plays make reference to the broad scope of historical time and the fool's place in it.

Interestingly, the anthropologist Julian Steward categorized four "comic themes of universal occurrence" (qtd. in Janik: 34) based on his studies of ritualized comedy in the indigenous tribes of North America: "ridicule or burlesque of the sacred"; "ridicule or burlesque of foreigners or strangers"; "themes of sex and obscenity"; "burlesque of physical or psychological harm, tragedy, illness, or need" (Janick, 34-7). Feste operates fully in these four categories (with some minor qualifications), fulfilling the role of primitive clown. At the same time, his stance on these eternal themes is expressed with great sophistication, fusing the primitive clown and Renaissance man.

A version of the servant clown that is very much like Shakespeare's early servant clowns appears prominently in the plays of the Roman poet, Plautus. The plot of mistaken identity between twins of The Comedy of Errors is a more complex re-working of The

Menaechmi (The Twins) and Twelfth Night, in turn, is a more sophisticated re-visiting of elements of his early comedy. The zanni of the Commedia dell' arte are direct descendants, theatrically and geographically, of the Roman clowns, and Shakespeare's early clown servants were clearly influenced by these zanni (Vanick 512). The zanni usually came in pairs, with one witty character, il furbo, and one stupid, il stupido. "il furbo controlled and manipulated the plot...resolution often depended on him...everyone from his master to the young lovers sought his advice, though his character was of lower status...(Janik 509). Feste plays this role in Twelfth Night, though his control of the plot and advisory capacity toward the other characters is mostly affected subtly and obliquely.

"The clown's ancestry in the Tudor 'Vice' is a generally accepted fact of theatre history. The precise nature of the Tudor 'Vice' is less clear," writes David Wiles, in Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse (1). The Vice originated as devil figure, though not the Devil himself, in medieval morality plays. One of the earliest professional plays in English is the morality play Mankind. The character Mischief and three of vices under his tutelage strive to bring the downfall of Mankind (also embodied as a character), who can be saved only by the character Mercy. Wiles describes Mischief:

His actions are governed at every stage by his statement in the opening scene: 'I am come hither to make you game.' And he keeps inventing new games for his companions, and the audience, to play: a miraculous healing...a mock...law court...a ceaseless parody of ecclesiastical speech. He is at once the villain, whom the audience learns to shun, and the welcome game-maker who makes the play possible. The idea that Mischief is a game-maker and master of ceremonies is central to the dramatist's conception" (1-2).

Feste has inherited many traits from this Vice character, Mischief. Indeed, Feste acknowledges his own lineage: when doing a burlesque impersonation of a cleric (Sir

Topas) in his mock trial of Malvolio, he refers to himself, in a meta-theatrical moment, as “like to the Old Vice” (4.2.106).

The Vice of Medieval and Tudor plays are complex and ironic figures especially as these plays became increasingly secular and satirical. In spite of his name, “Vice”, he is no mere embodiment of evil: in fact, his temptations and game playing with the characters and the audience are meant to bring about their ultimate redemption. Feste is likewise complex, with a name that has both an evident and ironic sense, and though he at times seems an amoral figure with a wide wicked streak, he is ultimately an agent for redemption. The Vice dominates the scene when he is onstage, as does Feste. Most intriguingly and similarly to Feste, the Vice juggles levels of reality, stepping into and out of character and acting as link between the audience and the world of the play. It is essential to understand Feste’s amoral/moral nature, his aggressive presence and reality juggling as a fulfillment of his role as the Vice figure in more modern (by only a few decades) context (Wiles 1-10).

Parallel to the morality play, the holiday festivals of Elizabethan England were a form of ritual that developed into theater for the English everyman. The festival of Twelfth Night was one of these and Feste-like characters drove these festivals. The seminal study on this subject is C. L. Barber’s Shakespeare’s Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form and its Relation to Social Custom. Barber explores “the way the social form of the Elizabethan holiday contributed to the dramatic form of festive comedy”(4). The five festive comedies are so named because they end with (mostly) happy marriage celebrations and fit Barber’s “festive paradigm” (Barber 5). They include Love’s Labour’s

Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream, As You Like It, The Merchant of Venice and, the last chronologically, Twelfth Night. Barber's concepts became central to my understanding of Twelfth Night and Feste's role in it, so I will discuss them here in some detail.

Barber begins with the premise that the Elizabethan holiday was Saturnalian in form and content. On the feast days everyday life gave way to celebration, which ended all involved with license to behave with a degree of abandon.

Mirth took form in morris-dances, sword-dances, wassailings, mock ceremonies of summer kings and queens and lords of misrule, mummings, disguisings, masques—and a bewildering variety of sports, games, shows, and pageants....such pastimes were a regular part of the celebration of a marriage, of the village wassail or wake, of Candlemas, Shrove Tuesday, Hocktide, May Day, Whitsuntide, Midsummer Eve, harvest-home, Halloween and the twelve days of the Christmas season ending with Twelfth Night. These seasonal feasts were not, as now, rare curiosities...but landmarks framing the cycle of the year, observed with varying degrees of sophistication by most elements in the society (5-6).

Barber illustrates the correspondence between the “whole festive occasion and the whole comedy” (6). The play, much as the holiday, puts its participants (the characters and the audience both) “in the position of festive celebrant.” (6). Both holiday and festive comedy “promote the effect of a merry occasion where Nature reigns” (7).

Barber suggests that although Shakespeare's earliest works were more influenced by the more didactic approach of Roman comedy his festive comedies take a turn to the Aristophanic, a Saturnalian “union of poetry and railing” that was basic to nature worship. This Saturnalian attitude fosters liberty, “an accession of wanton vitality...the energy normally occupied in maintaining inhibition is freed for celebration.” (7) Much as the

celebrants in an Aristophanic comedy invoke Bacchus and Aphrodite, Sir Toby invokes cakes and ale, Orsino music, Feste “Wit”, and love is everywhere in the air.

Barber characterizes the movement of the holiday and festive comedy as “through release to clarification” (6, et passim). Both in the holiday and the festive comedy participants find release in a celebration of the natural and a mocking of the unnatural. There is always a butt of ridicule, such as Malvolio. These butts are characters that “exhibit their unnaturalness by being killjoys” (8). These killjoys are too self-obsessed to join the dance of life. But the other characters, by this holiday release (to varying degrees) progress to a clarification of their place in the cycle of nature and join the dance. The audience shares in this release and clarification as they “have gone on holiday in going to a comedy” (9). Shakespeare, in effect, recreated for the emerging urban culture the country holiday and its catharsis in the vehicle of a festive play.

The clown, the epitome of a Saturnalian figure in his own right, becomes the master of ceremonies of the Saturnalian holiday. In addition to the Vice of the morality play, the “Lord of Misrule” of (many) holiday revels was another prototype of the Elizabethan stage fool. Originally a non-professional elected from the community to lead the rebellious revelry, the Lord of Misrule’s role went increasingly to professional clowns over time. (Barber 24-5) The clown was brought into the holiday (and the festive comedies) as “a recognized anarchist who made aberration obvious by carrying release to absurd extremes”. (5) I will refer to Barber’s concepts in more specific relation to Twelfth Night throughout.

I also drew inspiration from some key concepts presented in Shakespeare's Comic Rites, by Edward Berry. Building on Barber's ideas, Berry approaches Shakespeare from a more purely anthropological perspective, relating the romantic comedies rites of initiation, in the collective human archetype and then specifically in Elizabethan culture. Berry argues that the romantic comedies embody a rite of initiation, particularly that of courtship, where the adolescent heroes and heroines go through a "period of disorientation...a nerve-racking, potentially dangerous, chaotic, but ultimately re-creative time out of which may emerge the form and meaning of marriage" (31-32). Shakespeare has the heroes and heroines first experience separation:

...to be cast upon a strange shore, to lose one's family, to be estranged from one's friends, to withdraw into a fantasy of love or life without love – all of these comic separations cut the individual loose from his social moorings and his past, "confounding" his identity (49).

The heroes and heroines then experience a period of transition governed by folly, a period Berry identifies as a "liminal phase" (49 et passim). In this phase, the adolescents go through what Berry calls "natural transitions" and "artificial transitions"; in the former they are fooled by forms, in the latter they assume forms (such as women disguising themselves as men) to fool others, but in either case remain unfulfilled in their desires.

The fool is guide and catalyst in this liminal realm. "Folly is a liminal state, and the fool a liminal being" (109). The fool is "a figure of ambiguity, paradox and inversion" (115) who mirrors the confusion of the lovers while he himself is at home with it. The fool himself exists between adolescence and maturity, both highly sexed and sexless, both part of society and on the margins of it, both a character in the play and a known entertainer,

both an “embodiment of chaos” and an “emblem of...stasis” (137), a master of the line between logic and illogic, illusion and fooling, though himself disillusioned and hard to fool. While the lovers are on a search for their true identities, the fool ‘keeps...his true identity in question’ (137). There is “some mysterious energy that is released by the role itself...a particularly liminal energy...closely allied to that which moves through rites of initiation and marriage” (112).

Though in great part indebted to Barber, Berry disagrees with the latter part of Barber’s paradigm, in which the lovers (and, by extension, the audience) go from “release through clarification”. To call the insight the lovers gain as ‘clarifications’, Berry argues, “suggests an easy rationality that is alien to the experience, which is mysterious and paradoxical” (175). Though marriage is the denouement of the festive comedies, Shakespeare does not present marriage as an end to ambiguity. “Shakespeare’s clowns remind us, in word and action, that our “natural” home is chaos. Marriage is not a fixed state, but an acceptance of duality, as Orsino says (though not specifically about marriage), “A natural perspective, that is and is not!” (5.1.201) It is the fool, Feste, who helps the characters and audience arrive at this acceptance.

Berry concludes his chapter on fools, which he entitles “Natural Philosophers”, with this marvelous paragraph:

The clown’s is a natural circle, always the same, but capable of infinite renewal. His circularity is dizzying—always on the move, he never arrives—but his energy is endless. His confusion is a world through which the lovers pass en route to marriage. But the true mark of their passage is the knowledge that they carry his confusion within. At those rare and fleeting moments when lovers become one with themselves and with each other in rites of incorporation, they acknowledge their kinship with the clown....in

this acknowledgement lies a final paradox of hope and despair: the beginning and end of Shakespeare's comic rites of passage is folly. To escape from the liminal world is to accept it as one's natural home (137).

Feste's closest real-life ancestors and cousins are the professional fools of England, in specific those retained as court fools. The clown characters incorporated into Elizabethan plays were based on actual professional fools who performed in various venues: taverns, the street, festivals and in private homes of the gentry. Some of these fools were so called "natural fools" who were laughed at for their mental or physical deficiencies, yet prized for their simple, unconscious wisdom. "Artificial fools" put their folly on as an act, sometimes feigning qualities of the natural fool but able to use great verbal wit as well. The often-blurry distinction between the natural and artificial fool was part of a fascinating dialectic central to the notion of fooling, spinning endless ironies. Feste, clearly an artificial fool (and a brilliant one), sometimes feigns natural folly as part of his comic arsenal. Households of the gentry would retain fools of one of both types, depending on their taste. Kings and queens retained both as well, and the wittiest professional fools sometimes achieved prominence as advisors. Feste is Shakespeare's most complete portrait of the professional court fool.

Courts employed fools since ancient times and by the middle ages court fools were common fixtures throughout Europe. (Janik 1) In England, the most famous court fool leading into the Elizabethan ages was Will Somers who enjoyed great prestige as the chief jester of King Henry VIII. Somers remained in the king's employ for the last thirty-three years of Henry's reign (1525-1558). Somers' daring quips became legendary. He often went too far, eliciting death threats from the king, but he managed to stay in court for the first

two years of the reign of Elizabeth I before retiring and passing away himself (Janik 407-410). Somer's famous jests were recorded in Foole Upon Foole, by Robert Armin, who originated the role of Feste. In a touching coda for three careers, Somers appears as a character in Shakespeare's putative last play, Henry VIII. "Hotson is doubtless right to read into the prologue of Henry VIII an apology for the absence of Armin in the fool of Will Somers...following the actor's recent retirement" (Wiles 140). Feste likewise exists at such a nexus of literary and historical reference.

Richard Tarlton was the next great clown of the early Elizabethan Era. He became a favorite of Elizabeth but enjoyed a wide popularity performing on stage, in taverns and at banquets. He was hired as an original member of the Queen's Men in 1583 and toured widely with the company (Wiles 14). Tarlton came to London from the country, and he cultivated the persona of the rustic boor: drunk, lecherous, simple-minded. At banquets and in the tavern Tarlton engaged in coarse banter, sang, engaged in mock sword fights, danced and led revelry. On stage he was noted for improvising during and after plays, which, though anticipated, pushed the limits of license, legality and decorum (Wiles 12-17). Tarlton was "a synthesis of three different types of medieval entertainer: the professional minstrel, the amateur lord of misrule, and the Vice..." (Wiles 19). His humor and persona were to a great degree based on his "physical ugliness...with his flat nose and squint, he was remembered as a swine-faced clown, and a sight of his face was enough to set an audience laughing" (Wiles 17). Both the rustic Will Kemp, Shakespeare's first principal clown, and the more urbane Robert Armin, originator of Feste, studied directly under Tarlton (Wiles 11). Tarlton was large enough of spirit to serve as the unofficial village Lord

of Misrule of all of the growing capital, cutting across class lines and helping “to foster in Londoners a new sense of community, shared values, and active participation in the making of a culture” (Wiles 23). Shakespeare made great use of Tarlton’s two disciples in taking the expression of that culture to the next level.

Though legend has it that Tarlton promised Armin his clown suit upon retirement, Will Kemp was Tarlton’s true spiritual and physical heir. Kemp succeeded Tarlton as the favorite of the Queen and public and he was a physical, rustic clown in Tarlton’s vein. (Wiles 12) Kemp was large and athletic, as well as funny looking, and known for his great stamina at dancing. Like Tarlton, he was an improviser and was known for his ‘jigs’, or sketches (usually bawdy) with dance and song that he performed at the end of plays. Kemp had a wide independent streak and yearned to be a solo act. When he left Shakespeare’s company and his role as principal clown there in 1599, he went on a wild dance from London to Norwich, challenging all comers to battles of dancing stamina, which he wrote about in a book, Kemp’s Nine Days’ Wonder (Wiles 24).

In 1594 Kemp joined the Lord Chamberlain’s Men, for which Shakespeare had just begun to write plays exclusively. Although there is some uncertainty, it is generally believed Kemp originated the roles of (in rough chronological order) Grumio in The Taming of the Shrew, Launce in Two Gentlemen of Verona, Costard in Love’s Labour’s Lost, Peter in Romeo and Juliet, Bottom in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Lancelot Gobbo in The Merchant of Venice, and Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing (Wiles 73-4). These were roles suited to Kemp’s rustic clowning. Though many of these roles are listed as “clown” in the dramatis personae (and sometimes instead of the character’s actual name in the

dialogue prompts), none of these characters are professional court fools: in the world of their plays they are servants or workers of low status. They perform the traditional function of the rustic clown in Elizabethan drama of the time in that the fooling, both intentional and not, serves as a burlesque of the behaviors of their superiors and they have their moments of conspiratorial commentary with the audience. Besides not being professional court fools, these early characters do not have anywhere near the meta-theatrical function that distinguishes the clowns of the roles Shakespeare wrote to be played by Armin. There are, however, a few interesting harbingers of the Armin court fools, as Bente A. Videbaek notes in The Stage Clown in Shakespeare's Theatre (63-68). Costard, though a rustic whose speech is full of malapropisms, has a great fascination and facility with words. Launcelot Gobbo's humor changes when he leaves Shylock's employ for Bassanio's; he wears fancier clothes and his malapropisms are replaced by more refined wordplay. He becomes "more of an equal to his betters" much like the Armin fools (Vidabaek 67). It is clear, however, that Kemp was unsuited for the subtle and complex court fools Shakespeare was waiting, consciously or unconsciously to create.

Robert Armin, who was born around 1568 and died in 1615 (Janik 41), differed physically and spiritually from Tarlton and Kemp. He was diminutive, perhaps dwarf-like, sung ballads and could imitate courtly manners (Wiles 148). The son of a Norwich tailor, Armin had upwardly mobile ambitions (Janik 41-2). He studied Latin and Italian and completed an apprenticeship to a London goldsmith, and took pride in this more refined profession (Wiles 136.) While still an apprentice, he began acting and performing his own ballads, both brilliantly enough to earn Tarlton's attention and promise to bequeath Armin

his clown's mantle. Armin was also a successful pamphleteer on political and religious subjects and wrote several popular plays that served as vehicles for his clowning (Janik 42-43). Far from a boisterous man of the people, he was more of a dry wit and Renaissance man.

Armin was an observer, imitator and self-proclaimed connoisseur of all forms of folly. While touring the provinces with Lord Chandos's company, Armin studied the village idiots and natural fools retained by households he found along way, while taking notes on his own developing clowning in relation to other clowns. These observations bore fruit in his books Foole Upon Foole and Quips Upon Questions, both published in 1600, just as he joined Shakespeare's company. In these writings, Armin presents himself as both clown and clown scholar, illustrating and analyzing the various styles of clowning before (including some of his exchanges with Tarlton) and contemporary to him (Janik 43). Armin sought to retain what he saw as the divine inspiration of the natural fool and combine that with a more elevated word play suited for courtly audiences (Janik 46). Armin was very conscious of fooling as an art with a positive social function, a trait that we find, though less dogmatically, in Feste. In his writings and co-creation of Shakespeare's court fools, Armin brilliantly succeeded in bequeathing to all his descendants a blueprint for the passing of the mantle of master fool.

It is clear from his plays that 1599 marked a huge change in the fools Shakespeare created and that the change coincided with Kemp's leaving Lord Chamberlain's men and Armin's replacing him as the Globe's principal clown. Though we don't have direct evidence of why Kemp left, most probably he was pushed out by Shakespeare's readiness

to create a new kind of fool, or left himself in anticipation of this. In this light, his wild project of self-promotion, his Morris dance from London to Norwich and subsequent book on that feat, seems an assertion of independence and perhaps a professional saving of face.

This “changing of the clown” (to coin a phrase) in Shakespeare’s company lends extra meaning to the grave-digging scene in Hamlet, (which was written and performed at this very time) in which the gravedigger (identified in the text as “First Clown”) unearths the skull of the dead King Hamlet’s jester, Yorick. It is pretty certain Armin played the role of the gravedigger (though he may also have doubled as Polonius), and if he did, the regulars in the audience might savor the irony of the new clown handling the skull of old in a cavalier manner. Indeed, there is much in Hamlet that can be seen as Shakespeare’s processing his transformation of the clown role. Though there is no living court fool character in the court of Elsinore, it has been widely commented on that Hamlet himself is perhaps Shakespeare’s greatest fool figure (for example, Vidabaek devotes a whole chapter to Hamlet as clown), brilliantly employing an array of tactics that would’ve been beyond the abilities of Kemp, perhaps even of Armin: this dramatic role was played by Richard Burbage (Wiles 59). Hamlet’s dizzying wordplay, his discourse on madness (in both in word and behavior), his juggling of levels of reality became trademarks of the court fools Shakespeare was beginning to create (Vidabaek 177-190). Of further significance, this “change of the clown” came in the context of what James Shapiro, in A Year in the Life of Shakespeare: 1599, argues was not only a transformative year in Shakespeare’s art in general, but in England’s history as well.

1599 also saw the last role Shakespeare created for Kemp, Dogberry in Much Ado About Nothing (Armin took over this role during the transition, according to his diary) and the first court fool created for Armin, Touchstone in As You Like It (Mangan 259). Here is a fool who is on familiar terms with his employers. Though their servant, Touchstone is more companion and entertainer to Rosalind and Celia, and attains a measure of equality with them, at least in conversation. In the forest of Arden, it is clear he is an urban sophisticate condescendingly enjoying the rustic characters he encounters, a (somewhat more cynical) version of Armin himself, who wrote of his observations of country fools while on tour. As You Like It is one of the festive comedies identified by Barber, but here the fool, unlike Feste and the other court fools, joins the marriage dance as one of the “Country Copulatives” (AYL 5.4.58) himself. In this exception, though, Touchstone still proves the rule of fools: his bawdy and unromantic attitude in his relationship with Audrey burlesques the romantic idealism of his superiors and he remains philosophically aloof, commenting on his own motivations.

It is fascinating to speculate on the level of collaboration between Shakespeare and Armin in creating these new fools. So much of the essence and speech of the characters Shakespeare created to be played by Armin seem so close to the words and spirit of the author of Fool Upon Fool that there seems to have been a meeting of minds. As most of the fools’ dialogue, except for the songs, is in prose, it is very possible that Armin improvised much of it with Shakespeare’s guidance, and then Shakespeare set down its final form in writing. The songs were possibly created by Armin, too, (in whole or in part) as he was a published balladeer (Wiles 41-47). Armin was a star outside of Shakespeare’s company,

which added an extra ball to the reality juggling of the court fools: they were watching the ascendant philosopher-fool of the day play a fool in a play. This audience awareness (conscious or not) very likely conferred an extra status on these characters and thereby extra weight to their meta-theatrical stance on the play's action and themes.

All the foregoing strands of clowning lineage come together in the creation of Feste. As a character, Feste is the quintessential Elizabethan court fool and the fool most integral to any Shakespeare play. As a construct, Feste subtly fulfills the role of the Lord of Misrule driving the holiday festival. Of all Shakespeare's festive comedies, Twelfth Night (his last of this category) most closely follows Barber's festive paradigm, in great part due to Feste, who fulfils the festive function of the fool to a greater degree than in any of Shakespeare's other fools. Feste is the most complete return of the Old Vice in Shakespeare, as Feste himself mentions, juggling daringly with levels of reality, bringing back an aura of demonic mystery to the clown, both attracting and repelling the audience, and ultimately driving out the anti-life force from the community. The last of Shakespeare's festive fools, the melancholy notes in Feste foretell the darker, or to use Harold Bloom's word, 'rancid' (Bloom 358 et passim), court fools of the later plays.

In both Kemp and Armin, Shakespeare had clowns with ideal personas for the clown roles he was creating at the time. Kemp and Armin had both coined their own clown characters in many venues and Shakespeare re-stamped their coin to one that still retained traces their original stamp, yet could be used in wider currency for ages to come, Like a good Feste, the actor playing him will merrily take this coin, slip it into his codpiece and jiggle it, giving it his own DNA.

CHAPTER 3: FESTE'S STRUCTURAL ROLE IN THE PLOT OF TWELFTH NIGHT

Nowhere is it mentioned in *Twelfth Night* that the actual holiday is being celebrated. The play is not so much about *Twelfth Night* as it embodies the spirit of that holiday. I quoted Barber at length in Chapter 2 on the common elements of the English holiday. *Twelfth Night* in particular marks the last night of the twelve-day Christmas celebration and was traditionally celebrated with wild merry-making. A Lord of Misrule was elected from the common people to lead the community in one final night of merry-making where the societal order was temporarily upside-down and evil spirits were chased away. As in the holiday, *Twelfth Night* is full of cakes and ale, song and revelry, role-reversing disguises and rebellion against the normal order of things. The festive side of life triumphs over repression: Olivia, Viola, Orsino and Sebastian join the dance of life, their initiation to this dance sped by the revelry and game playing of the celebrants, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria, while the anti-life force, Malvolio, is exposed and expelled, and the celebration is tinged with the sad awareness that no holiday lasts forever. Presiding over this holiday, acting as its catalyst and driving it forward where necessary, helping it draw to a close, and embodying the its conscience, is Feste.

What follows is a scene by scene analysis of Feste's structural role in the plot of *Twelfth Night*, with a particular emphasis on how, as inheritor of the mantle of Lord of Misrule and Vice, he acts as catalyst for the fruition of the holiday spirit. I acknowledge that this analysis necessarily contains personal conclusions about the other characters.

By the time we meet Feste in Act I, scene 5, we have already learned the essentials of the main story. The Duke Orsino pines unrequitedly for the Lady Olivia, who in turn we hear has started a self-imposed, seven-year period of mourning for her recently deceased father and brother. Viola, shipwrecked upon Illyria, believes her twin brother dead, dons his clothes to serve Duke Orsino, whereupon she falls in love with him. We meet Sir Toby and his gull Sir Andrew, who is foolishly hopeful of courting Olivia, in a burlesque of Orsino's suit. The suspense builds for us to meet Olivia, but the solemnity of her entrance is undermined before we meet her by the introduction of Feste, who makes clear his rebelliousness toward Olivia and promises the audience a mischievous greeting to her entrance.

From his first utterance, Feste establishes himself as a figure of Saturnalia. Feste enters pursued by Maria, who scolds him for his absence and intimates that Olivia is so angry with him that she'd hang him. Feste's reply: "Let her hang me..." (1.5.4,) sets the tone for his devil-may-care defiance that remains basically unshaken throughout the play. Seeing Olivia coming, he pauses to enlist the aid of the comic gods: "Wit, and it be thy will, put me into good fooling"(1.5.27), whereupon he proceeds to work at his mistress' psyche with a line of jesting so bold that it will either earn him the threatened hanging or pierce her defenses. By positing the absurdity of mourning for her brother's soul "being in heaven" (1.5.58-59), Feste succeeds in shaking the foundation of Olivia's mourning for her brother's death, winning his way back into Olivia's good graces while delivering a preliminary humiliation of the killjoy, her steward Malvolio. In one deft move he has set

Olivia on a course towards maturation and has irrevocably undermined Malvolio's puritanical sway over her and the household.

Feste's timing couldn't be better. A few moments after he has opened Olivia's eyes to the vanity of her mourning, Viola enters, in the guise of Cesario. Cesario has come to plead Orsino's suit, but Olivia winds up smitten by Cesario instead. This disorientation is typical of what Berry (as discussed in Chapter 2) describes as the "liminal" phase of romantic initiation. But this infatuation, being a safe one, permits Olivia to experience falling in love in a chaotic manner and experience rejection, and is a stepping-stone on the way to a mature love relationship. And it is Feste who has incited her at the right moment.

Feste next appears to join the revelers, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, in Act 2, scene 3. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew have already been drinking and partying since we met them in 1.3. As in his scene with Olivia, Feste again acts as a catalyst with his singing and dancing presence. Their merrymaking brings on first Maria, then Malvolio, and circumstances are ripe for an escalation of the power struggle between Malvolio and the others present. Although Maria is the one who here hatches the plot to trick and humiliate Malvolio, and Sirs Toby and Andrew who sign on as her chief accomplices, it is Feste's earlier victory over Malvolio and skillful cheerleading and presence in this scene that may be the catalyst for confrontation.

Feste next appears in Orsino's court, again at just the right moment, in Act 2, scene 4 (though Feste's part in this scene was unfortunately cut from the Ten Ten production). Orsino, attended by Viola, is brooding over his rejection by Olivia and in need of consolation. He wants to hear a song he has heard the night before from Feste. He refers to

this song as one that is “silly sooth/And dallies with the innocence of love” (2.4.44-45). But the song Feste then sings is apparently a different one, about an unrequited lover “slain by a fair, cruel maid” (2.4.52). Instead of being consoled, Orsino seems more agitated than before, and dismisses Feste hastily. Before parting, Feste pronounces a subtly mocking benediction on Orsino, insinuating that Orsino is melancholy and inconstant. Feste’s parting words prompt an argument between Orsino and Viola on the constancy of love between men and women, Viola’s covert declaration of love for Orsino, and plant the seeds in Orsino’s mind of an awareness of his love for Viola. Once again, Feste has acted as a catalyst for awareness and action by means of some subtle clowning.

In Shakespeare’s text, Feste does not partake in the famous scene where Malvolio finds the forged letter he supposes is Olivia’s love note to him. He does not have to be: he has done his work as catalyst. In the Ten Ten production, Feste absorbed the role of Fabian, the comic servant of Olivia’s household, who only appears to join the gulling of Malvolio and Sir Andrew. . . Whether assuming Fabian’s role or not, from here until the “dark room” scene of 4.2, Feste can lean back and enjoy what he has helped set in motion. I discuss the ramifications of this combination of the Fabian and Feste roles fully in my performance journal.

In Act 3, scene I, Feste intercepts Viola who has come once again to beg Orsino’s suit. By now, Feste most likely knows (as I chose to play it) of Olivia’s infatuation with the Viola/Cesario. Feste is at his cagey best. The text hints at several possible approaches to Feste’s take on Viola without giving a definite answer. He comments frequently on her boyish appearance and addresses her so often as “sir” (seventeen times) that is impossible

to ignore the irony of that word here.. Feste jests at length on the falsity of words and the ubiquity of folly. Perhaps he knows Cesario is really a woman, or merely suspects it. Either way he makes his suspicion of Viola quite plain to her: “what you are, and what you would are out of my welkin...(3.1.48-49)” After giving Viola this runaround, he promises to tell Olivia she wishes to speak with her. Whatever Feste’s level of knowledge, he does not wish to stand in the way of a denouement of this relationship, but lets Viola know he has an eye to her unnaturalness. Right after Feste’s exit, Viola has a monologue in which she speaks in praise of Feste and on the art it takes to “play the fool” (3.1.50) It seems Feste’s insinuating jesting is a catalyst for Viola’s increasing distaste for her own playing the fool and craving for an honest resolution of her true identity and feelings.

In the text, Feste does not appear again until 4.1, absent for the whole Sir Andrew/ Viola quarrel, but the Feste-cum-Fabian of the Ten Ten Twelfth Night is a constant presence in these scenes. Either way, the subplot of the Sir Andrew/Viola quarrel is a bit of low comedy (though quite funny) that is not Feste’s chief concern and has a momentum of it’s own without Feste’s aid. Feste has already performed his function as catalyst in the midnight revel scene (2.4) where Sir Toby instigates this quarrel, in addition to Maria’s hatching the revenge on Malvoio.

Feste (as Feste) appears next in 4.1 trying to waylay Sebastian, whom he apparently mistakes for Cesario, having been bid by Olivia to bring Cesario to her. Most commentators take the scene at face value, that, for the first time, Feste is himself baffled, though unintentionally, by another character. I have also seen this scene played that Feste, that master of disguises and keen observer, realizes this must be the man Viola is imitating. (in

the CFS version, Feste has actually witnessed the shipwreck and Viola's subsequent disguising). If Feste has any suspicions, likely they would be confirmed by the young page's newfound ability at sword fighting. Either way this is played, Feste runs off to fetch Olivia to make sure she will not miss meeting him, continuing his role as catalyst as he, wittingly or unwittingly, delivers Sebastian into her hands. Once Sebastian is drawn into the fold, it is only a matter of time before the plot will resolve itself.

In 4.2 Feste physically joins the gulling of Malvolio for the first time (as Feste-sans-Fabian in the text). At first it is as if he is reluctant to assume the literal mantle of Lord of Misrule, as he begged by Maria to wear a clerical gown to disguise himself as Sir Topas, the curate as if in a tired repeat of thousands of such past jests. Once he agrees to do so, Feste clearly relishes the impersonation and invests full demonic energy in playing with the imprisoned Malvolio's mind in a scene which is a direct descendant of the Vice figure and Lord of Misrule imitating and railing on a repressive figure of the clergy, the ironic twist being that here the mocked figure is not clergy but merely a faux-Puritan. , When it becomes clear to Sir Toby that the jesting has gone too far, it is Feste who takes charge of the situation, bringing the jest to an end without exposing it, and laying the ground for a final confrontation between Malvolio and Olivia. As I will discuss further, many regard this scene is regarded as gratuitously cruel, but I prefer to see it as Feste using his bitter medicine as an ultimately beneficial truth serum. Certainly, it is the best illustration in Twelfth Night of how Feste is the gatekeeper of that liminal space between sanity and insanity, taking Malvolio and the audience into it and out the other side.

Feste enters 5.1 just after Sebastian and Olivia go off to get married. It is possible, from Feste's absence from this scene in the text, that he is unaware of this development. But 5.1 (which is the entirety of Act 5) could justifiably be played as if Feste already knows of Olivia's and Sebastian's elopement. In my journal, I discuss how my choices on this issue changed subtly over the course of the run. It is very curious that Feste makes no comment on Cesario's appearance next to Orsino in this scene, in light of the last encounter he just had with Sebastian in the same location, when he denied being Cesario. Either way, it is with some degree of awareness of the excitement to come that Feste teases Orsino one last time before we go on the rollercoaster ride of revelations that Olivia's reentry promises to set motion. Feste, as Olivia's doorkeeper, could turn Orsino away, but as catalyst for fruition of the holiday madness, he lets him through.

Feste, at least in the text, is not onstage for the main denouement. Sebastian enters, sees his sister, and their true identities are revealed. The Sir Toby and Sir Andrew subplot spends itself. Olivia's marriage to Sebastian is confirmed, and Orsino redirects his love toward Viola. The play could end here but for the resolution of the Malvolio story. This is where Feste returns and "delivers the madman" (5.1.273) whereupon Feste engineers a few more laughs at Malvolio's expense. In the end, Malvolio is entreated to forgiveness by all involved. The final interchange between Feste and Malvolio is for both their last lines of the play:

Feste: ...And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges.

Malvolio: I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you! (5.1.353-355)

Malvolio exits in shame and rage. Feste has succeeded in being the catalyst that drives the anti-life force from the community so that the life force of holiday spirit can triumph, at least for the moment. To those who see Feste as personally vengeful, his final words to Malvolio are the triumph of his vengeance. Whatever his personal motivation, Feste is also performing the traditional role of the Vice and Lord of Misrule, expelling “ill-will.” But, as I will discuss at length below, I believe Feste presides over a subtler version of this ritual expulsion and reintegration of the community, leaving the door of forgiveness open to Malvolio.

The play could end with Orsino’s last speech, but all exit (according to the text) and Feste remains alone onstage to sing his famous song, each verse of which ends, “for the rain it raineth everyday.” This is the only play by Shakespeare in which the fool has the last word, and as such it is Feste’s nuanced and somewhat melancholy stance on life, rather than the giddiness of the wedding couples, that lends final comment to all that has preceded it. It is wonderfully ironic that the clown, named Feste, the one who has helped bring about this double wedding and the presumptive entertainer at this wedding festival, is the one who remains alone and philosophical. In Feste and his final song, Shakespeare has both restored to the clown his traditional role as the force behind life’s festivity, and elevated the clown to philosopher, all the while maintaining his liminal status.

CHAPTER 4: CHARACTER STUDY OF FESTE

It is especially challenging for the actor playing Feste to do a character analysis for the role, as Feste is both a character in a play and a theatrical device. On the one hand, a full Stanislavsky-based approach to the character's back story might be superfluous in the case of a character like Feste, who functions in Twelfth Night as an archetype. On the other hand, Feste is not pure clown/archetype: he is more intriguing in that Shakespeare places this archetype on the same plane with the other three dimensional characters. The most effective Feste I saw in my research, Ben Kingsley, in the 1996 film directed by Trevor Nunn (discussed fully in Chapter 5), manifested a very full emotional life and, while he retained the function of the archetype, his clowning emerged from his believable humanity.

Shakespeare provides us, in Feste's combined utterances, ample material and guideposts to create a complex character, but Shakespeare leaves it to the actor to supply as little or as much of Feste's biography as s/he deems useful, . Ultimately, I believe a comprehensive understanding of Feste's historical and structural role must be the guiding principle in actor's consideration when making psychological choices for the role. Of course, the actor also has to adjust his/her choices to the director's concept of the role and play. What follows is a general character study for Feste, designed for use for any actor playing the role, with occasional reference, to my personal choices for the purpose of illustration. I found it a necessary step in my process to first do a character study of Feste based on text and my research, to identify the raw material and critical issues and then

make further personal choices. A fuller discussion of my personal choices is found in my performance journal.

Feste's Biography?

We are given little or no information about Feste's biography, either his past or his life circumstances at the time of the play. I say little or none, for such clues as, "my house doth stand by the church"(3.1.5) may just be part of his jesting, or as some suggest (Draper 191) it is evidence he has his own house, and therefore something of a stable existence. Shakespeare made Feste's biography effectively a cipher, so we will not belabor the issue with excessive speculation. So Feste could either have lodging at Olivia's house, his own place, or live itinerantly. We hear nothing of Feste's past, how he came to be a fool, had other jobs, or whether or not he has or had his own wife and family, although his final song may or may not provide a clue. The one biographical detail we do know he was "a fool that the Lady Olivia's father took much delight in" (2.4.10-11) but that could mean he was around a few years or for decades.

That Shakespeare intentionally leaves Feste's precise life circumstances a mystery adds to his liminal power. An actor should make personal choices for him/herself, about Feste's private life as s/he sees fit, but would be wise to incorporate the fact that Shakespeare tells us little of Feste's biography as part of Feste's psychology and strategy as a fool.

An Allowed Fool

Feste has earned the paradoxically privileged and precarious position as an “allowed fool” (1.5.76), as Olivia calls him in their first scene. He has license to speak difficult truths to his superiors, and enjoys a great degree of protection for that, yet always labors under the threat of having that license revoked and his security threatened for that very honesty. The flip side of this paradox is that such security may jeopardize his integrity as a fool as it could lead him to compromise the edginess of his fooling. A person who has earned the position of a licensed fool must be quite a nifty fellow indeed, one who literally lives by his wits. The reason he’s been “so long absent” (1.5.14) before the action of the play begins is unexplained, but perhaps it is an indication of his free spirit: he needs to roam, and Olivia’s household has become too oppressive to him. We learn soon enough in 2.4 that one of his extracurricular activities has been entertaining Orsino at his home, presumably without the approval of Olivia. That Feste is peripatetic would fit what we know of even the most illustrious fools of the day, that they didn’t like to keep all their eggs in one basket, but kept their sources of income open, to prepare for that rainy day when, as Feste sings, “men shut their gate” (5.1.372) against them.

A household fool seems like a very odd concept today. One may perhaps best understand the need for a fool when realizing the Elizabethan house had no television or stereo. A good fool was a one-man entertainment center who could not only make all manner of jokes but sing the latest songs and dance (and teach) the latest dances. This helps explain the value the fool had to the household who could employ him, and to those who could enjoy his jesting, singing and dancing when he was around. As Sir Andrew sighs,

“I would had rather than forty shillings I had such a leg, and so sweet a breath to sing, as the fool has” (2.3.16-18). More foreign to our era is the notion that people of status would want to have in their home a person who mocked their foibles. The Elizabethan era was obsessed with the question of Folly and in that light the Fool functioned as something of a therapist (perhaps this is why, though electronic home entertainments were centuries away, the court fool disappears from both history and drama after the Elizabethan era, as Folly ceased to be a central obsession). All these considerations enriched the very singular and paradoxical relationship between the court fool and his superiors. He was prized and rejected, on intimate terms with the household yet himself unknown, mocked and mocking, thought a fool yet counted on to expose folly. The actor playing Feste can draw on all these dynamics in constructing his/her onstage relationships. For instance, I made Feste’s soliciting tips more a part of his comic arsenal, more a device to simultaneously flatter and unbalance his superiors as well as monitor the effectiveness of his jests than a serious means to supplement his income.

Age?

Nowhere is it mentioned or strongly implied how old Feste is. I have seen very old Festes and very young ones. As I shall discuss further in considering the performance history of Twelfth Night, there has been a trend in since the turn of the twentieth century toward autumnal Twelfth Nights with melancholy Festes, and thereby older Festes. Many commentators find Feste tired, his jests reluctant, his stance weary. Some find in the outline of a man’s life in Feste’s final song an indication that Feste himself at the final

stages. I find Feste animated by, if not youth, then life energy. If old, he is still a singer and dancer called on to stir up a revel (2.3). Perhaps he is grizzled by life, but whatever age the actor playing him is, as I argue throughout, Feste must be a catalyst for the holiday spirit that renews life and therefore be himself inherently ageless.

Feste's Final Song: His Life Story or the Story of His Life?

Many critics see Feste's song at the end of the play as, in addition to being a parable for life in general, a veiled reference to Feste's biography which includes a checkered marriage. I don't favor this interpretation. I read the song's lyric as a mordant outline for arc of human life. Feste, whether older or younger, seems far from ready for "my beds" (5.1.378) a metonym for old age. I think the only thing certain here is Feste's distanced stance from life's roles, whether he's singing of his or someone else's. It's kind of a drinking-song version of Ecclesiasties: all is vanity.

In the end, Feste's philosophic stance and dramaturgical function contain the best clues to the nature of his life and history. His very lack of story is his mystique. He is a free spirit who seemingly does not, or no longer does, get involved in the usual entanglements of life. He seems to care little that his little position in society is threatened at the play's start. At the play's end (as written) Feste is by himself onstage, an outsider, physically and spiritually alone. It is up to the actor what details of Feste's history to supply and how much, but it is best that the history remain internalized. Manifesting too much Stanislavskian back-story could negate Feste's meta-theatrical presence as timeless clown.

Feste's Philosophy and Relation to Religion

Feste's philosophy can be summarized as: avoid folly. Feste himself has come to a philosophic outlook on life that is seemingly devoid of illusion. Of all the characters in Illyria, Feste is the only one who does not have a particular folly exposed. This is the great irony of Feste's existence, and he refers to it frequently. When Olivia insists that Feste, not she, is the fool, Feste replies, "Misprision in the highest degree!..I wear not motley in my brain" (1.5.45-46). It is only Feste, who is not deluded about who he is or chasing some vain phantasm, that can expose the folly in others. The main thrust of most of Feste's jests is to point out folly in all its forms, and in the course of the play, Feste acts as a homeopathic curer of folly in others. He feigns foolishness himself to make others look foolish in order to investigate, diagnose and ultimately purge their folly.

Feste has himself cultivated a detached stance toward the world's attachments, though he advocates enjoyment of earthly pleasures to others. His song "O Mistress Mine" (2.3.33-46) is an argument for the enjoyment of romantic love in the here and now as "present mirth has present laughter; what's to come is still unsure" (42-43). We do not see Feste involved in any excess or obsessive pursuit. It is not indicated in the text whether he actually drinks with the others in the midnight revel scene, though he sings their drinking songs with them. My choice is that he mimes drinking with his drum as a parody of drunkenness. As discussed, we don't know if he's married, nor do we see him pursue love or sex, but he acts as a catalyst for love throughout by nudging the other characters through adolescent romantic obsession or repression to mature partnering. Even so, Feste has no illusion that mature love will lead to permanent bliss and has caustic words about

marriage: "Fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings: the husband's the bigger" (3.1.28-29). Rather, marriage is a stage of life to be experienced.

Feste's advocacy of the enjoyment of "present mirth" (2.3.42) makes him something of a pagan figure. Like the Vice figure, he mocks the strictures of morality and religion. In his first scene, he sends off something akin to a prayer to "Wit" (1.5.27), not God, or even "the gods", though one understands this 'Wit' to be on the side of the Good. When Feste juggles with the words "sin" and "virtue" (1.5.39-40) he does not deny their reality, but doing so argues for a more relativistic morality. In his most effective jest, Feste argues that Olivia is a fool mourning for her brother's soul since it is in heaven, which seems at once irreverent reductio ad absurdum and more genuinely spiritual than standard piety. In his most extreme display of irreverence, Feste quite directly assumes the Vice function in 4.2 when he torments Malvolio, the Puritan figure. He creates Sir Topas, a bombastic parson with a goofy burlesque theology designed to baffle Malvolio and ridicule his vainglorious piety.

In his final line of dialogue (5.1.351) and then again in his final song (5.1.384), Feste repeats the phrase "but that's all one." In the first instance, directed at Malvolio, it can serve as a kind of non-dogmatic call to forgiveness. In the second, it can serve as an existentialist take on all that has preceded it. Feste downplays the moral significance of what we have just seen. It is the "whirligig of time" that brings in its "revenges" (5.1.354) rather than God meting out justice. Though I believe Feste fosters forgiveness, he advocates neither a dogmatically Christian forgiveness nor a Christian view of damnation or salvation. When he points out the contradiction of Olivia's mourning for a soul that's in heaven, one

senses that it's Feste's own lack of dogma that enables him to make sport of Olivia's beliefs. In the last verse of his closing song Feste utters a non-sequitur that may just sum up his agnostic teleology: "A great while ago the world begun/With hey, ho, the wind and the rain/But that's all one, our play is done..." His relation to religion must be seen in the context of his function as Lord of Misrule, and inheritor of the role of Vice (to which he himself compares himself while mocking religion). Feste is thereby a descendant of the figurehead of the Saturnalian festival of Twelfth Night festivities, in which the revelers, for a night, made mock of the church (as well as their secular superiors). He is the symbol of anti-religion. But he is not the Devil or a devil. He is the spirit of truth shaking the hypocrisy and morbidity from the church and its hold over the society, an antidote to excess religiosity. His creation of Sir Topas is the epitome of this: irreverent but not evil. There is no evidence Feste is antithetical to the notion of God: he merely mocks a pious approach.

Vengefulness?

Many commentators have found Feste a vindictive character and a desire to be revenged on Malvolio his central motivation. I disagree with this interpretation. Certainly, a significant story line for Feste personally is his involvement with tricking and maddening Malvolio and Feste has ample reason to desire personal revenge on him. In their first scene, Malvolio insults Feste's abilities as a clown and says to Olivia "I marvel your Ladyship takes delight in such a barren rascal...Unless you laugh and minister occasion to him, he is gagged" (1.5.67-71. Feste reminds Malvolio of this insult almost verbatim in the

concluding scene before he delivers his final line about the whirligig of Time bringing in his revenges. Furthermore, Malvolio's puritanical stewardship of Olivia's household threatens the few things Feste might be attached to: Olivia's happiness and his own livelihood. The "dark room" scene in particular can make modern audiences squirm, as many feel Feste and his cohorts go too far in their humiliation of Malvolio. Becky Kemper, in her article, "A Clown in the Dark House: Reclaiming the Humor of Malvolio's downfall," argues convincingly that this discomfort has been exacerbated by modern directors who misinterpret the redemptive nature of Feste's clowning. In an effort to infuse the scene with resonant gravitas, some directors have intensified Feste's clowning to the point of true psychological and physical torture. Conversely, even when treated as slapstick, the scene can come off as gratuitously cruel if treated too lightly.

I agree with Kemper that Feste is not essentially vengeful or vindictive. I see Feste's revenge on Malvolio (and sharpness of his barbs at everyone) as part of his function as Vice and Lord of Misrule: to do a Saturnalian version of exorcism; to purge the scene of, not the devil, but the life-denying forces, in this case, Malvolio, and the repression hindering the lovers. As Lord of Misrule, Feste stands for the laughter and liberation of holiday and Malvolio against that. Seen in this light it is not merely a personal vendetta of Fool against his antagonist, but a kind service to his small society. The jokers never physically harm Malvolio, and while there is cruelty in the way they humiliate him in everyone's eyes, it seems Malvolio is chiefly victimized by his own delusional self-importance. Feste and Olivia give Malvolio opportunity to forgive and be forgiven, but Malvolio rejects it. Had Malvolio simply confessed to his own excesses, he would be invited

to rejoin society at the end, but instead he runs off vowing revenge. Not experiencing personal purgation (maybe he will at some future date), he is himself physically purged from the community. It is not Feste who instigates the gulling of Malvolio, and Feste is entirely absent from the letter plot once hatched (though I argue throughout that he is a sleeper catalyst for the action). Feste is actually reluctant at first to play Sir Topas to further drive Malvolio mad, and it is Feste who is charged with ending the mischief and bringing Malvolio back to his Lady,

There is an undeniable brashness to Feste's jesting, which can easily be interpreted as cruelty. Certainly, Feste takes delight in needling his targets, and his jests make his targets uncomfortable as often as they delight them. Usually, it is a mixture of both, and it is this balance of the pain and pleasure of recognition that he delivers that argues against any essential cruelty on Feste's part.

A Melancholic?

Merrim-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary defines 'melancholy' as: "an abnormal state attributed to an excess of black bile and characterized by irascibility or depression." The secondary synonyms listed, "sad" and "pensive," are closer to our current usage of the word. But the word's more extreme original meaning is instructive in the consideration of how and to what degree Feste is melancholy.

Why is Feste considered melancholy? He makes morbid jokes, sings pensive songs that touch on mortality when asked for songs of love, his commentary demonstrates an insight into human folly that is tinged with sadness, and he sings his anti-celebratory song

alone onstage to end the play. I believe Feste has traits that fit the secondary, more modern definition of “melancholy”, while not being a true Elizabethan melancholic, who would be totalized by the primary definition. One of the challenges in playing Feste, as I see it, is to find a way to sound these melancholy tones without becoming too morose while simultaneously including enough spirited clowning without drowning these tones out. I discuss this question of Feste’s melancholy in relation to the performance history of Feste in Chapter 5. Here I focus on my own conclusions about his character.

Feste’s melancholy in great part stems from his aloof stance. He inserts himself at the very center of life, singing, joking, encouraging lovers, assisting plots, encouraging revelry and holiday spirit, yet he stands alone and apart. His actual moments of connection with others are brief, pointed and platonic. He himself never gets too high or low but maintains his equanimity in the face of events. He sees the others around him lose their equanimity in various ways and exposes this to them. If he is melancholy, it is the melancholy of the intelligent loner who sees all folly around him. But I think it’s generally a mistake to make him too melancholy, lonely or bitter. He is a true philosopher, which means he loves wisdom. It would not be wisdom to be too melancholy or bitter. And he is, after all, however reluctantly, the embodiment of the festival spirit.

Feste’s Wit

We know nothing of Feste’s schooling, but it is evident that he has somehow acquired the erudition to use phrases from a foreign languages and Latin, make numerous classical and biblical references, and parody theological positions and philosophical banter

intelligently. As discussed earlier, Feste's wit and erudition may resemble and stem from that of the role's originator, the literate Robert Armin. My choice was that Feste, like Armin, did not have much formal schooling but as an autodidact and longtime student of the behavior of the educated classes, he has come to a level of erudition to go into verbal battle with the best minds.

And battle he does. Feste's every utterance contains a witty challenge to his interlocutor using many of the techniques attributed to the fools of the era, "especially...nonsense, paradox, perversions of words, mock-Latin, comic proverbs and chop-logic" (Draper 193). In a perfect example of this, when Viola asks Feste (knowingly) if he is Olivia's fool, he parries, "I am indeed not her fool, but her corrupter of words" (3.1.29-30), which, of course, is one definition of a fool. Feste simply refuses to leave anyone's statement unchallenged and his challenge will never come in the form of a mundane phrase. Feste's conscientious rigor in practicing his profession at every moment makes him heroic.

Meta-Theatrical Elements as Part of Feste's Character

As I have been arguing, Feste himself is meta-theatrical device, a reference to all the clowns, fools, Lords of Misrule and Vices that have gone before him, turned into a character in the world of his play. I would further argue that this and other meta-theatrical elements that work through Feste can be considered as part of his character; that here, style is content. Besides the self-referentiality of his clown lineage, Feste cultivates a knowing and direct relationship with his audience that breaks the fourth wall. Depending on the

director's vision, Feste's reality juggling can be subtle or blatant. Either way, a certain amount of creative license to wink at the audience, insert anachronisms, or employ other subversive tactics could be more than devices, but come from the core of Feste's being.

Sexuality

In his primitive form, the clown is a representative of the natural world and his satiric role lies in his opposition to the artificial elements of civilized life. His earthy love of food, money and leisure stands in contrast to the courtly pretensions of his superiors. His sexual humor is intended to deflate idyllic talk of love and chivalry. Yet, as many commentators have noted, when it comes to that most natural of functions itself, "...the clown seems paradoxically highly sexed and sexless" (Berry 122). "Sexual pleasures the clown usually foregoes, though a large portion of his joking is based on the tricks sexuality plays on hapless humans, and the ridiculous and inexplicable behavior it prompts" (Vidabaek 3). Shakespeare's clowns generally follow this dichotomous paradigm. For the most part, we do not see any of Shakespeare's clowns actively engaged in a sexual relationship or the pursuit of one. The two exceptions to this, Lavatch and Touchstone, prove the philosophical rule by making self-deprecating jokes on their own purely sexual motivations for marriage, thereby retaining their role as parodist of romantic love.

Feste's sexuality follows the paradigm in a more complex way as Feste is Shakespeare's most complex clown. He is still the functioning Lord of Misrule, with his roots in the priapic satyr, yet he wears this mantle (or phallus, in this case) very lightly. He engages in bawdy humor, but it never gets too coarse. In song and action he urges "lovers

meeting” (2.3.37) but reveals nothing of his own desires. Feste is Shakespeare’s most refined, erudite, intellectual, thoughtful and philosophical clown, which removes him to a greater degree than the other clowns from the Nature that the clowns represent. He is indeed the most artificial of professional fools, and it is ironic that such a fool must stand for Nature in his role in the festive comedy. Though he stands aloof, he steers the others towards coupling. As a force against Puritan repressiveness, as a force of music, jesting and misrule, he is a force of Eros, if far from being Eros itself. I discuss my choice of an impish sexuality for Feste, as well as my choices for such other elements of Feste’s character as his age, appearance and musicality, for discussion in context of my choices in Chapter 6, “My Performance”.

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCE HISTORY AND PERFORMANCES VIEWED

It seems that between Armin's Feste and the 20th century, Feste was not treated as an important character in productions of Twelfth Night. Shakespeare's comedies in general fell out of favor after the Restoration and when they returned to popularity under David Garrick in the mid 1700's, Malvolio was considered the star of the play and a long line of famous actors passed their torch in playing the role (Ford 140). With the advent of Romanticism in the 19th century, Malvolio grew further in stature as a quasi-tragic, romantic hero, played by such tragedians Charles Lamb and Henry Irving (Ford 142). Yet we hear no mention of great Festes or great actors taking on that role. This is due in great part to the disappearance of the professional fool as a character from English drama after Shakespeare; Feste became too much of an enigma to audiences who lacked a clear cultural counterpart to him. His part was greatly edited in the ensuing years and the songs usually cut to favor the romance or the gulling plot and a star system that highlighted the roles of Viola, Olivia and Malvolio (Grief 62).

As Karen Grief notes in "A Star Is Born: Feste on the Modern Stage", the beginning of the 20th Century marks the beginning of Feste's return to prominence. In Herbert Beerbohm Tree's 1901 production, Feste was the "presiding genius" and "the all-pervading spirit" of a sunny Illyria. Tree appreciated Feste's unifying presence as "the connecting link in stories otherwise disparate", though Feste remained an uncomplicated merry-maker (Grief 63). In his influential Twelfth Night of 1912, Harley Granville-Barker restored most of the play's text, including most of what had been cut from Feste's role, allowing Feste to

give his voice to the full range of the play's many themes. Feste became "the anointed spokesman for the comedy's bittersweet undertones" (Grief 63), an emphasis that became the hallmark of the Festes in the artistically ambitious productions, on stage or screen of the latter two thirds of the 20th century.

For the next few decades, with a few exceptions, Twelfth Night continued to be played as a "golden happy comedy" with sprightly, cavorting fools (Grief 65). The happy-go-lucky Feste continues to be popular in our day, especially, as Greif notes, in regional American productions (69), and, I would add, high profile productions in both England and America that aim for broad audiences rather than to break artistic ground. But several notable productions carried the torch for a more nuanced Feste between Granville-Barker and the postwar era. Tyrone Guthrie directed Twelfth Night three times, in 1933, 1937 and 1957 each with progressively older, darker and sadder Festes, often complimented by older Sir Tobys and Sir Andrews. In 1933, his Feste was a white-haired old man. In 1937 Guthrie's Feste, Marius Goring, appeared, according to a review at the time, "like a spirit from another world" who sang his songs to the revelers who were "drinking not for conviviality but to stiffen their hearts against the shadow of death...And the clown, glancing at one and then the other, sings his song of sad mortality while the darkness deepens behind them" (Grief 64-5). In a similar vein, Robert Eddison, the Feste in Alec Guinness' 1948 production, was "white-haired, hollow-eyed, obviously tubercular...[his] doomed voice and hollow countenance dominate the Illyrian scene". He carried himself "like a man, not with a load of mischief, but of sorrow" (Grief 65-6).

These Festes were in part the product of a war-weary England and influenced by the existentially sad clowns of Beckett and Osborne and the era's popular motif of the pathos of the aging vaudevillian (Grief 67). Simultaneously, the happy-go-lucky Feste persists as a constant. But Grief finds the key to our era's fascination with Feste in our appreciation of irony and ambiguity. The passage with which she begins her article is worth quoting in full:

All the characters in Twelfth Night are masqueraders—all imposters, self-deceivers and counterfeiters, and all beguiled, to some degree, by the game of charades whirling around them. Only Feste the jester keeps his mask from slipping. He alone remains inscrutable, a quality that has made his character particularly fascinating to our century. We are intrigued by ambiguities, obsessed with ironies, and bewitched by paradoxes. So it is natural that the modern theatre has drawn attention to Feste, and in him we have discovered our own key to Twelfth Night...we have searched for our own answers in the play's mirror; and the image cast back has been that of a wryly smiling, somewhat weary jester, one of life's privileged spies into the mystery of things (Grief 61)

In this spying "into the mystery of things" lay the key to the parallel trends toward melancholy Festes and Festes who served as the play's omniscient observer, each trend reinforcing the other. In the acclaimed 1957 Peter Hall production, Feste was "an idealist embittered by experience", whose "unique knowledge of life's inequities and its transience" was reinforced by the staging in which Feste was the only character who could step in front of a transparent screen that framed the other characters in tableaux, serving as a metaphor for Feste's omniscience. At the end, he was left alone in front of the screen as the audience saw the other characters "dancing together in a golden distance", an image that left one reviewer with the impression of Feste as a sad deity, "sadly remembering how the world

began...forlorn at the thought that there was no more for him to do in this world. Even a god who plays the wise fool may be left lonely at the dance of love” (Grief 66-7).

Both these trends, toward darker Festes and omniscient (even omnipotent) Festes, have been taken to their extreme in the last fifty years. I applaud the trend toward the omniscient Festes, as I believe it helps highlight Shakespeare’s intention for the role’s function, though the means may go beyond what is only implicit in Shakespeare’s text. I concur with Grief, that the trend toward darker Feste’s, though fascinating and not without some validity, has often undermined Feste’s role. Grief writes, “Surveying the Twelfth Nights staged since 1960, one uncovers a host of eccentric, heart-sick, grouchy and decaying Festes. The novelty has now become a convention, even a worn cliché” (Grief 68). The litany of descriptions culled from reviews of such Festes, cited by Grief, is grimly humorous: “harsh”, “brittle”, “metallic”, “grizzled”, “gnome-like”, “gloomy”, “broken-down”, “seedy”, “moss-hung”, “bitter”, “insecure,” “a puttering elder with a damp wit”, “on his last legs”, “his jokes now tarnished and not very successful”, “ a misanthrope who despises his audience, suffered by all and liked by few” (Grief 66-69). A Feste who has some underlying sadness and hints of mortality can add wonderful and appropriate texture helping the balance between the dark and light tones of the play. But if Feste is too dark, sad and pitiable, then that balance is shifted and it could be, as Walter Kerr wrote of one such production, “as though the company were singing a requiem for a comedy recently dead” (Grief 70). If Feste is too negative a force, it makes no sense that he could bring Olivia out of her mourning, earn the spirited Viola’s respect, help shake Orsino out of his narcissism,

drive Sirs Toby and Andrew's revelry, and play the role of the Vice driving the anti-life force from the community.

A happy balance seems to have been achieved in John Barton's 1969 production. Considered one of the great Twelfth Night's of our time, Barton endeavored to achieve a balance of the play's light and dark tonalities and saw Feste, himself "a classic example of the mixture" as the "key" to the play and this balance (Ford 144-5). His Feste, Emrys James, was indeed old, but he was a welcome presence, "quietly in command...seeing everything and through everything" yet detached, an advocate of wise acceptance that "time brings fulfillment to some, disillusion to others, but irreversible change to all" (Grief 72).

The efforts in recent decades to highlight and embellish Feste's implicit role as Illyria's omniscient observer and conductor of events, though they may stray far from the letter of Shakespeare's text and his probable staging, are, I believe, perfectly in keeping with the spirit of Shakespeare's intention. These effects can be achieved by simple and subtle means, having Feste interface complicity with the audience, creating moments where Feste is clearly observing the folly of others and/or figuring out secrets (such as Viola's real gender). The trend toward directorial auteurism in the last decades has led to some bolder meta-theatrical choices to elevate Feste's function. I cited the Hall production's use of a screen to delineate Feste's omniscience and solitariness. In Terry Hands' 1979 RSC production, Feste was onstage from beginning to end, often unnoticed or in disguise, reacting to characters' private moments, witnessing Viola's transformation into a man and eavesdropping on Sebastian, such that the question of recognition in his with Viola and Sebastian was rendered ironic. In addition this Feste (played by Geoffrey

Hutchings) also changed scenery, planted flowers that miraculously bloomed as the romances blossomed) and generally presented the action, as if he were a “note-taking impresario,” a “conductor of the action” who “dispenses destiny.” Many productions have since taken the cue from Hands’s extreme exploration of the meta-theatrical devices one can employ to create an omniscient, mystically powerful Feste, to the point where this has become something of a commonplace (Greif 72-5). While it is an approach I heartily endorse, as it returns Feste to his roots in the Vice figure in modern stage language, I imagine it must be worked out with intelligent nuance so as not to be heavy handed.

Festes I’ve Seen

The only productions of Twelfth Night I had seen live prior to playing the role were so awful I don’t even remember the Festes in them. Of all the filmed versions I saw of Twelfth Night, only Ben Kingsley’s Feste in the Trevor Nunn film resonated with me. None of the other filmed or taped Festes I saw in my research for this project proved influential to my choices, except to inspire me to come up with a more well-rounded portrayal. Tommy Steele, in the 1969 television production (with Sir Ralph Richardson as Sir Toby and Sir Alec Guinness as Malvolio) was of the sunny variety, completely lacking in irony, for which he would have been excused had not his clowning been so uninventive. In the 1980 BBC production, Trevor Peacock seems miscast (he was excellent in the title role of the BBC production of Titus Andronicus) and plays Feste as blandly cheery, his one admirable trait being a imperturbable centeredness that serves as ironic counterpoint to all the folly around him. The 1988 Twelfth Night directed by Paul Kafno and Kenneth Brannagh is

uniformly dreadful, and its Feste is no exception, though he is at least original. Anton Lesser is a very young Feste who looks like a drugged-out punk rocker (though there is a Victorian setting) with long dirty hair who takes regular slugs from a bottle, bypassing melancholy completely toward a permanent depressive funk.

At Lincoln Center's Library for the Performing Arts, I viewed the Donmar Warehouse's 2002 production performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, directed by Sam Mendes. Described as "Chekhovian" in a positive review by Stephen Holden in the New York Times, I found this same quality gave the production an excessively maudlin tone. Anthony O'Donnell as Feste complemented this tone. He was likely cast for his beautiful singing voice, but everything else about him had a deadly energy to it: he appeared as an old, portly, disheveled busker and barely moved onstage, delivering most lines in a monotone. If his function was merely to remind the other characters of their mortality, he succeeded.

Tim Supple directed a fascinating, if over-serious, Twelfth Night for Britain's Channel 4 in 2003, set in a contemporary tropical port town with a multi-racial cast. The part of Feste, unfortunately, was cut to almost nothing, with Zubin Varla playing a wannabe rock star whose songs are alternately played on the guitar and on a CD labeled, "Music by the Fool". This Feste barely talks and serves only as a musician. That Supple missed the festive element of Twelfth Night is epitomized in his choice to neuter Feste.

The best version of Twelfth Night that is available on video (either of a staged production or one filmed for television or cinema) with the best Feste is Trevor Nunn's 1996 film. This production had every advantage from the outset: one of the great

Shakespearean directors of our era with a made-for-wide-release budget and high-profile cast including Ben Kingsley as Feste. My appreciation of this version grew with each of my three viewings of it over the course of a year, as my understanding of the play grew.

Though primarily a stage director, Nunn here makes great use of the conventions of film to create a wonderfully cinematic Twelfth Night that retains and heightens the essentials of the dialogue. On film there is no need for actors to project their voices so scenes can become much more intimate if desired, with the actors speaking softly, lowly, gently or whispering with quiet intensity to each other. Much is conveyed when the camera captures a glance or highlights a revealing detail. These traits lend themselves well to a more subtle realism, and Nunn here creates a Twelfth Night, that, though quite funny, plays like a very real drama. Kingsley's Feste meshes perfectly with this muted style. He makes his appearance as a gaunt figure with a shaved head, wearing the non-descript overcoat of a vagabond, carrying his traveling bag. His first scene, 1.5,, is broken into three locations. First, his conversation with Maria is done sotto voce in the kitchen as servants prepare dinner. He plays this usually jokey moment with defiant hostility. We cut to Feste's confrontation of Olivia as she leaves church at the head of a long train of dignified mourners. His jesting is sharp and insistent, with no physical clowning and there is great tension between him and Olivia. When Malvolio insults him, Feste fixes his eyes in fury at Malvolio for the rest of their interchange. The last part of 1.5 is played out in the privacy of Olivia's chamber. Olivia collapses into Feste's arms in tears and their discussion is softly spoken as they embrace each other on a sofa. Their intimacy and Feste's seriousness and, good intentions are beautifully established.

Kingsley allows his Feste brief moments of physical clowning. These moments are all the more delightful for their paucity. One gets the impression that this Feste has returned to Olivia's house with a serious purpose: to bring some healing to the household he cares about. He can pull the clowning out of his sleeve expertly when necessary, but he does no more than he has to. The last scene between Feste and Malvolio is played as Feste is leaving Olivia's house with his bag on his back: he has achieved his purpose. In the final montage, we see Feste on the road by Olivia's house observing wistfully or joyfully as the characters leave, either in couple or alone, to the next stage of their lives. Then, standing by the sea, he looks into the camera with a knowing smile we hear him singing on voice over, "that's all one, my tale is done". This final shot, as well as numerous earlier shots of Feste observing the action from afar or singing snatches of songs alone as if conjuring the ending we eventually see, establish Feste clearly as the omniscient observer, narrator and secret force behind the events. In Ben Kingsley's Feste, Trevor Nunn achieves cinematically what so many directors have been trying to achieve on stage: an organically meta-theatrical presence with a purposeful mixture of the melancholy and the festive.

The other successful Feste I witnessed was Eric Nyquist in the Connecticut Free Shakespeare production of 2010. As I played Malvolio in this production and it came right after my own performance of Feste concluded, I got to see quite vividly how Feste's mantle gets passed, as one seed of my experience that planted in Eric's mind bore ripe fruit in a new twist on Feste and Malvolio's final moment. I will process Eric's performance of Feste and my experience with it more fully in my conclusion.

CHAPTER 6: MY PERFORMANCE OF FESTE

In this chapter I give a detailed accounting of my performance in the role of Feste. First I discuss elements of my characterization that pertain throughout, such as physicality, voice, appearance, Then I give a scene-by-scene description of my performance, highlighting and analyzing key moments. The resulting portrait is a composite of twenty performances. I make some mention here of the process by which I arrived at certain choices arrived at as well as key changes over the run, but do so at more length in the performance journal (Chapter 7).

Elements of the Characterization

Ageless and energetic

When I played Feste, I was 44 years old. Several aspects of my appearance and performance tilted the overall effect to a more youthful Feste. I was given a jazzy-colored, costume of a younger man (discussed below) and jaunty hat that covered my baldness, which, combined with my choice of a semi-whiteface (in all but the two last shows) hid some of the facial and bodily evidence of middle age. My choice of a springy, cat-like physicality signified a man, though perhaps near my actual age, who was in no way decrepit or tired. In retrospect, I made this choice unconsciously before even learning of my costume, as it went with what I imagined the typical clown's energy might be, and on the vague descriptions of the dances and leaps of the clowns of the period. From the start of rehearsals, it was clear this choice would go best with our director's preference for an Illyria and Feste free of dark tones. I believe the choice to make Feste's age indeterminate meshes with clown as figure of liminality, living in a space between child and man.

Going by the text, Feste is primarily a verbal and musical clown, and can be played without much physicality. Indeed, as I discuss in Chapter 5, there has been a trend toward older and sadder, and therefore less kinetic, Festes. But here again I argue that Feste, however reluctantly, does ultimately embody the office of the Lord of Misrule, and it would be a loss for the actor playing him not to employ every means at his disposal to do so, including a purposeful physicality. If his super-objective is to bring the holiday spirit to Olivia's house and drive out repression, a physicality suffused with this spirit would be a primary tactic. Though Sirs Toby and Andrew and even Malvolio may have more obviously slapstick moments, Feste's presence, vibrant with a heightened and rebellious energy, is the catalyst for many of these moments. A physical Feste also honors his clown lineage and helps animate the challenging language.

I created a fundamentally physical Feste from early rehearsals. I felt it my duty as Feste to push the energy level of the scenes with my body. I felt the need to accompany my complicated lines with something of an interpretive dance. I instinctively found a walk for Feste that was a springy crouch like a cat creeping up to pounce. My gestures were a mild burlesque of the courtier or serving man at court, with graceful hand motions and postures, much as a Commedia servant might've used. Just as Feste speaks in many voices, I took on a separate physicality to go with each of those voices. I wish I had done more direct imitation of the voice and physicality of the other characters in the play. Judith didn't ask me to dance, but I threw in a few impromptu dance steps while singing. I made a few leaps (one to exit the stage), two intentional pratfalls, some jumping onto benches, some running and some skipping. Generally, I tried to throw myself into every movement with dance-like

energy. Hopefully this did not render my Feste too much of a gargoyle, and made the moments when I dropped the mask and antic energy more effective in contrast.

Voice

As almost everything Feste says is a parody of some form of diction, character or philosophy, it is difficult to know when and if Feste is speaking in his own voice. He literally imitates the voices of others, such as when he plays Sir Topas or when he imitates Malvolio in the final scene. He is often quoting existing or fictional sources (such as the made-up philosopher Quinapulus) to parody a line of thinking, perhaps speaking in the voice of the fool to which he's attributing such thoughts. He is constantly throwing the words of other characters back at them, suggesting he might also be throwing a vocal imitation of them back as well. From the start of rehearsals, I decided that Feste is always putting on different voices to suit the satirical point he is making, and that his real voice rarely is heard. I even have Feste occasionally use a parody of a fool's voice to lampoon others' low opinion of fools. In the moments that I drop the clown's mask, I drop all vocal inflection as well, hopefully with positive dramatic effect.

Fools in other plays such as Hamlet and King Lear get to use intentional anachronisms as part of their meta-theatrical arsenal. Unlike those plays, Twelfth Night is not set in a different era from Shakespeare's, so I taking the liberty of the licensed fool thought using various accents and imitations, ones that are very specific to our era would be in keeping with this mechanism of the fool stepping nimbly out of time and place. For instance, something about Feste's speech about Malvolio's letter suggested to me the

singsong cadences of an old New England postman, so I used it to heighten Feste's bombastic circumlocution in response to Olivia's asking how Malvolio is doing. Such a specific reference to an American region and era risks being jarring, especially if the audience detects it, but I think that's all part of the fool's function.

I used my voice and attitude to refer to some of the famous American clowns the audience might know. I used Groucho Marx's delivery on a few lines; some of physicality and facial were infused with the spirit of Harpo Marx; a few declarations were perfect for W.C. Fields bombastic tones; Lou Costello's high-pitched, rising inflection went with one joke that has the dumb logic of Abbott and Costello's "who's on first" routine. I was happy if these references were recognized, but I didn't overplay them so they would be. On the other hand, being more obvious with it, as Robin Williams might have done, would have been valid, too.

Motley? .

I don't know what costume I would've come up with for Feste had I not been given one by the costumer. The costume is based on that of a somewhat youthful Elizabethan courtier, with doublet, hose and breeches. My costume was made to fit in with those of the other men in the play except for Duke Orsino, whose costume was even more fanciful. I agreed with the choice to make his attire compliment his satire of the courtly class rather than make him look like the vagabond he might be (as was the CFS Feste). I'm also glad it was not the traditional jester costume of motley and coxcomb, which would be too unsubtly stereotypical. Motley was signified with multi-colored ribbons. My one attempt to

put my stamp on my wardrobe was first agreed upon, then, nixed. I had asked for a handkerchief that had a motley pattern as I brandished my handkerchief pointedly to flaunt my identity as Fool.

One humorous element of the costume was the codpiece, given to all the male actors. Feste's was brightly colored, with ribbons on it, that look like pink and orange pubic hairs!. We were told about the codpieces from the beginning, but actually having them adds an unavoidable extra touch of the bawdy. We were told not to put anything in the codpieces, but as Feste is given coins in several places, I thought it would be a missed opportunity to not at least mime once putting the coins in the codpiece. The costume itself would be on the minimal side of what I would've envisioned for Feste, but add the drum and my paleface and I approach clown, or at least comic performer. At first I tried to add a touch of the otherworldly clown by wearing a near-whiteface, but was convinced instead to try to bring the audience closer to Feste rather than alienate it, and settled on a more natural, yet pale hue.

Impish sexuality

As discussed in Chapter 3, Shakespeare's clowns are paradoxically sexual and sexless. My choice was to make a suggestion of an impish sexuality part of Feste's comic persona. For Feste sexuality is a game into which he won't get (or no longer will get) drawn too far. This choice was integral to the impish physicality I chose for Feste and the costume given to me as well as reflective of his function as Vice and Lord of Misrule; mischievous rather than venal; the liminal sexuality of a man-child for a liminal figure.

Also, I thought a playful bisexuality, though not evident in the text, would also be appropriate to his liminality and the play's motif of gender confusion. I toyed with that element, getting a little touchy-feely with both male and female characters and think something great could have come of all these choices, had I defined them better and committed more to them.

Music and my drum

Twelfth Night is Shakespeare's most musical play and, as Feste is its main source of music, Feste is the most musical of Shakespeare's characters. (The Tempest may have an equal share of music, but music as a motif is there subordinate to that of the supernatural.) As Shakespeare wrote it, the play begins and ends with music. The play opens with Orsino listening to music and his first line is "If music be the food of love play on". (This scene is often switched, as it was at Ten Ten, in order with 1.2, the shipwreck scene). The play ends with Feste's song. Feste sings in four of his seven scenes and plays his tabor in a fifth. Ideally, the actor playing Feste should be convincing as someone who people would pay to sing and play and whose voice, as Sir Andrew calls it, is "mellifluous" and "contagious" (2.3.47-49). Of course, how much music is included and how it is handled depends on the director's choices and actor's abilities, but it is crucial that the musical moments effectively serve their dramatic purpose while setting the appropriate mood.

Only in the midnight revels scene (2.3) is the music actually celebratory (apart from the wistful "O Mistress Mine"), with the lively round, "Hold Thy Peace" (after line 62) and brief snatches of other songs that help build the merriment. All of the other songs in the

play are either tinged with melancholy, or, as in 4.2, used as taunts. But even these melancholy and mocking songs are appropriate to Feste's role as Lord of Misrule as they underscore the folly of characters he's singing to (Orsino, Viola, Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Malvolio) and agitate them toward their disillusionment.

Feste enters 3.1 playing his tabor. Viola approaches him and comments, "Save thee friend, and thy music! Dost thou live by thy tabor?" The word "tabor" and the playing of it has been cut in many productions and changed to some other instrument that the actor can play, often a string instrument that might be a more pleasing accompaniment to modern audiences than a drum by itself. Unfortunately, I don't play any string or wind instruments. I was intrigued with the famous drawing of the Early Elizabethan clown Tarlton, playing his pipe and tabor at the same time (reproduced in Wiles, page 13). It seemed a drum was used not only to accompany a song, it could instigate a dance and otherwise be used to comic, festive effect. I thought it might make a pleasingly anachronistic connection between the Elizabethan clown and the burlesque comedians of the mid-20th century to have Feste give his drum a "ba-dum-bum" to accentuate his punch lines.

. In addition to accompanying my own singing and accentuating punch lines with the doumbek I pretended the drum, which had the top-heavy hourglass shape of a wheat beer glass, was various objects, including such a beer glass, a telescope, a shapely lover to kiss, a container for a urine sample, a censer and a phallus. I also use drum beats to jog Toby's memory, make the hit sound while delivering a fake punch to Sir Andrew, stalk Cesario and button the ends of scenes. I liked how the drum complemented Feste's man-child qualities aided his Lord of Misrule function, drumming the action towards Saturnalia.

Scene-by-Scene Description and Analysis

In this section, I mostly use the first person and present tense to give a sense of watching a performance. If a description of stage business comes in the middle of a quote from the text, I mark it with brackets.

Act 1, scene 5.

Feste makes his entrance in the process of being scolded by Maria: “Nay, either tell me where thou has been, or I will not open my lips so wide as a bristle may enter in way of thy excuse: my lady will hang thee for thy absence” (1-3). Before Feste does open his lips, Maria clues the audience in on Feste’s character: impudent, and insouciant with that special combination of low status and license typical of the court fool. Feste’s response? “Let her hang me. He that is well hanged in this world need fear no colours” (4-5). Feste immediately confirms and establishes his defiance and fearlessness.

I wanted to make the most of the entrance Shakespeare gives Feste. As my objective for the scene, indeed for my return to Olivia’s household, to tickle Olivia out of her state of mourning, I chose an entrance that would establish Feste’s playfulness and his daring tactic of joking about death. Early in rehearsal, I hit upon the idea of entering skipping and whistling with a noose around my neck, jauntily swinging the other end of the rope, a few steps ahead of Maria as she scolds me. I wanted to Feste to appear supplied with an edgy enigma for the audience to unravel as the scene goes on. I thought it would be fun to literalize all the play on the word “hanging.”

“...He that is well hanged in this world need fear no colours” (lines 4-5). The latter part of this line is a now obscure military reference. So rather than letting it alone, I decided to mock it’s very obscurity by giving the first of my many “rim shots” with my drum, punching the line with a “badumbum” on the drum, and wagging my eyebrows at the audience in complicit fun. My hope was that making a vaudeville punch line out of an antiquated Shakespearean line, plus the naked pandering would get a laugh from the audience, especially as I uttered it while Maria was holding my noose tightly. It usually did get a laugh and it at least established my relationship with the audience. I’d get a fair sense of how Feste would be received the rest of the performance from this very first bit.

Maria persists on the issue of hanging Feste, so Feste gets another shot at a punch line: “Many a good hanging prevents a bad marriage” (16). This line is funny enough in its literal meaning. I chose to gild it by making it into a sexual double entendre, dangling the rope suggestively from my crotch in Maria’s direction. Maria upped the tasteless quotient by grabbing it and other business. In retrospect I somewhat regret my choice here. Feste is distinguished from many of Shakespeare’s other clowns by his relative lack of crude sexual humor, so I might have struck the wrong note to have him defined in the audience’s mind from his entrance with lascivious humor. He is a more high-minded philosopher than that. I also wanted to suggest that Feste had a flirtatious, possibly sexual relationship with Maria, which I now think was similarly wrong-headed, though harmless as the moment was brief and singular. The literal meaning alone would’ve been more on point with Feste’s distaste for bad marriages, and his later action of fostering good marriages.

Maria parts, warning Feste to make a good excuse to Olivia, and I mime with impish bravado that she shouldn't worry about me. Much of the interchange between Feste and Maria was cut, which was merciful in the case of the more obscure wordplay, but it means Feste and Maria have to establish their jocular affection in shorthand. Feste's knowing reference to Maria and Toby's secret budding romance is gone, which is a shame as it establishes Feste's perceptiveness and his benevolent desire to foster good marriages.

Though I admired Ben Kingsley's approach to this scene (and to Feste in general) in the Nunn film, I chose a different tack. In the Nunn film, his first scene with Maria is muted, as the house is truly in mourning and all are in fear of Malvolio. Kingsley is full of some mysterious angry energy and his jokes in this scene are full of world-weary bitterness. It is very believable and valid, we see mainly the person behind the clown. My choice was to be already in clown mode, already purposely inappropriately merry for the tone of the household.

As Olivia approaches, I throw myself down on my knees at the foot of the stage to begin my short monologue: "Wit and it be thy will, put me in good fooling" (27). I try to make this a half-serious, half-mock invocation to the God of humor. I clasp my drum with two hands before me as an offering then kiss it up to the heavens. Then I ready myself for the jest I have planned, carefully extending the end of the noose with my left hand toward my Lady, and dabbing my right eye with my hanky in mock mourning, shooting a few complicit glances to the audience. I want to both steel myself for the daring sally I am about to attempt and bring the audience in on my mischief. I wait patiently until my Lady sits then, with a theatrical sob and snuffle say "God bless thee Lady," offering the noose to

her. My intention is to provoke my Lady with my audacity and to mock her mourning by mock-mourning my own impending death by her hanging me. The actress playing Olivia confirmed to me that this moment successfully provoked her first line: "Take the fool away" (31).

Malvolio has to cross the stage to come get me. I let him almost reach me when I stop him with my mock indignation: "Did you not hear, fellow? Take away the Lady." (32) (In productions with larger budgets, Olivia is traditionally "attended" by several servants, which adds pomp to her mourning and makes Feste's insult even more daring as a public confrontation. In our production, Malvolio is the only other audience and the lines were altered accordingly.) Olivia will not be drawn in: "Go to, y'are a dry fool; I'll no more of you" (33). Malvolio makes for me again and I stop him with: "The lady bade take away the fool..." (42). I take off my noose, relieved of being the fool for the moment, and offer it to Malvolio to use to cart off Olivia, "therefore, I say again, take her away" (43). (In the original, Feste uses seven lines of mock-logic to arrive again at this conclusion).

Olivia cuts to the chase: "Sir, I bade them take away you" (44). I rise to my feet like a defense lawyer taking the floor, faking out Malvolio as he makes one last attempt to grab me, and swagger across the stage, slinging the noose casually over my shoulder. "Misprision in the highest degree! I wear not motley in my brain" (45-46). Now I'm feeling my oats, full of mischief, walking right up to Olivia, but then go into a stylized bow that's full of urgency, half sincere and humble, half playful and challenging: "good Madonna, give me leave to prove you a fool" (47). She takes my bait: "Can you do it?" "Dexterously, good Madonna." "Make your proof" (48-50).

“I must catechize you for it, Madonna: good my mouse of virtue, answer me?” I repeatedly address her quirkily as “Madonna” and “Good Madonna”, my way of being simultaneously respectful and playful. In truth, though her servant, I love her like an uncle or older brother. I poke fun at her with “good my mouse of virtue” (51), hinting at the critique to come. I make it a little game of teacher and student to let her know I’m about to teach her a lesson, establish my status, soften the blow I’m about to deliver, and set up the answer I shall subvert. I compose myself with a formal half bow, with my hand to my heart, and ask as a combination of teacher, fool and genuine friend: “Good Madonna, why mournest thou?”(54)

“Good fool, for my brother’s death”(55). Just the answer I expected. I turn from her and dab my downcast eye with my hanky: “I think his soul is in hell, Madonna.” “I know his soul is in heaven, fool” (56-57). I anticipated that answer, too. Yet, I feign surprise, and take my time with the response: “the more fool, Madonna, to mourn for your brother’s soul being in heaven” (58-59). I say this elegiacally and, with a low and flowing motion, remove the noose from my shoulder, loosen it and gently lay it around Olivia’s neck, hoping it appears to the audience as a descending halo. I offer the loose end of the rope to Malvolio, “Take away the fool, good man” (59). I look back immediately to Olivia to monitor her response, I hope my bold gentleness helps drive home my point. I’m touched and delighted when I see her face light up in grateful realization: “What think you of this fool, Malvolio? Doth he not mend?” (60).

Now I turn to Malvolio with a humble bow, giving him the benefit of the doubt (though not too much benefit), that he might have a shred of generosity of soul to share

Olivia's newfound lightheartedness. No such luck: "Yes, and shall do til the pangs of death shake him. Infirmity, that decays t the wise, doth ever make the better fool" (61-62). What an ill-willed creature! He missed the comic miracle that just took place: I have succeeded in lifting Olivia's veil of mourning and Malvolio wants to yank it down again. And he wishes my death, to boot. I return the favor in the same note of mock good will, swinging the noose at him sweetly: "Good send you, sir, a speedy infirmity, for the better increasing your folly! Sir Toby will be sworn I am no fox, but he will not give his word for two pence that you are no fool"(63-65). Where upon I toss the end of the noose around the knob of Malvolio's outstretched staff. Now he's "it", i.e., the "fool", as I've hopefully established the wearer of noose as the fool.

Of course, Malvolio haughtily dumps the noose at my feet and goes into a long speech deriding fools in general, my ability as a fool in particular, questioning my Lady for taking delight in me and advising her to gag me by not laughing at me. These are fighting words indeed and I will throw them back at him later when my revenge is exacted. I busy myself by mocking his walk and airs, a little behind his back, a little to his face. In retrospect, I should taken these insults in with more awareness, genuine hurt and anger and saved the clowning, precisely because Malvolio's unkind speech here is the trigger for Feste's partaking in his humiliation. Fortunately, Olivia is not swayed back by Malvolio and comes to my defense, telling Malvolio he is "sick of self-love" (73) and that "there is no slander in an allowed fool..." (76) Having clearly won this pivotal battle for my Lady's heart and mind, I stoop down humbly and pick up my fool's noose, kiss it and bless Olivia: "Now Mercury endue thee with leasing, for thou speakest well of fools" (79-80). I

put the noose around my neck and retreat (sometimes skipping) to the swing across the stage, where I begin to swing lazily, resuming my customary role as resident man-child. Malvolio exits and we unfortunately missed an opportunity for a final confrontation, Olivia and I are alone and we slip into more familiar teasing tones: “thou has spoke for us, Madonna, as if thy eldest son should be a fool...” (93-94), but as we are on opposite sides of the stage the moment is not as intimate as it could be.

I signal the arrival of Sir Toby and my attitude toward his drunkenness with: “here he comes—one of thy kin has a most weak pia mater” (94-95). I misplay the moment. I should have risen from my swing to give Toby a more generous welcome: I’ve been away a while, I know he’ll be very happy to see one of his few allies return and I need him as an ally in bringing light to the household. Instead I let my sour comments about his drunkenness and reaction to his foul breath determine the moment. Olivia sends away Toby, who does a comic tumble offstage, stealing the thunder from my next jest. Olivia asks, worried about her cousin, “What’s a drunken man like, fool?” (107). I tried desperately for weeks to make my response get a slapstick laugh: “Like a drowned man, a fool and a madman [I rise from the swing] the first draught makes him a fool [I take a sip from my drum-cum-goblet and act tipsy], the second mads him [another chug, then pretend to threaten someone in the audience in like an angry drunk] and the third [I empty the goblet and fall flat on my back, as if dead, my drum on chest as a bouquet of flowers, then raise my head to say] drowns him” (108-110). I would sometimes get a wan laugh, but as Toby has just done the same drunken routine falling offstage and in a more inspired way, my jest was redundant. It occurred to me that it could instead have been a moment of genuine connection between

Feste and Olivia. I could've simply risen and crossed the stage with the lines, sans clowning, or with a half hearted gesture at clowning, with the intention of expressing my concern for Toby to her. Knowing the director insisted repeatedly this moment be snappy, and liked my shtick, I never attempted to change this moment. In retrospect, I should've. It was one of my few moments alone with Olivia and could've shown my non-clown side while making my final little joke exit more effective, coming after a sincere moment. When Olivia tells me to look after my cousin, I promise, "the fool shall look to the madman" (113-114) then yank myself offstage by my noose. I liked the closure of beginning and ending the scene with the noose and its black humor reference to death, but it came off as overkill due to my belabored slapstick on the previous lines.

For all the shortcomings, I feel this scene was my most ambitiously conceived and original contribution to the interpretation of the role. I had a pretty clear idea of what I wanted to accomplish with it and for the most part achieved that conception: I feel I succeeded in introducing Feste to the audience as a self-consciously professional clown with a twist; one who has a clear message for Olivia, which he delivers with a clever mixture of darkness and light; who takes a big risk to deliver Olivia an important message; who affirms life with his physicality and iconoclasm, who acknowledges the reality of death with a touch of melancholy that avoids nihilism. If I could do it over, I'd try, within the director's sunny and snappy style, to find some more moments where I drop the manic clown energy and connect with the others, deepening my intimacy with Olivia, my friendship with Toby and my power struggle with Malvolio, which should be one of life and death.

Act 2, scene 3.

In this scene, I channel my iconoclastic energy by serving as catalyst for the merry making and plot hatching of Toby, Andrew and Maria. I don't have to go out on a limb in this scene the way I do in my first. Though called on to entertain, which I do, I'm not the main life of the party, but skillfully help Toby, Andrew and later Maria to carry forth the holiday spirit of Saturnalia. As I am fresh off the victory in his first battle with Malvolio for the reclamation of Olivia's to the life force. Fresh, too, is the insult to my whole being that Malvolio delivered. With this energy, I seek out my allies in the household, who are conveniently up past midnight carousing. I join them to harness their holiday energy toward bringing the holiday spirit of Saturnalia to the house and driving out the anti-life force.

Toby and Andrew enter first; it's late at night, they are drinking and Toby is urging Andrew to keep the drinking going. As if on cue, I enter to inject new life into their revels. It's my profession and purpose (especially motivated now) to find where the party is and keep it going. I enter in a mock sideways drunk stagger, toasting them hello with my drum-cum-goblet. Toby and Andrew are excited by my arrival, and I enlist them in a moment of male bonding: "How now, my hearts! Did you never see the picture of 'we three'?" (14-15). We cluster and act out a tableau of happy revelers, freezing as if for a painter. I do some physical clowning in response to Toby 's calling me an "ass" and Andrew's comments to me about my "excellent breast" and "sweet leg"(16-17). I am not beneath such *pro forma* fooling if it will inject energy into the proceedings. They request a love song.

“O mistress mine” is usually presented as a melancholy contrast to the raucous scene. In most of the productions I’ve seen, the mood here turns contemplative and melancholy, as the lyrics and melody remind the aging Toby and Andrew that “youth’s a stuff will not endure” (46). Our approach was similar, but perfunctorily and schizophrenically executed. We barely establish the revelry when, Toby and Andrew sprawl themselves out languorously to hear my song. It’s not that I win them over; they simply assume a sleepy position. The melody is in a minor key and melancholy, but rather too fast to establish a melancholy mood. I’ve choreographed the number for coy comedy, as requested by the director, and its wistful elements get short shrift. The accompaniment is hard to follow for singer and audience, further militating against any consistent effect. I try my best, but my skill at keeping the rhythm, melody, choreography and mood working as one is not quite up to the task. I stoop to milking the audience for a round of applause that isn’t freely forthcoming. Though I occasionally seemed to provide mild entertainment, it was a shame that I wasn’t able to establish Feste, through this song, as a potent force of either music or comedy.

I redeem myself somewhat in the next bit, a ‘catch’ requested by Sir Andrew, which I lead with some whimsical verve, though the humor is of the generic merry-making kind. At least the three of us have now achieved some semblance of Toby’s desire to “make the welkin dance” and to “draw three souls out of one weave.” (51-52). I try to inject as much energy as I can into the merry making while letting Toby and Andrew take the lead, but we never build anything inspired. Our brief and generic carousing that wakes Malvolio was

put to shame by the elaborate and hilarious party scene devised by actors in the CFS production.

Throughout the rest of the scene, I try my best to maintain a balance between active participation in the burgeoning plot against Malvolio and detached observation. At moments I ape the drunken manner of Toby and Andrew, at others I regard them with penetrating sobriety. I choose some moments to share this consciousness with the audience and can only hope it reads. Sometimes I just stare out over the audience with a demonic look, becoming for a moment the Lord of Misrule lending his energy to the process. In a minor gesture toward the ideal of Feste-as-Manager-of-Events, I help the Toby and Andrew into each other's arms to stumble drunkenly offstage, following Maria. Left alone for a few seconds, I turn to the audience and drain the last drop from my Drum-as-Goblet, and exit with a wink, hoping the audience will get that I'm communicating to them that I'm playing at being drunk, commenting on the inebriated state of my colleagues and all is going as I hoped.

It is interesting to note that in the text, Maria does propose that the fool "make a third" in observing Malvolio from the box tree, but Shakespeare introduces a new character, without any explanation, to take Feste's place. That Maria does intend to include Feste in the plot gives justification for Feste's doubling Fabian's lines, which is precisely what was done in the Ten Ten production. Conversely, that Shakespeare seemingly, on second thought, created Fabian specifically to relieve Feste from the Malvolio and Sir Andrew gulling argues we should follow Shakespeare's better judgment. I discuss more fully the implications of the Fabian/Feste doubling in my journal. I mention it here to

explain why I will comment less on the Feste/Fabian scenes. In them, Feste/Fabian becomes a fourth banana, and his character arc takes a long break.

It is also valuable to mention that at this point in the plot our version cuts the scene where Feste sings “Come away, death” at Orsino’s house at the duke’s request. Like Feste’s song, “O mistress, mine,” the song gives weight to Feste’s soulful side, and role as both mender and vexer of the melancholy soul.. The scene with the Duke shows Feste as physically and mentally ubiquitous: he insinuates himself into the households of Orsino as well as Olivia and he’s gets into the duke’s mind as well, subtly lampooning his melancholia. Cutting this nuanced scene further shifts the balance of what the audience experiences of Feste, now already weighted toward antic humor by having him double as Fabian.

So, in the Ten Ten production, Feste does take part in 2.5, the Malvolio “letter scene”. As I’ve written in my journal, Fabian’s lines do differ in nature from those written for Feste. Feste almost never utters a word that is a straightforward statement, observation of even conventional joke, but Fabian does. So for the Feste/Fabian scenes I’ve employed a few strategies. One is that in these moments, Feste is gladly accepting a fourth banana role, content to carry water for the others in their pranks. Feste is a confrontational verbal jester, not surreptitious practical joker, but he aims to please those who appreciate his talents. So by helping Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria, he pleases them, and furthers his objectives of routing Malvolio and the state of mourning in Olivia’s home while fostering the triumph of the holiday spirit and exposure of folly, while hiding somewhat safely behind them. I further justified this acceptance of fourth banana status by thinking of these moments as Feste’s “down time”, where he’s simply enjoying himself rather being “on” and

center stage when he must be at the top of his game. I also endeavored to give Fabian's mundane lines a more Feste-like twist to them, layering in some extra satirical flavor, as if Feste is mocking the immaturity of the practical joker. For instance, when Feste/Fabian exults "I would not give my part of this sport for a pension of thousands," I'm genuinely delighted, but add a note of exaggeration, physically and vocally, so it also becomes a cartoon of the prankster.

Maria hustles us (Sir Toby, Andrew and Feste) onstage to hide. I enter parodying the energy of someone on a secret military mission, saluting, scampering in a crouch. A secondary element of the humor of the scene (which is funny enough when performed as a monologue for Malvolio) is the reactions from the eavesdroppers. The majority of the lines go to Toby and Andrew, so I have fun with mugging, aided by the fact that our heads must appear and disappear a dozen or so times based on Malvolio's movements. In this first week of performances, I gave full demonic energy to this mugging, but thought it too extreme, stealing focus. So I pulled back a bit on it and added in some moments of Feste simply observing and savoring the folly of Malvolio and even his co-conspirators. My favorite, and most consistently successful moment in the scene, is my first line (which comes quite a way into the scene), a mundane injunction to the others: "Nay, patience, or we break the sinews of our plot," which I hiss out loud and fast like Peter Lorre. It comes out so oddly (even I am stunned at it) that we all pause a second, turn in unison to see if Malvolio heard it, then duck behind our shrubs.

I'll describe a sight gag (the director's idea) that worked beautifully the first time we tried it in rehearsal but never again attained the same spontaneity. Malvolio still hasn't

noticed the letter, which is sitting on the bench. So I creep from behind my shrub while Malvolio's back is turned, and flick the letter onto the ground, closer to him. As he turns around, I duck behind the bench, toward which he advances, but I've left my fingertips on the edge of the bench so I can support myself. All the while continuing his monologue, he sits on the bench, and my hand as well. I make a big show of trying to pry my hand loose, turning to my colleagues in mock despair then finally blow furiously on Malvolio, whereupon he stands, sending me flying backwards into my friends' arms. The timing that was perfect when improvised always got screwed up in one way or the other in performance.

Another moment I'm fond of in the scene came when Malvolio, after adding up all the clues in the forged letter exclaims, "My Lady loves me!" (137) Going with a suggestion of mine in rehearsals, Feste and the others all leap out in unison from behind their shrubs, do a wild exultant dance, with Feste manically blowing kisses, then simultaneously duck behind their shrubs just as Malvolio turns around. Moments like these in this and other scenes where Feste doubles as Fabian don't have the deep resonance of the "real" Feste's set pieces, but where I achieved something creative with them I felt that at least I was bearing Feste's torch admirably until the unadulterated Feste returned. Depending on whether or not the audience was already enjoying my performance, the extra clowning either increased their favor or accelerated their impatience with me.

Malvolio goes off fully deluded and the pranksters fall out of their shrubs laughing. I take the bench downstage left and Maria sits on the swing stage right with Toby and Andrew at her feet. Other than having the first line out of the shrubs, I am silent for the

remainder of the scene. This silence and my placement on the opposite side of the stage is a welcome return to my state of aloofness. I finally turn the clowning off for a minute, recline on the bench, basking in the glory of what happened and what promises to come: the triumph of 'wit.' Maria exits victoriously, marshaling the others to follow her to observe Malvolio's humiliation. Early in the run, Sir Andrew would walk off up the stairs in a comic crouch, and I would take the cue and follow him up the stairs doing little frog leaps in time to my drumming. Funny though I thought it was, it took too long, was awkward and made too much noise. The director cut it, asked me to do a simpler button with my drum. So I simply waited until the others got halfway up the stairs, then bolted from my bench, spun up to the landing, turned to the audience and with a devilish grin that repeated the message of my 2.3 exit that all is going according to plan, I gave one emphatic drum beat then leapt off stage, hoping not to injure myself or the others. It wasn't the creative, meta-theatrical moment I dreamed of for Feste but it was effective.

Act 3, scene 1.

This scene is often greatly edited, as it is in the Nunn film, since it contains much abstruse wordplay and doesn't explicitly further the plot. It is, however, a wonderfully written exchange between two of Twelfth Night's most playful wits and shows Viola the near equal of Feste in banter. Fortunately, we only cut lines 9-21, but it's a shame to cut any of it as Feste uses all the lines to skillfully develop his themes of the falsity of words and foolery and, by implication, the enigma of Viola/Cesario's identity. It prompts Viola's

wonderful monologue on fools (“This fellow is wise enough to play the fool”) in which she implicitly compares her role to his (which is often cut, as it was at Ten Ten).

I believe that ideally the scene should be sharply executed with a sense of dangerous playfulness around Viola’s identity. As with much of this production, the basic notes of the scene got played, like a pianist practicing a piece, without ever reaching a nuanced and flowing final performance. Judith went with my suggestion of beginning the scene with a mock chase, where I follow Viola/Cesario onstage with my drum, making a show of hiding from her. We’d walk a few steps, with me drumming, then she’d turn around and I’d freeze and look innocently away a few times, knowingly fooling no one. Then she turns and we catch each other squarely in the eye then revolve cat-like around each other in a circle, before the dialogue begins. The moment could’ve been more effective than it was, if we had worked more on it and given ourselves competitively to the game.

VIOLA Save the, friend, and thy music: dost thou live by thy tabor?

FESTE: No, sir, I live by the church.

VIOLA Art thou a churchman?

FESTE No such matter, sir” I do live by the church; for I do live at my house, and my house doth stand by the church. (1-5)

Judith’s penchant for vaudeville pacing was appropriate for this scene. It certainly starts out like an Abbot and Costello exchange, and going with this I allowed my voice to rise like Costello’s on this last punch line above, giving my drum a ‘badumbum’ (which reliably got a laugh, mercifully). Viola has her turn at a one liner about my drum, which I listen to skeptically, but then magnanimously hand the drum to her so she can beat her own “badumbum.” It’s a nice moment: a bit of a friendly truce. Viola laughs and says, “I warrant thou art a merry fellow and carest for nothing” (22). I withdraw the truce: “Not so,

sir, I do care for something; but in my conscience, sir, I care not for you: if that be to care for nothing, sir, I would it would make you invisible”(23-25). With that, I throw my hanky over her head, run behind her and leap onto the downstage left bench, and pose like a Greek statue, as if that would really fool her when she turns around to find me. “Art thou not the Lady Olivia’s fool” (26)? Of course, she knows I am and I know she knows, but I decide to play with the answer to tease her, my Lady, and make a denial that is as good as an admission:

“No, indeed, sir; the Lady Olivia has no folly: she will keep no fool, sir, till she be married; and fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings; the husband’s the bigger: I am indeed not her fool, but her corrupter of words” (27-30). I use the bully pulpit of being on the bench to play the power game. I treat “the husband’s the bigger” like a great punch line, and wait with hands outstretched for the audience’s laugh, which then gets the laugh the line itself did not. Then a hint of Groucho as I waggle an imaginary cigar on “corrupter of words”, pronounced “woids”, of course.

Viola calls my bluff: “I think I saw thee late at the Count Orsino’s”(31). Feste won’t simply give up, but makes his admission with more wordplay: “Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun, [I leap off the bench, circle Viola] it shines everywhere [I wave my hanky about, finishing by shining her boot with it]. I would be sorry, sir, but that the fool should be as oft with you master as with my mistress [a double entendre, ‘the fool’ being me as well as ‘folly’] I think I saw your wisdom there”(32-35). Here I advance on Viola/Cesario with my finger pointed, as if to say: “I know all about you.”

Feste calls Viola “sir” seventeen times in the unedited scene, punctuating his phrases with the word. Could it be a sarcastic reference to his youth, or has Feste figured out this is a woman? My decision was that Feste has his suspicions but doesn’t know. In the Nunn movie, it’s clear Feste knows, and he’s very threatening with that knowledge, grabbing Viola’s lapels. In the CFS production, Feste is omniscient, has seen the shipwreck and his knowledge of her true gender is revealed in this scene and it becomes a moment of bonding between them, a silent promise that Feste will help her. Judith asked me to highlight the word ‘sir’, but we never decided together what Feste knew or didn’t know. We didn’t create an “aha” moment between the two. So, since Feste wasn’t, in this staging, omniscient I felt it better to go with the Shakespeare’s textual ambiguity and take Feste’s assessment at the end of this scene literally: “what you are and what you would be out of my welkin...” (48-49). So throughout the scene I do a lot of sideways glances at Viola, circling her, looking her up and down, but there’s no arc to this conflict.

In addition to all the “sirs”, there is plenty of insinuating dialogue: “Now Jove, in his next commodity of hair, send the a beard!” (38). I accentuate this by leaping on the center stage bench, grabbing and putting an imaginary beard out of the heavens and holding it up to Cesario’s chin. I try to make Viola/Cesario uncomfortable with a little begging, insinuating crudely that “I would play Lord Pandarus...to bring a Cressida to this Troilus” (43-44), or, in other words, play pimp to bring a client to his prostitute. Going with the idea that I don’t realize Viola’s gender, I am also insinuating that I know (mistakenly) that Cesario is here to rendez-vous with Olivia.. “I understand you, sir” (45), replies Viola. There’s a lot of both understanding and confusion in the air.

Delighted to win an extra tip, I leap up to the first landing of the stairs to Olivia's house. "My lady is within, sir. I will construe to them whence you come. Who you are and what you would are out of my welkin. I might say 'element', but the word is over-worn" (48-49). I ready my hands to play a badumbum on the drum, think better of it, and slink offstage dismissively. I am trying to retain the upper hand even as I admit to being baffled, so I make an insult of Viola's confusing being. Though the timing of the scene improved over the run, I'm torn about the approach. If we had gone with Feste being certain about Viola's gender, the scene might've been clearer and more satisfying to the audience. But perhaps this way, with Feste knowing something's amiss, but not sure what, is truer to Shakespeare's intention, resulting in the scene's unresolved ambiguity. In that case, we could've had more fun with that confusion.

Act 3, scene 2

In 3.2, Feste/Fabian joins Sir Toby in gulling Sir Andrew and Viola/Cesario to duel each other for Olivia's love. This jest, in tone, seems below Feste's standards, as it preys upon the hapless Sir Andrew and pointless compared to the jest designed to discredit Malvolio. To justify it to myself, I reason that any jest that exposes the folly of others and unmask their guises, however cruel, brings about a healing truth and is therefore justified, so long as I play it for light fun. We don't succeed in justifying why Viola would suddenly trust Feste's words at face value (it's less of a problem with the gullible Sir Andrew). With Andrew and Viola, I enjoy parodying the language of honor and bravado that accompanies dueling. I have a long speech in which I convince Sir Andrew that Olivia's favoring of Viola

is merely a way to “awake his dormouse valour” (15). I change from my usual crouch to an erect carriage, and fire the speech off rapidly and forcefully, a burlesque of the diction of the duello, manhandling the hapless Sir Andrew on the appropriate words under the guise of rousing him to action. It’s cartoonish, but that’s the style we’re playing. I drum militarily as Andrew marches offstage.

Alone onstage with Sir Toby, I drop my clown mask a bit further to listen to Toby’s next plan, but still try to keep up some antic energy, my body back to a crouch in conspiracy. Toby says “For Andrew, if he were opened and you were find so much blood in his liver as will clog the foot of a flea [I catch an imaginary flea between thumb and forefinger] I’ll eat the rest of th’anatomy [I offer the ‘flea’ to Toby’s lips; he refuses, so I eat it myself with a shrug]” (48-49). Maria enters and takes center stage with great excitement, delivering longish speeches about the sight of Malvolio in yellow stockings. I try my best, with Toby, to vary, build and share our reaction to her description in a way that adds to the comedy without being tedious. These Fabian moments are more purely Commedia than Feste is ordinarily in that they are purely situational, the servants performing pranks. We run off, following Maria like giddy boys, appreciating her girth with outstretched arms behind her back for extra fun.

Act 3, scene 4.

In 3.4 I continue as Feste/Fabian, and intrude on Malvolio after he has presented himself to Olivia in his yellow stockings. Malvolio is at the height of his delusion when the Maria, Toby and I enter in collusion, with the intent to keep his fantasy going, even to

nudge it toward madness. We creep in with mock trepidation, as if Malvolio is possessed by the devil. I tremulously inch toward him, swinging my drum in front of me by its strap as a priest would swing a censer at a possessed person at an exorcism. When Malvolio speaks, I pretend to be so frightened that I'm frozen in place, begging my comrades for help, but they're cowering behind a bench. I make one last attempt to charm Malvolio, but he takes a swipe at my legs with his staff, I jump up to miss it, then run and leap over the bench at center to cower with Sir Toby and Maria.

One of my favorite moments in the scene comes when I suggest that we "Carry his water to th' wise woman" (89). I hold my drum up as if it is the proper receptacle for such a project. Maria agrees and I cover the precious urine sample with my hand and clutch it to my chest. To make the moment register more with the audience, I wish we could've changed the line to "Bring his urine to the medicine woman," but at Ten Ten they were sticklers for not changing any of Shakespeare's words (though cutting is fine). After Malvolio goes off clinging to his fantasy, Fabian has a wonderful line that gains in meta-theatrical impact when it comes from Feste as a winking aside to the audience: "If this were played upon a stage now, I would condemn it as an improbable fiction" (108-109).

Sir Andrew bursts in with his the ridiculous letter her wrote, challenging Cesario to a duel. I support Sir Toby, who reads the letter aloud, as we react to the letter, with tongue in cheek, simultaneously letting the audience get our reactions to its idiocy and cowardice while convincing Sir Andrew of it's brilliance and boldness. After I drum Sir Andrew off to battle again (a running gag), I listen to Sir Toby's lengthy plan for us not to deliver Andrew's letter to build up Andrew and Cesario's mortal fear of each other.

Unfortunately, our Sir Toby had such trouble with remembering this speech that I limited what could've been amusing byplay so as not to disturb his train of thought. Since the scene here grew quite flat, I took the opportunity to let my role as Toby's pitying caretaker come through a bit here, hopefully letting the audience in on my awareness of the folly, certainly of Sir Andrew, but also of Sir Toby's intemperate exploitation of his friend.

I return later in the scene with Sir Toby to try to convince Cesario that there is no way out of the duel with Sir Andrew and that Sir Andrew is a dangerous swordsman. I say not one single word through the first thirty-five lines of the scene, and much more comedy could've been wrought from my silence had I the cooperation of the director and actors on it. I tried to negotiate some moments where Viola and Toby would turn to me for my reaction to Toby's assertions of Andrew's ferocity and had they agreed I might've had some good mime moments that at least justified my presence onstage as Toby's cohort. When I am finally left onstage with Viola to keep her in the prank, my presence in the scene has not been clearly established, and I have a hard time suddenly picking up the pieces as being a voice of authority on Sir Andrew's prowess. Another difficulty here is the question of why Viola, who already knows me clearly as the fool who "cares for nothing," would trust Feste as a credible source of information? I try my best Clint Eastwood impersonation on "he is indeed, sir, the most skillful, bloody and fatal opposite that you could possibly have found in any part of Illyria", but it doesn't quite register with the audience, likely because my campy reading further strained the audience's credulity. For a gulling to work on stage, there must be some level of dramatic believability or at least clear storytelling to help the audience to go along for the pleasurable ride.

After a brief exit with Viola, to allow Sir Toby to continue to work on Sir Andrew, I reappear with her to force the final showdown with Sir Andrew. The moment is not milked for even a quarter of what it's worth. Fortunately, although it's not in the text, the director has Feste/Fabian make a hasty exit when the officer enters, and Fabian's lines were transferred to other characters. This was decided purely because I needed to make a separate entrance as Feste in 4.1, but it worked out dramatically, too, showing Feste to be only loosely invested in the duel prank and ready to disassociate from it and the other troublemakers at the slightest provocation, with the humorous hint that he himself prefers to be elsewhere when the law is on the scene.

Act 4, scene 1.

In 4.1 I enter as Feste trying to convince Sebastian, who I think is Cesario, that Olivia wants to meet with him. In versions where Feste is omniscient, such as the CFS production, this scene of mistaken identity takes on an extra layer of irony as Feste knowingly plays with Sebastian's mind by pretending to mistake him for Viola, and shows gleeful restraint in allowing the web of error to be woven further. Ours was the more standard playing of the scene, which shows that even Feste can be confounded by appearances. The non-omniscient Feste here is a much diminished Feste, making defensive jokes and cheap put downs to regain control of the situation, to no avail.

SEBASTIAN: I prithee, vent thy folly somewhere else.

FESTE: Vent my folly! He has heard that word of some great man and now applies it to a fool. Vent my folly! (4.1.8-11)

I tried to put my stamp on this moment of mock outrage by taking an imaginary pad of paper from my imaginary breast pocket and writing the phrase down with my imaginary pencil, mocking both Sebastian's phrase and my own pretention as professional comedian. I cherished the few laughs this visual earned.

Sir Andrew and company (including Feste/Fabian) arrive and, emboldened by their previous experience of Cesario, Sir Andrew attacks Sebastian and is thrashed. In the text, Feste and Fabian are literally on the stage at the same time. Here, we just eliminated Fabian at this moment. Feste, paralleling the moment in 3.4 where he (as Fabian) runs off when trouble threatens to get out of hand, runs off to draw Olivia out of the house. "This will I tell my lady straight. I would not be in some of your coats for two pence" (25-26). Here Feste shows loyalty to Olivia, ready to play the snitch on Toby and Andrew, part to alert Olivia to an important development and weird appearance of Cesario and part to save his own hide. This is one of the schizophrenic moments arising from combining Feste and Fabian, as Fabian is invested in the duel and would stick around to see its conclusion, while Feste has already distanced himself from it and is mainly concerned with carrying out Olivia's wish to speak with Cesario. It works well that Feste doesn't stick around as Fabian when Olivia enters and is furious at Sir Toby and Sir Andrew for sword fighting. It helps justify Feste's initial reluctance to take the humiliation of Malvolio to the next level in the next scene.

Act 4, scene 2.

I've seen two general approaches to this scene. One is as an opportunity for the actor playing Feste to achieve a tour de force of slapstick, with quick changes of stage position, changing into and out of the clerical costume, all building to a frenzy to drive Malvolio mad. The other is as a subtler mind game where Feste truly convinces Malvolio that Sir Topas fears his soul is possessed. I tried for a mixture of the two. The staging effectively set an eerie nighttime mood of a dark dungeon and was more conducive to the mind-game than slapstick. Malvolio's cell was suggested by lighting only, so I couldn't literally hide behind anything solid, and instead spoke as Sir Topas on Malvolio's stage left side and as Feste on his stage right side. At our first read-through I tried only to put the fear of Hell into Malvolio by playing a straight holy man with a sepulchral voice, rather than a cartoon parson. It was very effective and I wish I had the courage to have stayed with the purity of that choice. But I couldn't resist turning the dial a notch toward parody. Indeed, Sir Topas uses a lot of double talk and nonsense, indicating that Feste is enjoying amusing himself and the audience at the humorless Malvolio's expense, not merely trying to be believable.

I creep to toward Malvolio's cell in mock trepidation, peering through the darkness, pretending not to know where he is: "What ho, I say! Peace in this prison!" (16) "Who calls?" (18) asks Malvolio. I am all humility and caution, as one talking to a man possessed by the devil: "Sir Topas the curate, come to visit Malvolio the lunatic" (19). I am prepared to treat his next utterance, whatever it is, as though it comes from the devil. "Good Sir Topas,..go to my Lady"(20). I interrupt him with a violent outburst all the more startling

for my previously gentle tones: "Out, hyperbolic fiend! How vexest thou this man? Talk'st thou nothing but of ladies?" (21-22). I make my rage at the devil and my fear for Malvolio's soul both as real and as theatrical as possible. The outburst done, I retreat to my cowed and deferential stance. Malvolio protests that he is not mad and that "they have laid me here in hideous darkness" (25). This causes another of my violent outbursts: "Fie, thou dishonest Satan!" But fearing the wrath of the devil I immediately bow again and say soothingly "I call thee by the most modest terms, for I am one of those gentle ones who would use the devil himself with courtesy" (26-27). Then, with all the pity for a deluded soul I can muster: "Sayest thou the house is dark?" (28), which, of course, it is, as Malvolio attests: "As hell, Sir Topas" (29). Here I lay on the parody a bit more, as befits the increasingly absurd language, with sing-song diction and stylized hand gestures which only the audience can see: "Why it hath bay windows as transparent as barricadoes and the clearstores toward the south-north are as lustrous as ebony; and yet complain'st thou of obstruction?" (30-32).

Malvolio asks Sir Topas to test his sanity with a philosophical question. Feste obliges with a line of inquiry that prefigures the absurd interrogator/bewildered straight man routines of Monty Python:

FESTE: [intensely] What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?

MALVOLIO: [disdainfully] That the soul of our grandam might haply inhabit a bird.

FESTE: [more intensely] and what thinkest thou of his opinion?

MALVOLIO:[reasonably] I think nobly of the soul and in no way approve of his opinion.

FESTE: [case closed, this man is lost] Fare the well. [utter condemnation] Remain thou still in darkness. [admonishingly] thou shalt hold the opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits [warning] and fear to kill a woodcock [tearfully horrified at the thought] lest thou dispossess the soul of thy grandam. [Floating away, calling back to Malvolio like a voice in a bad dream] Fare thee well (40-47).

Now Sir Toby is affraid the jest has gone too far and commands me to speak to Malvolio in my own voice and see to it that he is “conveniently delivered” (55). I overhear Sir Toby invite Maria to his chamber and she and I exchange a coy wave as they exit. Alone with Malvoio, I decide to have a little more fun playing with his mind yet find a way to have him “conveniently delivered” without showing my cards. In my official fool’s voice, I sing as I approach. I can’t help rubbing it in: “Hey Robin, Jolly Robin; tell me how thy Lady does” (58-59). I pretend to be shocked to see him imprisoned. When he asserts, “I am as well in my wits, fool, as thou art” (73-74), I can’t resist replying “But as well, sir? Then thou art mad indeed if thou be no better in thy wits than a fool” (75-76). I sit myself on the stairs next to him and relax, making a show to the audience of the contrast between my leisure and his imprisonment. Malvolio is all urgency, repeatedly asking for pen, paper and ink so he can explain everything to Olivia, but I have all the time in the world. Even though it’s risky, I decide to have Sir Topas “return” and to play both parts at once. At this point, I indulge in this feat more to have fun, show off to the audience, and beat Malvolio into submission than to truly drive him over the edge. He may figure it out, but at this point, as the jest is coming to an end, I’m not too worried about the consequences. After his final assertion that he is not mad, I make take one final exam. “Nay, I’ll ne’er believe a madman ‘til I see his brains.” I use my drum as telescope and peer into his ear before letting him

know “I’ll bring you light, paper and ink” (99-100) by way of giving a grudging diagnosis of acceptable sanity. I relish his newfound respectful tone: “Fool, I’ll requite it in the highest degree” (101).

I perform a final song around Malvolio’s as a ritual exorcism. In it, I morph into the Medieval Vice, showing a demonic side I have saved for this moment:

I am gone sir,/And anon sir, /I’ll be with you again,
In a trice,/Like to the old Vice,/Your need to sustain.
Who, with dagger of lath/In his rage and his wrath,/
Cries, ‘Ah ha’ to the devil,
Like a mad lad,/‘Pare thy nails, dad?’/Adieu, Goodman devil.
(102-113)

Here, the Vice figure, as Feste quite literally identifies himself, ironically dressed as a member of the clergy, is purging the community of the puritanical anti-life force as if purging the Devil himself. I chose to make Feste charitable: he hopes that his efforts will purge this life-denying force from Malvolio, rather than Malvolio from the community, but he leaves that choice to Malvolio. My voice fades away in ghostly admonition as I slowly exit in the moonlight.

As discussed in Chapter 5, this scene is at the center of the current uneasiness with the level of cruelty the revelers show toward Malvolio. Indeed, Sir Toby himself realizes the jest has gone too far, if only out of fear of reprisals. In productions made for family audiences, the scene is often either cut or made innocuous. Some darker productions play up the cruelty. In the Nunn film, Malvolio appears later before Olivia bruised and bleeding from his ears, suggesting actual violence has been done to him. One production went so far as to make a parallel to the torture of prisoners by U.S. soldiers at Abu Graib (Kemper 42)! I

think all of these adjustments, though they have their purpose, get away from Shakespeare and, in some cases, may achieve the opposite of what they intend. In my opinion, the main cruel act is the forged letter and its immediate aftermath, which raises Malvolio's hopes and dashes them in a publicly humiliating manner. The main damage to Malvolio has been done before the dark room scene and in it there is no mention of physical violence. Perhaps it is the trappings of imprisonment in this scene put modern audiences off so. But if Malvolio were to mend his ways as a result of the prank, though it was affected mockingly, it will have ultimately been an act of kindness. So when I played this scene, while I was enjoying a degree of sadistic pleasure at Malvolio's discomfort, at all times in the back of my mind was the thought that this was precisely what could cure Malvolio of his folly.

On the whole I was pleased with how this scene was played. I appreciated that the stage was darkened, giving the scene a menacing atmosphere and setting it apart from the sunny tone of the rest of the show. At first I faulted myself for not achieving a tour de force of slapstick, but now I'm glad that I focused mainly on the psychological dynamics of the scene. The scene was, in fact, almost cut in the CFS production in the concern that it was too cruel for family audiences (it was the director, Ellen Lieberman, who sent me the Kemper article) and in the end was included as an opportunity for a bravura slapstick improvisation by Feste. The result actually made Feste seem crueler as his antics had no healing purpose and it caused the audience to sympathize with Malvolio! I think at Ten Ten we achieved a meaningful middle ground for the scene that avoided being too frivolous and or too dark.

Act 4, scene 3.

Feste is not in 4.3, which ends with Olivia hastily calling a priest so she can marry Sebastian (who she thinks is Cesario) as soon as possible. My entrance at the top of 5.1 comes right after. At the start of the run, as directed, I allowed Olivia and Sebastian to run off with the Priest before making my appearance, with no indication that I saw what just occurred onstage. But halfway through the run, I started to peek my head from behind the flat where I enter while they are still exiting to suggest that I might have seen what just happened. There is no mention or other evidence in the text that Feste ever learns of this elopement before Olivia reveals it publicly later in the scene. Since I wasn't a blatantly omniscient and omnipresent Feste, I liked my choice, which hints at the possibility that he knows and sees all, though I never did decide definitively. At any rate, the entry of my head got a laugh as it also was an apt counter move to Orsino's noisy entrance with Cesario from the back of the theater.

Act 5, scene 1.

Orsino shows up at Olivia's house for the first time in the play and Feste conveniently appears to block his way. Like the oddly mundane and talky scene between Osric and Hamlet before the action-packed denouement of Hamlet, this scene seems an intentional dilatory tactic, both a breather and a teaser to the audience before the dizzying twists of the remainder of the play. By now, both Orsino the audience are impatient to resolve matters, and Feste literally stands in the way of the forward momentum, coaxing money from the duke before he'll let him and the play proceed. It's a fun scene but often

cut for obvious reasons. I'm glad it stayed in our production, especially since the "Come away death" scene was cut, making this my only encounter with Orsino (though it would've been funnier as an escalation of Feste's impudence toward Orsino from their first meeting).

Orsino shows up with Cesario. I handle the unanswered question of whether or not I just saw Olivia go off with Sebastian by giving Cesario a coy wave. I do know my Lady is in high spirits and will have none of the pompous Orsino, so I am a little giddy with extra boldness. Orsino ingratiatingly asks how I am and calls me "good fellow" (8). I give him a hard time, knowing he'll be inclined to indulge me:

"Truly sir, the better for my foes and the worse for my friends" (9). He challenges my assertion and I explain:

Marry sir, they praise me and make an ass out of me. Now my foes, sir, tell me plainly I am an ass, so that by my foes, sir, I profit in the knowledge of myself, and by my friends I am abused; so that, conclusions to be as kisses, if your four negatives make your two affirmatives, why then, the worse for my friends and the better for my foes (13-18).

I never did figure out the precise math on all that, but I came up with some clowning that made sense of the line and got a laugh. By the end of the run, I perfected a series of gestures with my hands and fingers that did the dubious math. I switched around the last phrase and ended up with "the worse for my friends" while giving the duke my middle finger, to which he's constrained to reply, "Why this is excellent" (19).

I was pleased with the through line of my clowning in this scene and my timing with Orsino, though the audience didn't always respond. After successfully getting Orsino to offer money to me twice, I try for a third time: "*Primo, secundo, tertio* is a good play" (29). With each number, I kick my way down the steps like a Las Vegas showgirl. Orsino denies

this third bag of gold, but dangles it before me, promising, “if you...bring [Olivia] along with you, it will awake my bounty further” (33-34). I consider a moment, then cup Orsino’s hand along with the bag of gold, then sway back and forth as I sing, to the tune of “Rock-a-Bye, Baby”, “Lullaby to your bounty, ‘til I come again” (35). I gently move Orsino’s hand with the gold bag to rest on his thigh. “Let your bounty take a nap, I will awake it anon” (37-38). I creep off on tippy toe, shushing Orsino and the audience as I go. He laughs and I turn to shush him again.

The denouement begins but is interrupted before all is untangled when I accompany Sir Toby as he barges in, having been wounded offstage by Sebastian. At first, I was trying to find ways to add clowning to this moment. But this was Sir Toby’s final moment onstage, and as it developed, it went from a moment of raucous slapstick to a moment of pathos: Sir Toby’s drunkenness has gone dangerously too far. I decided to pull back the clowning and let my mask fall as my concern for and dismay at him comes through. I become all business as I realize Olivia needs me to hustle him safely away at this delicate moment, and I do so with all seriousness and a sincere look of resolve to Olivia. Although a hilarious exit arose spontaneously in dress rehearsal, in which Sirs Toby and Andrew and myself all tumbled offstage in a heap, I’m glad the moment was changed to add a smidgen of darkness to balance the light.

After Feste goes off to tend to Sir Toby, Sebastian enters the same space as Viola for the first time, all becomes revealed and Orsino all but proposes to Viola. Malvolio’s name comes up, as he has apparently imprisoned the sea-captain who we met after the ship wreck, and Olivia bids that he be brought out, remembering that the “poor gentleman” is

“much distract” (264). I immediately appear, not with Malvolio, but with Malvolio’s letter that I agreed to deliver. Shakespeare does not give Feste an explicit reaction to the new reality before him, with the identical twins paired off with Olivia and Orsino. So I repeated my action of peering my head in from behind the flat where I enter a moment before my cue, and take in the scene before I enter with further nods of recognition to the new couples. I really wanted to interrupt my speech to say, “by the way, Mazel Tov, everyone”, but restrained myself. I let it suffice that I enter full of mischief and glee, both at what I see before me, and the fun I’m about to have with the letter.

Olivia asks how Malvolio’s doing. Based on the language of Feste’s reply, I chose to deliver it in the voice of a cheery old-time New England postman; as I take center stage brandishing the letter, to build excitement to hear it’s contents:

Truly madam, he holds Beelzebub at the stave’s end as well as any man in his case may do; h’as here writ a letter to you; I should’ve given’t you today morning, but as a madman’s epistles are no gospels, so it skills not much when they are delivered (268-271)

A brief comedy routine follows in which I force Olivia to play the straight man. She asks me read the letter. With formal grace I deliver this set up: “Look then to be well edified when the fool delivers the madman” (273). I open the letter and set myself for what looks to be a dignified and stately reading. After a long pause, I erupt into the loud and spastic outburst of a true lunatic, hollering the first words of the letter. Olivia interrupts me: “How now, art thou mad?” (275). I reply in a totally calm and reasonable manner: “No madam, I do but read madness; and your ladyship will have it as it ought to be you must

allow *vox*" (276-277). Though it's not in the text, I commence a second reading, more creatively insane than the first, totally incomprehensible, with autistic rocking, jumping and punching myself in the head thrown in for good measure. Again, she stops me: "Prithee read it i' thy right wits" (278). Again, I am calm and reasonable: "So I do madam; but to read his right wits is to read thus". (279). I give a big wind up to read the letter a third time, knowing she's sure to interrupt me quickly: "Therefore, perpend princess, and give ear" (280). I manage to stuff the letter into my mouth before she commands me a final time to read it in a way that makes clear that the joke is over. Actually, in the text she asks Fabian to read it at this point, but here it falls to me to get it right.

I indicate to Olivia not to worry, that this time I'll read it with no fooling. I set myself somberly and proceed to read the letter in my best Malvolio imitation, deep and pompous. This whole routine usually got the most genuine laughs I received the whole show, building to a climax with my Malvolio imitation. It helped that the moment is designed to burst the tension at the climax of the play. Toward the end of the run, I found a way to enrich this moment. As the reading of the letter draws to a close, I drop the Malvolio imitation for the last lines: "...I speak out of my injury." I stress the word 'injury', feeling some empathy, which continues on "The madly used Malvolio." The helped shift the mood onstage from mockery to empathy as I go to fetch Malvolio (though in the text it is Fabian who does so).

The lovers joyfully clarify and confirm their new relationships whereupon I bring in the seething Malvolio. I take a back seat as Malvolio demands to know of Olivia why she deceived him, Olivia denies the letter was hers and Maria (taking Fabian's lines) comes

clean with the trick she and Sir Toby played. I suppose Feste could've remained quiet at this point, but it's good diplomacy for him to confess his role in the ruse. As discussed in Chapter 4, many commentators view Feste's speech to Malvolio, which is his final speech of the play, as one of vengeful triumph. Surely, Feste takes pleasure in rubbing Malvolio's humiliation in his face a bit. At the same time, though, the speech can also be offered as an olive branch. Feste's aim is always to expose a person's folly, but not to destroy the person, but to cure the folly. By the final performance, I succeeded in finding a way use the speech to offer Malvolio the choice to either recognize his folly, relent and join the community, or not to.

[Imitating Malvolio as I walk down the stairs, taking center stage] Why 'Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrown upon them.' [mixture of friendly confession and teasing good fun] I was one, sir, in this interlude, one Sir Topas, sir-- [Malvolio glares at me. I try to minimize] --but that's all one, [more teasing: I can't resist, I circle him one complete turn on the next phrases] 'By the Lord, fool, I am not mad' [and to make sure he remembers my grievance and hold a mirror up to his ill-will] But do you remember – Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal, and you smile not he's gagged?' [I am center stage again, and as I deliver the final line, I spin my upper body slowly around three hundred and sixty degrees while my legs are planted with my arms outstretched] And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges (349-354).

I end my turn with my upper body and visage facing Malvolio, my legs twisted in a corkscrew, with one arm extended toward the audience, meaning "here with us", and the other hand extended toward the upstage exit, meaning "exile". Malvolio thinks a second (I wish it were longer) and makes his decision. "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you" (355) and exits in the direction my upstage arm suggests. I watch him wistfully as he goes and turn back toward Olivia who scolds, "He hath been most notoriously abused" (356). I

take it all in with a sad smile and a shrug that mixes agreement with Olivia and self-exoneration: I had to administer bitter medicine for the benefit of all. The sour moment is dispelled quickly as Orsino bids someone “Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace” (357), then turns everyone’s attention to the upcoming marriage celebration. I humbly cede center stage to the lovers and sit on my swing for the final song.

Feste’s final song, in the Ten Ten production, was turned into a group song that became a curtain call after the first verse. This was a reasonable decision, as Theater Ten Ten takes as its aesthetic one of the primary functions of an Equity showcase: to showcase a group of actors. Perhaps one reason Judith resisted giving Feste a stronger meta-theatrical presence was to avoid having one actor stand out of the group. Also, Judith and Ten Ten had a strong musical theater aesthetic, and, the choice of group song was in keeping with the tone of the rest of this sunny production of Twelfth Night. The song’s words and tone, however, were obscured by the cheery rendition, the bows and applause, so it served little more than to signify a conventional happy ending, with all being well in Illyria. This was clearly not the theatrical moment Shakespeare was striving for when he gave Feste this enigmatic and melancholy song to serve as final comment on all that preceded it.

The mise-en-scene of the finale did allow Feste to retain a hint of the function as Illyria’s orchestrator of events, as I remain drumming throughout, slightly apart from the celebrants, the musician/master of ceremonies accompanying the final celebration of life. I did get to be the last to exit, turning on my axis while skipping, drumming, and smiling to the audience as I go off.

CHAPTER 7: REHEARSAL AND PERFORMANCE JOURNAL

The following journal of my rehearsal and performance process has been edited. Sections have been deleted for brevity and relevance, but words were only changed for grammar or spelling. Excised text is marked by three dots [...] and editorial comments are marked with brackets [].

Audition and Preparation for First Rehearsal

Thursday, March 25, 2010

About ten days ago I emailed Judith Jarosz, the Artistic Director of Theater Ten Ten, to express my interest in playing the role of Feste in her upcoming production of Twelfth Night. I knew there was a good chance the role had already been cast. Judith replied that she'd love to work with me again, but she was hoping to cast a woman in the role of Feste....Judith wondered if I'd be willing to be considered for Andrew Aguecheek instead. I told her that at another time I'd accept any role she'd offer, but at present, since my thesis was on Shakespeare's clown roles, Feste was the only part that would justify the time commitment. About a week later, Saturday, March 20, she called to ask me in to read for Feste: the women she was considering for the role had schedule conflicts.

So I had less than twenty-four hours to prepare. Judith was calling in about a dozen actors to read for several roles still uncast. She wanted us to prepare a comic Shakespeare monologue, sing a song *a capella* and be prepared to read cold from the script. I had a comic monologue at the ready, but I figured she already knew my comic abilities. I imagined that her main concern might be my singing. Judith is a professional singer and though she's heard me sing back up, she knew I didn't have much experience singing in

shows. Certainly I never had to be the main singer of an entire show. She told me on the phone that she was willing to go for a less than beautiful voice if the actor could sell a song. I remembered that Feste plays the tabor. Judith had mentioned to me that she was going to give the show a Moroccan flavor. Going with that clue, I got the idea to accompany myself on a drum, playing quasi-Arabic rhythms while singing. Surprisingly quickly, I found a friend with a doumbek, an Arabic drum, who was willing to lend it to me.

I watched a few Youtube videos on basic Arabic rhythms and started to play around on the doumbek. I started singing a popular song in Arabic I had learned..., “Ana Mayal”. It was a song of unrequited love, so I thought it might actually be appropriate. Then I started singing Feste’s closing song, “Heigh, ho, the wind and the rain”, using a tune I think is standard for the song in traditional productions, then played around with the rhythm to make it sound Arabic. This was great fun and I had a good feeling about how it would play. I wanted to play both, but thought two songs would be odd. Out of the blue, I started singing a Gilbert and Sullivan song from Yeoman of the Guard called “I have a song to sing, O”. It is actually sung by the only jester character in all of Gilbert and Sullivan. It went perfectly with the other two as an opening number, allowed me to sing more “beautifully” than the other two and sounded great as an “Arabic” song! I did only thirty seconds of each song so the medley would be mercifully short.

My instincts paid off immediately. Judith first asked everyone to do his or her monologue. I didn’t want to do mine, since the only one I had ready was Malvolio, and her husband was going to be playing Malvolio. When it was my turn, I walked up to her with my doumbek to ask her if I could sing first instead, but before I could ask she saw the drum

and exclaimed, “are you going to sing for us”? Nodding excitedly, I went and sat on the edge of the stage, which already made me more comfortable than I am when starting a monologue. I took the liberty of looking around and making eye contact, which is what Feste would do, as the intermediary between the audience and the world of the play. Everyone looked back with heightened expectation. I milked the moment a bit as I took out a pitch pipe and tooted an F. I started singing the intro a capella, then dramatically raised my hands and started drumming. I have pretty good rhythm, though I’m no drummer, so I kept it simple. I could tell from the start that I had won over Judith (and her husband, David Fuller, her producing partner)....I usually get quite nervous when singing, especially at an audition, but this time I knew what I was doing was going to work well, so I was calm and in the moment.

When I was done Judith was laughing and looking quite pleased. She did ask me to read a Feste scene, which I threw myself into with gusto. That must’ve clinched it: when I was done she pointed at me and said “You’re Feste!” Okay, I’ve worked with her three times before, I know she and David think well of me, and there wasn’t much competition at the audition. Still, it felt good to come in with a hunch and an unconventional plan and know I hit the bull’s eye. Now if only the rehearsals and performances to come will go as smoothly!

Friday, March 26

Today we received the script, which Judith had told me would be edited. One major element that affects me directly is that Judith has combined the roles of Feste and Fabian. Apparently, there is precedent for this, which makes a lot of sense, in some ways. It does

tamper with the integrity of the role of Feste as Shakespeare intended it, which I will address as I go along. Judith did mention this to me even before I auditioned, but I neglected to mention this to Kate [Kate Ingram, the Head of the Graduate Acting Program at the University of Central Florida and the chair of my thesis committee]. I should run this by her, as now it is not purely Feste. Of course, going into the thesis role, I have little control over directorial decisions that may affect my interpretation and understanding of the role. I think the way to deal with this is to acknowledge that this or that change has been made from the text or traditional conception of the role, and address the ramifications of the change.

My first reaction to hearing of the addition of Fabian's role to Feste's was disappointment. As Feste is my thesis role, I would prefer my part to be as close to what Shakespeare wrote as possible, as I'm mainly interested in Shakespeare's intentions for Feste and how I bring my originality to his intentions. Of course, I realized that Shakespeare is often cut quite a bit. From personal experience and my research, I know the clown's part is often cut the most, sometimes entirely (the smaller clown roles). I accept this fact and for my shadow thesis on Shakespeare's clowns, I would have a whole segment on defending the clown's part from cuts. I do understand why he is often edited heavily: much of the clown's dialogue is wordplay, nonsense and parables that usually don't move the story along. His language is arcane and often intentionally cryptic, even to Elizabethan audiences. Much of the humor is obscure and hard to sell to a modern audience. For all these reasons, the clown often overstays his welcome, as even some of the characters say!

.... In the case of Judith's cuts, most make good sense. She gets rid of many of the most obscure references and laborious word plays. Some of my favorites are gone, but most are left in. On the one hand, I would have liked the challenge of tackling those tricky passages. On the other, I'm relieved to be relieved of the hardest and most superfluous of them. There is enough left that will still be a challenge to interpret effectively. I fear Feste's trying the audience's patience and embrace the shorter-is-sweeter approach.

There are two lines that I wish we could keep in. I'll mention one here as an example. Act 3, scene 1 is basically verbal sparring between Feste and Viola. The scene does not advance the story in any crucial way and is often cut entirely or a great deal. It is a good scene, though, and Judith left most of it intact. However, she cut Feste's exit line down to simply "I will conster to them whence you come." Feste has been taking great pains throughout the scene to give Viola the verbal run around. I think it diminishes his character to have him exit any scene without a parting bon mot. That the bon mot is cryptic doesn't matter: it actually enhances his mysterious nature. I am waiting for the right moment to ask Judith gently if she'll consider putting back in, "Who you are and what you would are out of my welkin; I might say 'element', but the word is overworn." I'd gladly trade putting that back in for three other cuts elsewhere.

Saturday, March 27

I'm not crazy about the idea of incorporating Fabian's role into Feste's. I do understand why Judith is doing it: mainly, she doesn't want to have to hire another actor. She has also combined the roles of Curio and Valentine, which makes even more sense. It does work quite well if you're not being purist about it. Feste and Fabian both serve in the

household of Olivia. Although Fabian is not officially a clown, he becomes part of the prank upon Malvolio and part of the trio with Sirs Toby and Andrew who hide behind a tree as it unfolds...

However, Shakespeare intentionally keeps Feste out of the prank until Maria importunes him to play Sir Topas, and then Feste goes to work in his own more baffling style. As Shakespeare draws him, Feste is a loner. He engages with others as a solo act, bantering with them in opposition or entertaining them with song. That is the main reason I think Shakespeare keeps him out of the letter prank, to keep him somewhat aloof. Besides, he is on a short tether with Olivia, and might not want to put his employment on the line so directly. And I don't think the jest is in his style. It is a coarse, though brilliantly executed prank. Feste is not a prankster or rioter. He watches on as others commit their follies.

Fabian's lines are more mundane than Feste's. All of Feste's lines are virtually void of pragmatic content. He says nothing that is not full of irony or sarcasm or...meant to challenge the listener. Even when he is expressing that he will go tell Olivia that Viola wants to see him, he says it in a twisted way, adding a bon mot after. Fabian's lines are full of mundane observations and factual information, usually delivered without irony or sarcasm. He does have wit.... But this is not the brilliant wit of Feste.

So, how do I deal with this dichotomy? How do I justify Feste's "lowering" himself to take place in the two pranks? What's coming to mind at this beginning phase is that Feste takes off his professional mask when he's among Sir Toby, Sir Andrew and Maria. Much as a professional stand up isn't "on" all the time, and might even have a normal conversation

backstage, so Feste, when he's with more kindred spirits, let's down his truculent style somewhat and relaxes into companionship. Perhaps he is relieved to play second banana in other peoples' jests.

Still, I'm actually getting more upset about the combining of Feste and Fabian as I write this. It's becoming clearer in which ways it's unfortunate. The great clown characters throughout history are always consistent creations that operate under a specific set of rules. They never step out of character and never stoop to a mundane thought, word or action. Feste is a great clown creation and Fabian is created as a comic character, but in no way a clown. I must make it work as the decision is made. A part of me is glad to have the extra opportunity to create comedy. ,,,

Sunday, March 28

My work today on Feste consisted mainly of working on the "structural analysis" required in the guidelines....

Monday, March 29

There are many outpatients from mental hospitals roaming the streets of New York and I saw two (at least) today. They made me think of some places I could go with Feste to give more texture to a very verbal role. The clown historians talk of "natural fools" as opposed to "professional fools."A professional fool is in control of his fooling. Most are generally witty and urbane, but some may pretend to be natural fools, or at least draw on some natural fool traits as part of their "act". Feste is definitely the professional fool, and, at least textually, uses no natural fool behaviors, at least in the traditional sense of

appearing stupid. However, an obviously witty or clever fool can be so odd or outrageous in behavior that he may seem threateningly crazy to those around him.

Further reason why it's a shame to both cut a lot of his obscure lines and to combine the roles with Fabian. Some of his extended obscure conceits could actually help create the effect of the semi-coherent ranting of a natural fool. And since Fabian does none of that so it makes it harder to keep this "act" up. So this is where the two-Feste idea will be helpful.

I did read in Bente Vidabaek's book The Stage Clown in Shakespeare's Theatre some passages that partially help justify a combination of Feste and Fabian:

Feste's clowning primarily consists of two levels, the sophisticated verbal acrobatics he performs with the court circles and the more earthly interaction with the comic group. He is equally at home operating alone and as an element in a group. The comic group's mirroring of the higher level is to a large extent made available to the audience by Feste's interaction and mediation, as is the interplay between the two courts [Orsino's and Olivia's]. In one way, however, Feste distinguishes himself from his brother jesters; he remains completely aloof from the love intrigues, he does not take sides, and the only time he actively participates he does so to punish (95).

I would agree with Vidabaek to a degree. I think Feste is at home operating alone and in a group, but not as at home in the latter. As written, he only joins the tormenting of Malvolio at the last moment, when impressed into service. And in his Sir Topas act, which he finishes alone, serves to end the jest. Feste takes no part at all in the crude trick to get Sir Andrew and Viola/Caesario to duel each other. But in its broad outline, I agree with Vidabaek and mainly the argument that Feste participates to punish (and, further on, "his clowning has many malicious elements") gives me a helpful mechanism for playing both roles.

Tuesday, March 30

Judith left a message saying she cut another of Feste's songs ("Come Away Death" in 2.4 where he sings at Orsino's request). Actually, she's cutting Feste completely from the whole scene. I don't mind cuts. I'm prepared for cuts. It just adds to my anxiety over how much control I'll have (or not) over the interpretation of Feste and whether Judith is cutting Feste down to a mere ornament or will he retain his crucial function. I called Judith several days ago, as I always do before rehearsing a show, to ask her about her concept of the show and Feste's role. Judith said she didn't have a strong concept other than giving a Middle Eastern flavor and that she prefers making discoveries about the play's direction and Feste's role in rehearsals. I find this a bit troubling, especially coming out of grad school where the productions of necessity have strong concepts as part of an academic collaboration...I am worried that this lack of game plan will translate into spurious directorial choices. I long to be in a production where I get to put my head together with the director long before rehearsals start and to truly work together toward a well-thought-out, well-executed plan for my performance. I have found such vagueness and lack of communication at this stage usually leads to vague and choices that fall back on stereotypes.

On the positive side, I have worked in a show directed by Judith once, and another directed by her husband, David and on a third which she produced. Individually and as a creative couple they do appreciate my creative input and that's partly why they hired me for Feste. For David, I played a clown role he created for a version of The Mikado set in Singapore. He loved and accepted many of my ideas, including one that was pretty extreme. My character was to close out the first act by jumping into a chest and hiding

during a bomb siren. I suggested that this was inconsistent with the character I was creating and that the theme of the production might be better served if I sat on top of the chest in a meditative lotus position without moving a muscle the entirety of the intermission. David generously agreed to the idea and audiences loved the choice and I often got applause as I got up to start the second act. What made this all possible in the first place was that David did have a brilliant directorial concept for the show, and it informed my choices and spurred my creativity. It gave us a direction we could work toward together.

It's harder to make strong choices when you don't know what the director wants. When Judith told me merely that she was going to have a Middle Eastern flavor, that small clue spurred me to borrow a doumbek and give a very unique audition. Had she not given me that very basic suggestion, I wouldn't have come up with the idea and even if I had, it might've been baffling to Judith. But as it was it was a good example of an actor working with a director's suggestion from the very beginning. At this point, for instance, I have no idea if Judith would prefer a more melancholy Feste or a more antic one. This could have a positive side in that if I do come in with a strong choice that appeals to me, that might be the one she goes with.

Wednesday, March 31

So let me shift the focus onto myself. There will always be disappointments in the imperfections of conditions for a production. My job is to maintain a positive attitude and take responsibility for what I can do with the given circumstances. Our first read through is tonight, on the eve of April Fool's Day, so I'll take it as a good sign.... What are my choices

so far? I think it's valid to stay pretty open at this point, as I don't have a strong leaning or desire to do the part in a specific way yet. Perhaps I should take Viola's observation of Feste to heart at this point: "This fellow is wise enough to play the fool,/And to do that well craves a kind of wit. He must observe their mood on whom he jests..." (3.1) Feste adjusts his jesting and language to fit each character and situation, and so must I in relation to the variables of this production, which I will learn as I go along. I don't need to impress Judith at this point, as I have already done so with my past work and audition. It will take some restraint on my part not to make some commitment to choices at the first read because I feel some pressure, as Feste, to entertain, and, as a professional, to come with a lot "to the table" as I often do. I must trust now that what I bring to the table is a great deal of forethought on the role, and that I can hang back for now.

I would like to spend some more time with the script and review the cuts. I have barely looked at Fabian's role (with an eye to playing it), which is now mine, and it would be a good idea to do some basic preparation there just to get the words into my system. It might also be good to do some free association on everything about this project, role, my career, my hopes and fears as it is good to go into a project in a philosophical frame of mind. That would certainly be in keeping with Feste's function in the play. He is the resident philosopher, standing aloof as he comments on life as he sees it without getting too personally involved. I guess that's a good realization to be having at this point. I often get very passionately attached to the roles I do and how to play them. This often leads to clashes with the director. Feste is masterful at injecting his viewpoint, going out on a limb,

flaunting his individuality, but in a surrendered way. He won't be upset if rejected, thought a fool or if people persist in their own folly.

Rehearsals

Thursday, April 1, a.m.

I pretty much stuck to the plan I came up with yesterday, to hang back with my choices during the first read through, and it seems to have paid off. I didn't get to do much journaling as I had hoped, but I was doing the free-associating and thinking of the upcoming role in a philosophical way before the read through. It's funny-- I remember my first read through at Ten Ten about five years ago. It was for Shaw's The Apple Cart, and it was my first Equity showcase, a big step up from the ... situations I'd been in. I was impressed by of the actors' first readings. They made strong choices for their characters and voices (a big dialect play) and made lots of eye contact. I sensed the professional pride and competition in the room.

The same was true last night. There was lot's of eye contact and, I felt, a self-imposed pressure on the part of many, to deliver a performance. This certainly made for a more entertaining first read. The actors playing Sir Toby and Sir Andrew were excellent. At the break, I told the fellow playing Sir Andrew that I thought he was already the funniest Sir Andrew I'd ever seen, and meant it. ...I felt justified in my newfound dislike of such high-octane first reads as it seemed many of the actors were already making way too specific choices and relying on their usual bag of tricks. Of course, I prefer such effort to ...little or no effort. But I'm a new convert to a more Meisner approach to the first read and maybe,

we'll see, the first rehearsals. I would also prefer More table work. Here there simply isn't as much rehearsal time....

Feste doesn't first speak until late in the first act, so I had time to sit and think about my approach. With each moment, my original idea to hang back appeared more and more a good one. I was gearing myself up to simply say my lines with as little inflection as possible. I wanted to try saying the lines sincerely, with no attempt at being comic. I figured everyone was waiting to see just who this guy they hired to be the clown was, and I'd subvert expectations by being straight. I also thought it an appropriate response to the high, extroverted energy in the room to bring things down a notch. This approach also worked well with what's going on in Feste's first scene. His first line, in response to Maria's warning him that Olivia is so mad at Feste she could hang him is: "Let her hang me.... " I said it in a very nonchalant, matter-of-fact, quiet manner. Feste's next interchange is with Olivia in which he "proves" that she is the real fool for still being in mourning for her brother. Instead of using a clownish approach, I simply and sadly took the lines straight to her. It had a sobering effect on the proceedings, as if the fool's action was very clearly to stop madness, hers and everyone's.

As the reading went on and I persisted in my minimalist approach I could sense a bit of discomfort, confusion and fascination with what I was doing, which is exactly what I was hoping for. I was putting the others off their guard and making them think, which is what Feste does, no matter what approach I eventually come up with. Harold Bloom writes that Feste is the only character Twelfth Night who is in his right mind and I wanted to give the most relaxed, natural, open-ended reading in the room. This approach became ironically

more challenging when we got to Fabian's lines. Most of what Feste says is an ironic observation, told in an artful style, and is already so intrinsically interesting that detachment works well. Fabian's lines are more mundane and have no irony, so they need energy to "sell" them, or at least, it felt that way. I did try to employ the thought that Feste, when doing the scenes intended for Fabian, takes his persona down a notch and willingly plays second banana. Still, it's hard to go from his very powerful stance as Feste, the man who holds all the cards, to Fabian, a mere accessory in crude jests.

I couldn't help making a few bold choices along the way. They went over particularly well as I had been hanging back so much they came as surprise. I was trying to figure out how to approach the part where Feste pretends to be Sir Topas, a man of the cloth sent to exorcise the devil from Malvolio in his "dark room". The usual approach I've seen is for Feste to do a goofy impersonation of a curate. But it seems to me the important thing is to scare the wits out of Malvolio, and silliness won't do the trick. Malvolio is a Puritan afraid of damnation. So why not instead make the curate's rant believable and frightening to Malvolio? What can be funny is the vividness of Sir Topas' zeal. So I was very big and loud, which took everyone by surprise. My action was to put the fear of hell into Malvolio, with no goofiness, and not only did I get laughs, but I think I scared people a bit.

After the read, Judith told me she liked my laid-back approach, especially since everyone is so extroverted, and Sirs Toby and Andrew in particular are so boisterously comic. I sensed that the time was ripe to ask her for a conversation on the role and she agreed to have a phone conversation with me today or tomorrow. Now is the time for me

to ask my questions and try to get on the same page with her. And now is also the time to bring up any line additions and cuts I might desire....

P,M. (same day)

As planned, I went through the script, comparing Judith's edits with the full text. I came up with several lines that Judith had cut that I was hoping she'd put back in, as well as a few suggestions for cuts, and one stage direction for her to consider. While I originally agreed with many of the cuts, the closer I read the play the more I'm sad to see certain lines go. The big shame is the cutting of scene where Orsino calls in Feste to sing to him and Olivia. The scene serves a few functions, such as further establishing Feste's role as muse. My main concern was that the scene establishes that Feste is known as Olivia's fool to Orsino and both Orsino and Viola refer to this in later scenes and the thematic significance of this is that Feste is ubiquitous and is the only character who goes between all the characters.

Judith phoned as we planned and I spoke to her first about getting on the same page with her about Feste's character, which we basically were. She saw Feste as a free spirit who still tried to keep his begging and busking chops going even though he had a place in a household, in case the day came when he was turned out, or wished to go. She liked my low-key approach to balance with the energies of the other characters. She was willing to hear my suggestions for re-inserting some lines and cutting some others....They were all very small additions or subtractions that might seem to make little difference, but to me they did, and I argued successfully with her that they would help clarify the action. She also agreed to consider inserting Feste physically into the scene with Orsino and Viola in Act II,

even with the his dialogue cut, so that the later references to his being there make sense, and his ubiquity is established. She made no promised on that, but I'm very glad she accepted all my line insertions and cuts after she heard my justification for them.

.... We had a very short table discussion about our characters (just Viola, Olivia, Malvolio and Feste) and got right to blocking I.5, Feste's first scene. Well, I had some ideas, but I was holding to my plan of being open and not wanting to predetermine. How different a read-through is from the first rehearsal! I had forgotten that when Judith says 'we're just doing blocking,' that, even if not final, choices get made for much of the scene's mood and action as we go along. Suddenly I wished I had done more preparation. I did have one idea, which I called out when Judith was asking me to do something that would've taken things in a different direction. I told her I was thinking of coming on with a noose for both the literal mentions of 'hanging' and the bawdy punning on the same. She liked the idea and encouraged me to work towards its inclusion. It was nice to get that encouragement, after working in so many situations where my input would be shot down, especially so as a clown where I want to feel free to shape my clowning. But today's rehearsal was a good warning that the time has come to make choices, and do my homework on those choices before I even let them see the light of day in rehearsal so as to have a better chance of having things go in the direction I'm hoping. It sounds so controlling, but I'd rather be shot down trying something than not have something to be shot down.....

Now that I know the general lay of the land, it's time to get out of the general and into the specific.

Friday, April 2

I made a makeshift noose from a cloth yoga belt I have. I watched a video on the Internet to learn how to make it. I have this elaborate routine in the making with the noose. As it involves putting the noose at one point over Olivia's head and possibly throwing the noose at Malvolio, I had better tread lightly. As Feste ...says before Olivia enters "Wit, an't be thy will, put me in good fooling," so do I pray to the gods of comedy now to guide my steps in the right direction. I already am getting attached to the notion and that's a recipe for a clash with the director. I think for today, I bring the noose, as Judith is encouraging me to do, do some of the ideas I'm working out, but not the Olivia thing— unless things are going real well and there's an opportunity to discuss it in advance. I think it would be strategic to ask Olivia and Malvolio first if they'd be willing before I spring it on them or Judith. So complicated, this collaboration business, and how often it goes awry and is less than it could be....

I walked through Central Park on my way home from rehearsal in the dark last night and saw a fellow with a set of drums drumming away. He seemed a bit nutty, and I thought this was another good sign on April Fools Day. I should've stopped to encourage him to play some more (he was taking a break by the time I got near) and found out more about him. I wish I had the lack of self-consciousness to play the drum on a bench in Central Park. That would be good background work for Feste. I did play very softly on the church steps before the audition (which I couldn't resist as Act 3, scene 1 begins with Viola asking Feste, who is playing a tabor, "Dost thou live by thy tabor?" "No, sir. I live by the church, " replies Feste).

The next scene we are likely to rehearse... is the late night party scene (2.3). ..Feste, as of now, still has his song in that scene. I had to return that doumbek, but I do have a little toy "Indian" drum I could bring to rehearsal. It's too bad I don't play any Elizabethan era instruments. ... a piano doesn't work if the show is set in Shakespeare's time. Judith asked if I could juggle and for a while I felt bad I didn't apply myself more for Chris's clown unit with my juggling. But in truth, I don't like juggling enough to ever get good enough at it that people would be entertained by it. And I never found juggling that funny in itself. So now I don't feel bad. But I do wish I could play something else. I told Judith I could learn a song on the recorder if I had time to. It's true. But for now, we have no tune for that song. There's a composer for the show, but he hasn't arrived on the scene yet with any music, so rehearsing this scene where the song gets mixed in with the dialogue, will be a challenge at this point. I just realized that I don't need to pressure myself so much for ideas for this scene as it really not Feste's scene as much as the first one is. He does figure prominently, but he's the musician, as it were, and that might call for less take charge clowning.

Saturday, April 3

Last night we began by rehearsing the first Feste scene a second time, As planned, I used the prop noose and a hanky (for a few bits of business I'm working in). I didn't perform or mention the full concept I have for the noose bit, especially as Olivia wasn't there. Judith seemed pleased with my progress and still seemed fine with the noose and the hanky. For now, when Olivia enters in mourning, I parody her mourning by sniffing with the hanky as if she's newly bereaved. This prompts her annoyed first line of

the play, "Take the fool away." Later on, when Malvolio sneers at me: "unless you laugh and minister occasion to him, he's gagged." I shove the gag in my mouth to mock him.

...It's evident I'm primarily concerned with my clowning bits. These bits, however, are more than mere jokes. In their tone and slant they will convey Feste's intentions and character. In a sense, they *are* Feste....

We also worked on 2.3 for the first time. It's the scene where Feste joins Toby and Andrew in their late night carousing, wake up and anger Malvolio and resolve with Maria to plot against Malvolio. It's a pretty difficult scene to build as we need to eventually create an atmosphere of raucous joking, singing, laughing and mocking. There's lot's of interplay and interruptions. I have often found this scene and the others with Andrew and Toby to play falsely. It's very hard to convey spontaneous hilarity, using mostly jokes and songs that are hard for a modern audience to follow. I find the actors in these scenes usually fall back on tired stereotypes of what revelry is supposed to look like, and the result is tedious to watch, and probably not so much fun to play either. So I think here, the key for us is to genuinely have fun, and not perform a caricature of fun. While there are certain gags and stage directions we'll obviously have to follow, I hope we can rehearse with and retain in performance an improvisatory feel. I tried to play my part toward this end last night, by "having fun" with trying new ways to inhabit each line. The staging is very tame so far, and at the moment when Judith was wondering how to handle the moment where Maria conspiratorially tells the others of her idea to trick Malvolio, I spontaneously got down on the floor, on my belly with my feet in the air, like a small kid listening to mommy tell a story, and the others joined me in similar positions. Judith loved it and she even asked us

to stay there, sprawled and spent as Maria makes her exit. I don't know what the final shape will be, but I think I'm onto the right track with my impulses to keep things loose.

So much for the laid-back Feste I thought I'd be after the first read-through! It just proves how different getting on a stage is compared to reading around a table. We rehearse on the actual stage which is a proscenium stage facing a large hall with very poor acoustics, with an echo when there's no audience. Subtle doesn't really work as well. It's interesting to monitor myself as I fall into my usual clowning tricks (the particular faces, postures, attitudes I take) as soon as I'm on stage. So it's very important to really think and work through each moment (eventually, after the playful period) so I'm not just lazily using those tricks. It's just funny to note how quickly the subtle Feste has given way. I can, however, bring him back where possible. Perhaps more important than subtle, is returning to the honest and the direct occasionally, instead of always being antic. And if not simply honest and direct, another contrast to antic would be the intentionally mysterious.

Sunday, April 4 (morning)

Today we will work on the Malvolio letter scene (2.5) for the first time. This is one of the scenes where I'll be taking over Fabian's role, as Feste, as written, is absent. In the scene, Fabian/Feste, Toby and Andrew (and now Maria, too, who has been added) hide while they watch Malvolio as he finds the letter. As this is not originally a Feste scene, and (as Fabian) Feste is now a mere accomplice, I am less attached to how the scene goes. Judith has said she intends to cut some of the lines and I have told her I'd be happy if some of Feste/Fabian's lines were cut.

(Afternoon)

Had fun at rehearsing the letter scene today. Enjoyed coming up with bizarre line readings for Feste/Fabian's asides while spying on Malvolio. It had the unintended effect of Judith deciding to keep certain lines in that she thought of cutting as she liked my offbeat delivery. A bit of good slapstick developed happily against what I would have chosen to do. Judith had me sneak up behind Malvolio and flick the letter further into his sight, then duck behind the bench. When Malvolio sits, he sits on my hand. I thought this silly, and Judith admitted it might not work. But we tried it and I did this whole silent big reaction to having my hand sat on, trying to pry hand away by pushing off the bench with my leg, then blowing on Malvolio. When M does stand, I was thrown backwards into the arms of Sir Andrew by the force of my pushing. This all happened without planning and got a big laugh and now seems to be a keeper. I felt good about my willingness to go with Judith's suggestion and try to make the best of it, when we both were thinking it might not work.

Jason Wynn, our composer, came to rehearsal today to give us an idea of the songs he's composing for us and to get an idea of our voices and instrumental ability. I would love to play drums, recorder and (since they are using one, though anachronistic) keyboard, but Judith has been seeming more inclined to cut my musical moments, even the drum which she originally liked. I'm trying to pick my battles, but expressed to her the thought that I'd love Feste to be more like his name, a "Lord of Misrule" and to play music in various scenes and maybe even as part of some meta-theatrical devising (such as playing with the music director occasionally and otherwise breaking the fourth wall in a clownish fashion). Judith said she appreciated my ideas and understood where I was coming from,

but didn't know if it could be done for this production, though she'd continue to think about it and welcome my ideas.

Although the situation is full of (for me) the usual frustrations, I have to be happy about the process. Judith appreciates me (she was laughing throughout at my antics today) and she is considering and keeping many of my ideas. My colleagues old and new seem to enjoy what I'm doing and respect me. I have the opportunity to play the clown in the basic sense I've truly wanted to but haven't for a long while: I get to be a comic engine in several scenes and have license to be creative. If I can stay positive I may actually enjoy the game of turning the frustrations to comedy, which, after all, is typically what a clown does.

Tuesday, April 6

...At this point I've seen all the productions of Twelfth Night available on video (five on Netflix and one at Lincoln Center Library) and am in the process of seeing them again, as some of the viewings came months ago, as research for the clown project or my Malvolio audition. Today I watched again the Twelfth Night done by the BBC around 1980. Similar to the whole production, Trevor Peacock's Feste was competent without being very interesting. His is a direction I'm decidedly already far from taking. He plays Feste as an almost normal fellow who happens to be an entertainer. There's nothing odd, or "liminal" about him. He's actually pleasant looking and affable, and one has to look hard for any reference to motley in his attire. As George Bartenieff [with whom I took a Shakespeare performance class] said, Shakespeare's clowns are all perverse. Peacock conveys no spirit of the perverse.

Paradoxically, Feste, a fool, is also said to be the only character in the play that isn't suffering from folly. That's true enough, but that's is because he is a marginal figure, and as a marginal figure he is far from "normal" himself. In order to stay successfully on the margins, he needs to keep folly as his bosom friend, playing alternately professional and natural fool and be willing to be seen as a fool, and not be attached to the trappings that accrue to those who behave normally. So, though he may not wear motley in his brain, as he says, he must wear motley on his physical and spiritual sleeve. There I go writing essays again.

I've also just read through ... a wonderful book by Edward Berry called Shakespeare's Comic Rites. Berry shows how Shakespeare's romantic comedies are the literary incarnation of the coming-of-age and marriage rites that had been part of English society for generations. For Berry, the fools are the key figure in the ritual that initiates young lovers from their adolescent to mature state. The fool stands at the threshold between folly and wisdom and lives in that wild space the lovers must go through to attain maturity. Of course, it's not so simple. It just further impresses upon me the responsibility the fool has. It's frustrating that Judith doesn't seem too aware of it, not so open to discussion of it, and I feel I must work hard and smart to retain that responsibility and, even as it is diminished by circumstances, to act as if it is mine anyway.

Wednesday, April 7

After some internet and phone research, I found a place in the West Village that sells imported instruments that had a doumbek (also known as tabla in the Middle East) for \$25. I went and checked it out. It was quite small, about 9" high by 5" wide at the top, which is

actually the perfect size for my needs. I need a drum that I can carry around easily hanging from my neck so my hands are free to play it (or not) while standing and moving about. The larger ones require one to sit in order to hold it. It sounds okay, though certainly not as great as a larger, more professional drum, but that's fine, too, as a louder sound might drown out my voice, especially in that space. I brought it in to rehearsal this evening, and though I didn't actually get to play it yet, I wore it in several scenes. It comes in handy for funny gestures. During my line about a drunken man, "one draught...makes him a fool, a second mads him and a third drowns him" (1.5), I use the drum as a big stein of beer (it tapers in the middle and bottom so it looks like it could be a stein or goblet). I also used it similarly in the merry-making scene (2.3).

I am playing with the question of whether or not to play "drunk" in that scene. None of the Festes I've seen (save Anton Lesser in the horrible Branagh video) play that scene drunk. They're just the entertainment. I don't think it serves Feste to get actually drunk, as he's the clear-headed one. However, it might be fun and useful to pretend I'm drunk, or to behave drunk, so long as I can do it in a way that lets the audience know that I'm pretending in the name of clowning and satirizing my targets. The drum will come in handy as I can be taking "gulps" from it. I know I could just play it cool and "observe" the folly of Sirs Toby and Andrew. But as I'm now Fabian, too, it might help justify my joining them in their pranks if I 'join' them more here, too, in their revelry. It does give me more to do and play.

The universe seems to keep telling me something about drumming in public. Right after I bought the doumbek, I was walking through Washington Square Park (admittedly,

the single most likely place on the Eastern seaboard to run into a person drumming in public) and sure enough, there was a fellow accompanying a singer on a large doumbek! He looked every bit as if he could play Feste. I started to challenge myself to get out the drum and join him. But he seemed to be part of an act (they had their hat out for donations) and I wasn't feeling up to intruding. I walked away beating up on myself for cowardice as I usually do after such moments. This prompted a resumption of a long conversation with myself, one that has been ongoing for years, about my identity as a performer. I am most attracted to the clown role. Certainly, comic characters of many stripes attract me. But it is the devil-may-care, in-your-face clown that most attracts me, since I was a kid. This has driven me to act the clown in social and public situations, mainly when I was younger. And I have beaten myself up for not being more of a clown. Deep down I believe that I should be living by my wits, playing drums for money in public, constantly challenging the status quo with clowning. I feel hypocritical playing the clown as a role in a show. I feel I haven't earned it by being a true clown in real life. It's all very safe, playing a daring clown when you're being asked to and the situation is set up for you to do so.

Of course, this is true of most acting, where one is attracted to parts where the character behaves in daring ways, such as heroic or romantic. Who is the actor playing Indiana Jones or Romeo in real life? I'm sure those attracted to those roles often suffer the same line of self-questioning. These questions are good to ask, so long as they don't become a debilitating form and self-flagellation. On my way to the train after walking away from the public drummer, I had a new thought. Maybe it's okay to just play the fool in a

play. If all goes well, I am about to be a father. It wouldn't be good ... to fulfill my fantasies of being a daring vagabond at this point. It's too late for me to replace my childhood, which was happy and secure, with the street urchin childhoods of my comic heroes. Perhaps I can actually accept myself and enjoy the process of playing a clown artistically. And maybe such self-enjoyment is one key to being a clown in life as well. If I am relaxed and centered, then I can be free to joke, play and entertain. Certainly, clowning can be fueled by negativity (anger, anxiety, a need to gain acceptance or to win), but that's not what I want for myself or for my clowning anyway. And it's okay not to be the guy who takes out his drum in Washington Square Park. If I really wanted to, I'd do it. It's more that I wish I wanted to do it.

Thursday, April 8

... Judith has kindly asked me to think with her about a "button" for Feste to perform to end our first act before intermission. I suggested something involving the drum as the play ends with music, and 3.1 (our second act) begins with Feste drumming. A good framing device, especially as music is such a strong theme of what is known as Shakespeare's most musical play. Judith liked this direction and we will keep exploring it. To start our second act, however, she wants Viola to enter first, followed by a drumming Feste. I was hoping to be alone onstage drumming as I might be to end the first act, and to have Viola happen upon me. I must remember I'm not the director, though I really wish I could just direct all the scenes I'm in!

Friday, April 9

We've just had two rehearsals without Sir Andrew.... So it was partial progress when I... presented my idea for some slapstick involving Feste and Sir Andrew and Judith said she liked it but would have to see it done with Sir Andrew (and of course, Sir Andrew might object). I'm sure it will be fine, though. It comes in Feste/Fabian's speech in 3.2, where he is screwing Sir Andrew's courage up to fight Viola/Caesar:

FESTE

She did show favour to the youth in your sight only to exasperate you, to awake your dormouse valour, to put fire in your heart and brimstone in your liver. You should then have accosted her; and with some excellent jests, fire-new from the mint, you should have banged the youth into dumbness. This was looked for at your hand, and this was balked: the double gilt of this opportunity you let time wash off, and you are now sailed into the north of my lady's opinion; where you will hang like an icicle on a Dutchman's beard, unless you do redeem it by some laudable attempt either of valour or policy (14-23).

My idea is one as old as the comic hills: to manhandle Sir Andrew in the appropriate ways at the appropriate words, at which Andrew will of course cringe, underlining his cowardice:... to shake him on "exasperate" and "awake" then slap first his chest on "heart" and then his belly on "liver". On "banged", ... do an obvious "air punch" across his jaw, while blatantly making the sound of a hit on my drum. On "Sailed into the north" ... turn Sir A to face upstage where we will wave wistfully at the version of him that will be exiled from Olivia's favor, then I'll whip him around to face me on "unless." Hopefully, this will work out.

Saturday, April 10

A small miracle occurred yesterday evening. From the beginning of rehearsals, the actor playing Sir Toby has been a negative presence and has been directing hostile put

downs at me (though occasionally being friendly and supportive as well). It was his birthday on Thursday, and I invited him out for a beer after last night's rehearsal. It would've been with Sir Andrew as well, but that actor was off yesterday, so it was just we two. We had a far-ranging conversation on our childhoods and religion and found there were many coincidences in our biographies. Near the end I opened the topic of our working relationship and said I really liked it when actors collaborate well and that I was hoping we could be open with each other with ideas and concerns. He said he felt the same way.

I had a feeling that our relationship would change after that, and the evidence after today's rehearsal is that now we're on the same team. This is a wonderfully promising development. I have often tried and failed to steer such touchy situations to a better place only to meet with outright failure or very limited success, such as this past summer when my I had a very reluctant collaborator in my identical twin Dromio in The Comedy of Errors. I actually think it best that it was just Sir Toby and me, as it allowed us to really have a great tete-a-tete. Sir Toby himself said we've got to get Sir Andrew to come out with us soon. This is very important as we share so many moments on stage together, especially now that I'm Fabian as well, and if we don't work well together and just rely on our individual wits, those scenes will be chaotic and tediously repetitious. However, there is hope if we can work together to create distinct moments and truly play off each other.

Sunday, April 11

We had Sir Andrew back at rehearsal today, and he was very agreeable to my idea of manhandling him during the longish speech where I screw his courage to fight

Viola/Caesario. That's a relief, and more sign that the possibilities for collaboration are improving. Sir Toby and Viola were also open to some bits of business I suggested. So far the ideas are mostly coming from me, but the ice has been broken and hopefully now everyone will feel free to share ideas.

Today was our first rehearsal of the music. It's very odd being the only singer in a show, especially for a company that does so many operettas and musicals and hires so many professional singers, even in straight roles. This production has fewer of the usual triple threats, but there are some, and of course Judith is an opera singer and directs musicals. So it feels like a nice breakthrough for me. So far I seem to be making the grade vocally, with only one backhanded compliment from Judith: "It sounds good...in a funny way." I know I'm not a great singer, but the key is if I'm able to carry it off in convincingly and effectively. Jason, the musical director, has already been working with me on how to present the songs. He was delighted I found a drum, and is helping me work that in to his arrangements.

The final song, "When I was and a little tiny boy/With Heigh Ho the wind and the rain" is, in the text, sung by Feste alone onstage. So to a degree it's a disappointment from the purist standpoint not to sing that song alone. I do understand the choice to include everyone in an ensemble finale. Judith's idea was to have Feste sing the first line. Jason is using an existing contemporary recording from somewhere in the Middle East with very strong rhythm and instrumentation, and composed a melody to sing over it. I proposed that, as is typical in middle eastern music, that I begin a cappella on the drum, singing one complete verse and then have the full "orchestra" strike up. This will give me

my solo melancholy moment, and give the nod to Feste's traditional role and still have our ensemble finale. Judith liked the idea and wants to try it. I will take heart in these small "victories" (we'll see how it goes). [This idea was not used.]

Monday, April 12

I received the script for Connecticut Free Shakespeare's Twelfth Night in my email. Ellen Lieberman, the artistic director calls it her "adaptation.... What Ellen has done is to substitute antiquated phrases in key places with contemporary vocabulary, and added a few fun anachronisms. I am jealous of her Feste. ... she highlights Feste's role as "Illyria's stage manager" in several ways, including a few meta-theatrical devices of which I imagine Shakespeare might have approved. Feste opens the show with a song and introduction and leads a "living intermission", which (I'm imagining) involves Feste staying onstage or even working the crowd. He even directs the stage lighting at the end of act one ...I would love for Ten Ten's Feste to have such a role, but it doesn't seem in the cards...

I am waiting for the right moment to suggest more of a role for Feste. Judith has generously asked my input on coming up with a "button" for Feste, with which to end our first act. Feste also enters with Viola at the top of our second act. As it stands, Feste follows Viola onstage drumming. Viola is coming to gain entry to Olivia's house. What if as I march Sir Toby, Andrew and Maria offstage into the house at the end of our act one, I simply don't follow them, stretch out on the steps to the house and go to sleep? Then remain there throughout the intermission. Then, when our act two is beginning, I wake up and start drumming. Viola enters to find me in blocking her entry to the house. Not too exciting, but different, and gives Feste that framing role I like. And maybe there can be a way to insert

Feste into the beginning of the show. As it stands, we now begin with the shipwreck, scuttling the much commented upon fact that this is the only Shakespeare play to begin and end with music. Maybe there can be a musical opening of some kind involving Feste. I imagine Judith would be open to this, or perhaps she already has it (at least the musical part) in mind. As I write this part of me feels like the typical stage diva. But I really feel I'm sticking up for the integrity of my role, not just my own ego. I'd trade having lines cut for having a well-defined Feste. Hopefully I can find the right time and way to move things in this direction.

Tuesday, April 13

We still haven't blocked the entire show, which is worrisome with opening in a little over two weeks and three off days to come. Decisions are being made in a chaotic fashion with little collaboration going on. I never liked this method of rehearsal. I'd much rather spend lots of time on each scene from the get go. How can one decide blocking before the scene has had a chance to develop? I know the standard wisdom regarding this (it gets the major outline in place, then one can fill in). It just has never satisfied me as an organic way to work. For my brief scene with Sebastian in Act IV and Orsino at the top of Act V, Judith basically told me where to stand and told me to stay put in those positions. No actual discussion as to what's going on in the scene. So even though I do have some freedom within those limitations, certain possibilities for the direction of the scene are eliminated with nary a discussion. On the positive side, having me stationary in these two scenes gives me more power. In the first, I'm trying to steer Sebastian toward Olivia's house and he doesn't recognize me. Instead of working hard to physically block his way (which was my

original thought) by simply standing behind him, I have to waylay him with my words alone. I like the centered confidence this way gives me. I received the same instruction for my scene with Orsino. He wants to see Olivia and I'm giving him a hard time with my jesting before I let him pass. My instinct was to do all this antic moving about to accompany my wordplay. But Judith is just having me stand on the steps. So I have to rely on attitude and verbal dexterity more than heightened physicality. Again, this works as it makes Orsino the one to fidget, to no avail. Finally, when I commit to a physical jest at the end, it has more effect. ... I think she just wanted to keep things simple. But I am happy for those times I don't have to fight for "what I will" and find a good way to use given circumstances.

Thursday, April 15

I have allowed myself to get depressed and frustrated about this production. We finally finished blocking the show last night, and much of Act 4 and 5 have not been rehearsed beyond this.Another run through seemed like an exercise in futility.... I think I am justifiably upset, but I can't help beating up on myself for being upset. I'm Feste, damn it! I should rise above the negativity (and folly) and be the irrepressible fool under adversity. I should take every opportunity and make the most of it. ... Judith ...[suggested]... we should change the ballad "O' mistress mine" to a faster, more comic pace, since "you're not Frank Sinatra". This hurt, as I've just been taught the fairly difficult music, and I felt the scene and moment called for a break in the non-stop vaudeville style of the show. ... I was feeling myself giving up on a number of hopes I had for Feste. To add injury to insult, the base of my little drum broke. I didn't realize it was ceramic and I've

been letting it hit the ground and other surfaces. I saved the dozen or so pieces and hope I can repair it with glue.

I'll take the broken drum as symbol for the situation. I need to repair my process and myself. We have two weeks to our first audience. I cannot afford to despair or give up in any way. ... I hope this is the nadir. I'm sure things will improve as we do have to make choices. It's just fully hitting me (such is my folly) that this show is not going to be my fantasy Twelfth Night. However, if I have faith in taking the right actions, I might be pleasantly surprised. It is my job as Feste to carry this fantasy Twelfth Night within me and praise the God of Wit whenever and wherever it makes its appearance.

Friday, April 16,

I repaired my drum today with glue today. It took a while and it's imperfect and we'll see if it holds. I'll take it as sign that the drum and I are returning from our nadir. The more important development in that direction came with last night's rehearsal. To my mixed delight and apprehension, it was announced we'd be working on the scenes in more detail. I had been out all day and missed the email saying so and didn't bring the drum So I rushed about frantically looking for a way to make a drum substitute. At Ten Ten, there is a small scene shop with many materials and tools lying about. After experimenting unsuccessfully with a child's pail and rope, I found an almost empty baby wipes bottle that was almost the size and shape of my broken drum. I removed the last wipes (a waste in the name of art) and cut two holes in the bottle with a utility knife and threaded a length of rope through the holes. It hung perfectly from my neck and even sounded pretty good. That put me in a better mood.

As the first scenes were without Feste, I found my scene partners one by one and asked them if there was anything they wanted to work on in advance. They all seemed to appreciate this. Sir Toby and Andrew and I never did get to talk much ... but I did get to speak productively with Maria, Malvolio and Olivia. Maria actually had a little shtick she wanted to work out with me with my noose to make the 'hanging' pun bawdier (I had mostly abandoned the bawdy element of this section). We spent five minutes working out a sequence (she's very good at shtick). I was pleased at the result, but more pleased that she actually wanted to collaborate and improve matters. With Malvolio, we briefly discussed the need to work on better blocking for our first conflict.

The bigger breakthrough began with talking to Olivia. I finally, after weeks of holding back on this, asked her if she'd consider letting me take the noose from around my neck and put it around her neck after I "prove" she is a fool. She said she loved the idea, as she needed something extreme to help with her mood change, as it now has to happen in about a quarter of the lines of the original. We tried it onstage and Judith did not stop the action. Then, when I shortly thereafter call Malvolio a fool, I threw the rope at him. I didn't prepare him for this, and he let it hit his chest and fall to the ground. Uh oh, I thought, he doesn't like it. But when we worked on the scene the next time, David held out the staff he walks with and whispered to me "I'm helping you". I caught on immediately, and this time I threw the noose so it lassoed his staff! I hope we keep that moment. Judith said she liked the idea of putting the noose over Olivia's head but was concerned it wouldn't fit over Olivia's headdress. She offered, though, that if the noose could be made big enough, it

might be possible to keep it. Fortunately, I've learned to make a noose that can be adjusted for size very easily.

That was the only scene of mine we got to rehearse last night. But for me, it's the most important. It's Feste's introduction and it's crucial that he establish his character clearly and effectively. And now it looks like all my ideas are going to be included. I'm pleased with my growth as a politician. I carefully structured the timing of the presentation of my ideas so that they'd be acceptable to the director and my fellow actors. ... I'm becoming more and more convinced that such careful diplomacy is a major part of successfully working on a role. This aspect is certainly heightened when one plays a clown role, and further when one wants to have one's out-of-the box ideas and interpretations included.

Judith made a point of telling me "good work" as I left the stage. I am feeling much better about the prospects for this show now, and my functioning within it.

Saturday, April 17

Another factor contributing to the difficult state of affairs is ... this is the last show for Theater Ten Ten at the Park Avenue Christian Church. This was announced officially at the first read through. The theater has had a home at the church since it was built in 1955 and it is known in New York as the longest running Equity showcase. In spite of all, I am fond of Judith and David and grateful to them for all their dedication and for nurturing me. I want to help make this experience a positively memorable one. Everyone is aware of the bittersweet irony that the last Ten Ten show (at this space, maybe forever) is Twelfth Night, with it's themes of last revels in the face of puritanical party pooping, and its last line,

“But that’s all one/Our play is done/And we’ll strive to please you every day.” I’m feeling a special responsibility ... Feste to help keep the spirits up onstage and off.....

Sunday, April 18

.... Many say that early memorization leads to getting set in choices too early. I don’t believe that it’s so for myself. I see my choices as an ongoing process, and the sooner I can help myself in the process by having the words in my system, the sooner I can truly play with them and be free to play physically as well. Today provided much reinforcement of my belief in the benefits of memorization as the scenes where I was most solid I had the most fun and made new discoveries and choices.

Monday, April 19

.... I want to keep a separate journal that doesn’t go by date, but by subject. This journal would have entries such as “voice”, ‘movement’, “relationships”, “sexuality”, etc. Basically it would be a character study in journal form; not an essay, but an ongoing file for my thoughts on each subject. Perhaps there could be a file for each scene. This journal is my linear documenting of my journey, and the subject journal a horizontally organized way of building my observations and thoughts... While it is late in the rehearsal process, there’s still time to benefit from this before opening, and could be a structured way to work on improving as the run goes on.

This is one of the fortunate situations where the run of the show is longer than the rehearsal period. The first time I was ever in a run of longer than about eight shows, it was my first show at Ten Ten. They always do twenty shows. It was a great feeling to get to keep improving. In runs of eight shows I always come up with ideas on how I could have

improved my performance after the show closes. In the longer runs, those epiphanies have a better chance of occurring during the run.

So perhaps I'll spend less time on this journal as I proceed, as I find I have the tendency here to philosophize or give a very broad outline of what's been happening, rather than rolling up my sleeves and getting down to business. But in the spirit of keeping up with both the micro and the macro, let me commit to simply starting the subject journal tonight.

Tuesday, April 23,

I did, indeed, start my "subject journal" last night, setting up whatever categories came to mind, and writing about 3 pages on Act 2, scene 5 alone. I am excited by this new approach and think it will allow me to get lots of constructive thinking and "work" done that I might otherwise have been too paralyzed to do. I can see right away that I won't get to all subjects, or even a majority, by our first audience, but it will be an excellent format for my ongoing exploration and building of the role during the course of the run...

Wednesday, April 20

...With delicacy, I brought up ... wanting to stay paralyzed in front of Malvolio and only run off after his last "go off." She agreed to let me try it, and this time she liked it. Another small victory, which makes me feel much better about things. In the "letter scene" (2.5) I floated a few ideas, one of which Judith accepted, in abbreviated form. When Malvolio finally concludes: "for every reason excites to this: that my Lady loves me." I suggested we all jump out from behind the three "trees" where we've been hiding and

dance wildly but silently in front of them and circle them. Judith liked it, but cut the circling the trees part. At least the basic joke it made it in!...

...After the rehearsal, the few of us at this rehearsal went to our regular pub to celebrate our ASM's twenty-first birthday. Everyone wound up leaving pretty soon (Tuesday night) but Judith and I stayed. Her husband, David, was still working at the theater on the set, so she was waiting for him. I welcomed the opportunity to talk with Judith one on one. I felt that any time we spent together just being friendly would help our working relationship. In spite of all the complaining I've done here, we are actually fond of each other and had a great chat, but very little about the show.

I am still debating whether or not to suggest the idea of my staying onstage during intermission, and possibly joking with the audience before the show, but with each passing day this it gets less likely that I will bring it up. I am now leaning toward not ever bringing it up. I don't think the idea of my sleeping onstage during the intermission is such a magnificent one that I want to fight for it. I'm not even sure I want to do it, and as such would rather not be stuck spending my entire intermission doing that. My main concern is, as some scenes that reinforced Feste's role as catalyst in Illyria have been cut or altered, plus the Feste/Fabian compromise, that there be moments that clearly define this structural role. I am getting prepared to stop fighting for more of this. The idea Judith said she'd entertain of finding a moment to insert Feste in Orsino's court has been dropped. I've seen a few ways it could've easily been done, especially at during last night's rehearsal, but I am getting prepared to drop any further agitating for extra Feste moments, and rest content with the decent number of such that are included.

Thursday, April 22

Last night we worked more on music and the curtain call. The music Jason has written is fairly tricky, made more so by prerecorded accompaniment that is not so obviously related to the sung melody. For “O Mistress Mine”, there is no instrument keeping rhythm, and just a very sparse electronic sitar line that runs almost entirely contrapuntally (both melodically and rhythmically) to the sung melody. For “When that I was and a Little Tiny Boy” the accompaniment is a wild prerecorded instrumental song Jason found on the Internet that imperfectly meshes harmonically with the melody and begins on an odd beat, hard to detect. My first sung note is on a “fourth” which is very hard to locate against this particular accompaniment.

I respect and appreciate Jason’s experimental creativity, and actually like the music he wrote, but it puts a lot on me We just got some of these tunes, and I have to sing strongly over the recording, yet not so loud that I can’t hear it, and thereby get ahead or behind it, all the while drumming (which becomes hard for me to do when singing simultaneously) and moving about the stage..... Judith] has been pretty scornful of my attempts and especially my volume. There has been no acknowledgement that these are tricky melodies, made tougher by the offbeat accompaniment. I am getting nasty looks from the musical theater types in the cast (and one professional opera singer) who I’m sure are further irked by the fact that I’m the only one who gets to sing. I sense that Judith might be on the verge of cutting something or making me forego drumming.

So today, I spent hours with a recording of the accompaniment trying to get it down before we work on music again for tonight’s rehearsal.

Friday, April 23

It turned out all that time I spent practicing the music was a bare minimum. I thought I had pretty much gotten my two main songs down, but the acoustics in the auditorium derailed me a few times. But I hung on and basically came through it with Judith's approval. In the finale, "When that I was a little tiny boy, " I have been singing the entire first verse. Tonight Judith let me sing the first and third lines, but gave the second and fourth, "With heigh, ho, the wind and the rain", to Orsino and Olivia respectively. This was a good choice as it took away some high notes from me and lets the audience know it's an ensemble song from the beginning. Still, it hurt a bit that, with so much wrong in vast stretches of the play, Judith is publicly holding an ax over my singing... Jason even had to come to the defense when Judith was thinking out loud of cutting "O mistress mine" in half (a song which lasts ninety seconds and for which the accompaniment would have had to been rerecorded).

The rest of the evening was spent as our last rehearsal to work individual scenes. Of course, there was only time to work on a few of the many scenes that are chaos. Fortunately, we spent the bulk of the time on the long series of scenes involving the manufactured duel between Sir Andrew and Viola/Cesario. For me the challenge is finding things to do that keep me engaged in the proceedings without stealing focus, as I have few spoken lines (as Feste/Fabian). Viola, with whom I share most of these moments, has been very cooperative. The hardest part is when Toby is gulling Andrew stage right, while I'm gulling Viola stage left. Viola suggested I take out her dagger and put it in her hand. A

focus stealer, perhaps, but at this point I think the action demands that stuff is going on both sides of the stage, it passed Judith's approval as we ran it three times.

Viola also agreed enthusiastically to work with me on our main first scene together (3.1). We only got so far, during a ten-minute break, but we addressed the main moment that was awkward. We enter with me "stalking" her with my while beating my drum. Our movements have always been awkward and there's been no clever coordination with the movement and the drumming. So in two minutes, we came up with a pleasing traffic pattern and a neat solution to when to move and when to drum. If only there were more of such collaboration among the actors to make certain moments work! The scene still has a long way to go, but at least the biggest problem was solved and there's hope for us addressing the rest....

Saturday, April 24 (late)

Tonight was our tech rehearsal and I had a few nice breakthroughs even though we barely rehearsed the actual play. Since there was so much down time, I spoke with Olivia about that moment where I interrupt her as Malvolio is accosting her in his yellow stockings. This is the third time I've spoken to her about the moment and this time I was very clear about what I was asking her and she finally understood it and agreed to it. Oddly, we got to perform that moment (oddly, as it is in the middle of the scene and has no light or sound cues that I know of) and, as I requested, she didn't move until after I ran offstage laughing like a hyena. The moment worked far better than before and has the shape I was imagining. At a break, Olivia came up to me and thanked me, saying not only did her not moving help my joke, but it helped her as well, to remain pinned by Malvolio,

and not to move on her line, but after it. I am really happy about these seemingly small victories in the rehearsal process, as collectively they are giving me the empowering feeling that I am succeeding in building a performance.

I had a breakthrough with the music tonight. Jason was there again and we did spend about an hour or more on all the music. I finally had that breakthrough I was working towards in being able to keep the rhythm and melody over the difficult accompaniment. ...For our finale of "When That I Was", the group singing continued to drown out the accompaniment, so it became my task to keep the rhythm with the drum. In "O Mistress Mine," I finally was able to hit all the pitches correctly and keep the rhythm. I still need to add more drum and more physical actions, but first things first. Judith and Jason were pleased. It's a good feeling to get over the hump where I was worried they'd cut my songs and be irrevocably disappointed in me.

Other little victories along the way: getting Sir Andrew and Judith to agree to a funny exit to 2.5. It was Sir Andrew's idea to start to walk off following Maria in a crouching and worshipful position. I have wanted to imitate him and follow him in the same position, beating my drum as if we are a ridiculous regiment following our commander. The problem is, we exit up a short flight of stairs, which makes it hard to continue the crouch. Til now, Andrew has been simply rising to his full height when getting to the stairs and we've simply walked off, a rather lame exit for such a wild scene, and the end of our Act I. So today I finally spoke with Sir Andrew while we were onstage doing the exit for tech. In the space of thirty seconds I proposed that I follow him while crouching and that we actually attempt the entire exit up the stairs crouching. We practiced it once

and it was sloppy but funny. We tried it again when we officially ran the exit and Judith laughed, so it looks like it can stay in! We need to refine it, and the big problem is myself: my legs and knees are older and bulkier than those of the young and reed-thin Sir Andrew (he's about 28 years and 120 lbs).

I am happy such moments of collaboration and improvement are finally occurring, but sad that they have been so hard to come by.

Sunday, April 25

Today will be our second and longer marathon day including our first time in costumes and our first dress rehearsal. It has occurred to me that my journal entries for the last period of time have concerned mainly my working relationships with my colleagues and my struggle with the mechanics of specific moments and the music, but little on the development of Feste as a living character. it's high time to take stock of where I am with the role here and now as we have our first audience in four days and our official opening in six.

I think a lot of the direction and choices I have made have been consciously or subconsciously related to style of the production as that became evident. As I have been hinting at here, this production is very "shticky". Not that the shtick is that good or well developed, but it is the main style of pretty much every scene. The romantic relationships are played only for cute laughs. We have not worked to bring out Shakespeare's darker notes: there is no real melancholy or beauty in this Illyria. There has been no discussion on the themes of the play, so that we have not been working toward any vision of this play or any of its moments other than to make it all cute. Certainly, Judith has made choices

with her direction that give the piece a flavor, and in the end it may prove entertaining. And Shakespeare has a way of showing up in even the most ill conceived productions, magically bringing the actors toward the richness that lies in waiting.

As such, there has been little room for a melancholy or contemplative Feste to emerge. I have been going with the flow and have been mainly concerned with making each moment funny. Still, there are opportunities for Feste to pull back and be the observer; the critic, the reality checker, the concerned friend and I need to define those moments as well, in addition to the shtick.

That's not to say that my shtick isn't a valid part of my character's actions. Feste is, after all, a clown. Not only do I entertain with my clowning, but also all my actions are expressed through one form of clownish attitude or another. In my first scene with Olivia, my need to both convince her it's time to stop mourning and thereby to see the worth of my clowning and my remaining a member of her household rides on that very clowning. I won't get into all the examples of such moments here. It's important to take stock at this moment that, along with refining my shtick, I need to find and refine those moments where the reason for Feste's clowning are manifested....

...So, as we go into our final rehearsals, I realize how much work I need to do. Unfortunately, I have to focus on so much of the physical right now: my new costume, my new props, hitting cues that have just been set, whole stretches of scenes that have hardly any shape to them, lines that are shaky and for which I have made only a few weak choices, songs that I'm only beginning to execute with any precision. But writing this is helping me focus where and when I can on those moments where I can bring some depth to Feste,

where I can let down the antic front for a moment or where the antics can become infused with intention.

Monday, April 26

Yesterday was our marathon costume try out and first dress rehearsal. The costumes look amazing. They are the property of Deborah Houston, who ran Kings County Shakespeare for 27 years and she is a stickler for authenticity. She is also very particular about how we wear the costumes and a couple of ideas I had and thought she had agreed to, might have to be cut, such as my idea to use a “motley” handkerchief, which I use and refer to in a few strategic places....

...The skin on the top of my drum broke in a scene near the end where I give it only one big thump, which I took positively as a sign that things couldn’t get worse; that the nadir before the ascent had been reached.

Tuesday, April 27

Yesterday, I went back to the store where I got my drum and explained what happened. Fortunately, the identical twin to the broken one was yet unsold, and the proprietor kindly sold it to me for twenty bucks, which Judith will reimburse. I was grateful to have been able to get the exact replacement (the shape and size was perfect) and this put me in a positive mood.

Last night’s dress rehearsal was a positive step forward. Though we still have a way to go before having a smooth run, let alone a really good one, it began to come together. In particular, I was pleased with my own progress. “O Mistress Mine” finally took shape. I got most of the music right and I added much of the “choreography” I’ve been working on

(very basic, but with the drumming and singing, tough for me). More important, I began to live in the part and relax into the different moments, rather than merely trying to remember my lines and physical actions. I began to explore moments more fully, make clearer choices, and when things went awry for whatever reason, to roll with it in character.

Judith has four or five young interns, paid by the Board of Education, from a high school in the Bronx, and they watched the show. I got quite a few laughs from them and this helped my confidence. It was great to have even a small audience as that usually inspires me, especially in a comedy, to connect and invest myself

I was happy to find some moments, as hoped for, where Feste can hang back from clowning and observe, or simply be human. Without intending it as such, I found moments and a through-line in which Feste is a caretaker. The arc of my fooling is starting to take shape. I start as instigator, but in the end help restore balance, though never fully letting down my Fool's mask. For his final exit, Toby wanted to do this huge fall "up" the stairs. In Sunday's rehearsal, Sir Andrew and I spontaneously fell on top of Toby and we basically rolled offstage in a heap. We all loved the moment but Judith cut it. We were very upset that Judith didn't want what we saw as a beautiful gag. However, not being able to do so today, we trudged of in a despondent daze, which, combined with a new choice I made, to play the scene as Toby's caretaker, trying to prevent a total breakdown, felt more appropriate to the arc of that part of the story....

I have not yet returned to the subject journal... I am grateful for what is going on in my head, though. I am with Feste much of the day in my mind, and am consciously and

unconsciously working through moments. I feel like I am in a very dynamic process with the development of this role, a place in which I haven't always been before opening. I am more familiar with going into the first performance with a relatively well-rehearsed but set performance that I refine only by degrees, only to have certain major revelations AFTER the show closes! But this time, I feel like a bit of a "hot mess" with Feste, yet in a much more exciting place of possibility. The nature of the clown role gives me more freedom to explore, and I imagine Judith will tolerate to some degree my experimenting with how I approach various moments, so long as I don't do anything drastic or upset the blocking. On one hand, I would like to "figure out" and "set" more "moments", but I am also excited by the realization that I can have a blast approaching this as an ongoing process.

Wednesday, April 28

It was painfully apparent after tonight's final dress rehearsal how much more work I still have to do. Every moment, even the ones that have been well-rehearsed and well-thought out, needs better execution. I learned from watching our Orsino tonight. His performance is highly shticky, but it is precise (except for his diction, which often gets slurry) and therefore enjoyable to watch. Of course, there is much positive going on with my performance, and other than notes on cleaning up certain moments Judith is quite pleased with my work. I just need to systematically work on each moment further and further. Though it's always been a struggle for me to actually rehearse things at home on my feet unless there's a scary deadline, I must take advantage of my free time tomorrow to do so. Indeed tomorrow's first preview is that scary deadline. Josine, my wife... will be there taking notes and will see it at a later date, but I don't want to be a mess. ... I owe it to

myself, the cast and tomorrow's audience to focus as much as possible on preparing for tomorrow night's show.

On the positive side, my "dark room" scene with Malvolio, which had completely broken down on Monday, was much tighter, as David and I ran our lines three times before the run. My first "noose" scene with Olivia went better, and the timing with putting the noose on her head went more smoothly. I am getting a more physical sense of the through line of Feste's involvement in the various subplots, arriving at a sense of ripeness at the end of the play. It could also be merely fatigue!

The mood in the dressing room after the rehearsal was depressing....

Thursday, April 29

Tonight is our first preview. I had intended to prepare all day but was completely exhausted and wound up sleeping most of the day. I guess I've been out rehearsing late and getting up early ... every day and it caught up with me. I suppose I needed the rest as much or more than the preparation. This is not our official opening and there won't be any reviewers there, but Josine will be and I still consider it our "opening." Josine is a very good critic and that's why I asked her to be there the first preview as she always has great insights. She's been watching all the Twelfth Night videos with me and has reread the play. I will get there early to warm up physically and vocally and to walk through certain tricky moments on the stage before the run.

The Performance Run

Friday, April 30

Our first preview went pretty well, all things considered. It was certainly our smoothest performance and mine as well, in terms of simply not making huge mistakes. The “noose” business went the best it’s been so far. It’s been a process of incremental adjustments in when I loosen the noose; when I take it off, and what line and how to put it on Olivia’s head.....

I connected immediately with the audience during my entrance. By simply looking at them conspiratorially as I said my first line “let her hang me”, I got on their good side, just as I imagine fools have done for ages. My song, “O Mistress Mine” went more smoothly than ever, with my adding a little drumming this time (which I had forgotten last run). Our “dark room” scene came together like never before and got lots of laughs. It’s all a matter of confidence and clarity. I’m finding the approach of showing pity on Malvolio for being possessed adds to the comedy more than merely being horrified by his being possessed....

....Josine actually thought the show was quite good, which helps my frame of mind going forward. She had a number of constructive criticisms, most of which I agreed with, and others that are food for thought. She thought my various moments of looking conspiratorially at the audience were quite effective,, making me the audience’s ally, which most agree is Shakespeare’s intention. She suggested that when I put the noose on Olivia’s head on the line, “The more fool, Madonna, to mourn for your brother’s soul, being in heaven,” that I imagine the noose’s “O” is a halo. This will allow me to place it with more intention and gentleness, and thereby more effectively and lovingly convince Olivia of her folly, as well as justify the carefulness required to place the noose without disturbing her headpiece! I look forward to trying this tomorrow.

Josine didn't like my near whiteface. I am using a light ivory base and mascara, which gives the suggestion of clown face without it being too obvious. But Josine found it obvious and didn't think it necessary. She suggests I wear only mascara. She prefers that my Feste be a human and accessible to the audience, without the somewhat otherworldly note I'm going for. This is food for thought, as my whole understanding of his character is that he does wear a mask, he does play the role of clown consciously, and he uses mystery in various forms (his language, dress, music, physicality) to heighten his clowning and put his targets off balance. However, I don't want Feste to get too remote and weird the audience out. I have some darker base at home and will try it tomorrow.

In all, I feel that a lot did come together for our first audience, and that the outline is in place. Now I need to fill in that outline with color. There were many moments that need more energy, more definition and clearer intention. But after tonight I feel confident that I, and the rest of the cast, will continue to improve and as the audiences get larger as the run goes on our confidence will grow and we will have a much better show than we have now. I just wish it would come together sooner.

Saturday, May 1

Our second preview went better than the first, as a slightly larger audience helped. Josine's suggestion of imagining the noose as a halo worked very well, indeed. I don't know if the audience got the image, but it helped me with my intention and Olivia with her sudden change of heart....

Judith gave us a few notes via email. Generally she wants us to pick up our cues and pace, which I can't disagree with. One note is not sitting so well. At the end of our act one,

I've been going off stage with Sir Andrew in a frog hop, beating the drum. It's a bit cumbersome and it takes a while for us to get up the stairs, but it is pretty funny. But in her notes, Judith said, just walk offstage and give a final drum tap before I go. This was the lame exit that I've been hoping to avoid from day one... It's almost crazy that I brought up a major new issue that I noticed to Judith. I'm embarrassed to admit I'm just discovering it, but when Feste comes onstage in the middle of Act 5 with Malvolio's mad letter, the identities of Viola and Sebastian have just been revealed and the couples have paired off. There is no evidence in the text, that Feste acknowledges this new reality, but just launches into his bit about Malvolio. This could be remedied by having Feste re-enter earlier and actually witness the revelation of the twins. Or, we could build in a moment, visible to the audience, where Feste "recognizes" silently what has transpired. Least invasively, we can simply ignore it, or have Feste have his own silent and private moment.... [Judith asked] me to find the place in the text where I might come on earlier, but warning me we can't re-work the moment with the actors. ...

Sunday, May 2

Last night's show was the best so far. We had a decent-sized audience, which allowed people to feel free to laugh. My performance is gradually becoming smoother. I need every bit of preparation before the show. I do some vocal and physical warming up, I walk through some of the tougher moments on the stage, practice my "O Mistress song." I think the one thing that will help me most is to assiduously speak through all of my lines several times before each show, until I feel I no longer need to do so. I am tripping over my lines to an alarming amount, and I feel it's part not being as solid as I could be, and where

I'm solid but screwing up, it's that I haven't gone over them before the show, so error becomes more likely. It's so basic but so important. Feste's power comes from an invincible ability to wield his words like a rapier, and any stumbling hurts the audience's confidence in him. However, in spite of the many flubs I made last night, the audience let up a big cheer when I took my bow, which was a nice surprise.

I tried Judith's suggestion trying to make that moment of realization in Act 5 work. It's a small thing: I enter with Malvolio's letter and make sure I see the two new couples. I even take a half second between Olivia's line, "How does he, Sirrah?" and my "Truly, Madam, he holds Beelzebub at a stave's end..." to snap out of my astonishment and to let Olivia know I see what has transpired. It's very small, and if Shakespeare missed it, I guess it's okay if our audience does, too, but I needed to address it. My friend who is a college English literature professor is coming to the show this afternoon and I've asked him to share his honest critique of my performance.

Monday, May 3

Yesterday's matinee was rough going. It was hot and few people were in attendance. A white-haired fellow in the front row started napping the moment the show started. I know from my own narcolepsy that it means nothing...I can fall asleep at the most exciting action movie; it just added to the somnolent atmosphere. The laughs were few and far between. I soldiered on but the heat and lack of response made my perspiration seem flop-induced. My response to all this was to make my clowning even more antic, but to no avail. It probably made me appear as I felt: desperate. I again made many simple flubs, transposing and tripping over words. At least I'm not forgetting any

lines or cues any more. The most unfortunate mishap was that the string holding my drum around my neck became untied right at the beginning of our second act, 3.1, the scene where I use my tabor throughout. So I had to carry it under my arm and it limited a bunch of the antics in the scene. No big cheer for me at the curtain call this time!

I felt truly awful after the show and questioning my abilities and choices. Was I clowning too much or too ineffectively? Aren't there some clowns who can get laughs without fail? I understand more than ever why the clown in Shakespeare was known to improvise to get some of the "barren spectators" (Ham 3.2.40) to laugh. As I follow a number of my one-liners with a ba-dum-bum on my drum, perhaps I could beckon the audience to laugh in one of those moments. Then again, I did so after my song, though halfheartedly, and I got no applause. Maybe if I do so, I have to be bold and commit to it until I do get a response.

My friend had to leave right after the show, but he called me later to discuss it. Generally, he thought I was too clownish and not human enough. While this can work if there's a good crowd, if it was like it was today, it could be a disaster. He encouraged me to dial back some of the clowning to reveal more moments where Feste the person is talking or reacting. In the very first scene, my need to retain my job and cheer Olivia from her state of mourning should be more evident, he thought. I thought I was already there, but I have taken my friend's words to heart. Tomorrow night (we have Monday shows) will be another small audience and the perfect chance to dial back some of the clowning and find more moments to just pursue an intention or merely observe philosophically. I would like to try to relax into this performance. Feste is confident ... He does pursue intentions,

but not in a desperate fashion. Therefore, he need never be too antic. Or maybe my antics just have to be funnier. I'm still not sure about any of this. I've been going on theories and choices. I knew that it would be an experiment through exploration and the longish run is a perfect opportunity for this.

I already have been cutting the clowning from the moment I come on in Act 5 with the injured Sir Toby, merely trying to prevent him from falling and following Olivia's commands to get him offstage to be helped. I found this a welcome moment to let down the clowning mask, even though it came about as a result of Judith cutting a funny climax (we were just beginning to develop) to our trio's clowning. I have been thinking that the moments that Feste is alone with Toby and/or Maria specifically, he can let down the clowning, as they are co-conspirators. I put it back up in Sir Andrew's presence as we are gulling him, as well. But even in such scenes where Toby/Maria and I are gulling people, I can look to find places to let down my mask when the targets of our gulling don't see me, because I can, and because I can connect with my co-conspirator and the audience in such moments.

When I shared all this with Josine, she again urged me to consider going without the near-whiteface, or at least wearing a base that isn't so mask like. I had meant to do so yesterday but didn't. Today I bought a base two shades darker than the one I was using. It's still light, but it might not read as "clown". Josine might be right that the near-whiteface was distancing me too much from the audience. It's a tough question: the clown has been both traditionally the audience's link to the world of the play, the one who'd on their side,

but as also traditionally had unworldly qualities as the Lord of Misrule. I guess, like anything in art, it's a delicate balance, to be found by trial and error.

Tuesday, May 4

I dialed back the clowning in certain places and it worked beautifully. We also had a surprisingly large and lively house for our first Monday show, which helped a great deal. They laughed at my first line, which always helps my confidence. I've finally become comfortable enough with the physical [elements] of the scene (though they're far from perfect) that I could relax and focus on intention and connecting with my fellow actors, especially Olivia. Annalisa, who plays Olivia is wonderfully present, is a true friend personally, and is miraculously available for eye contact whenever I choose to seek it. The scene finally worked today as I'd hoped. I was determined to use the noose routine to lighten Olivia's frame of mind, rather than just go through the motions. When it was over and we were both offstage, Annalisa rejoiced with me over how well the scene went.

In other places I tried to be more conscious of Feste's intention behind the clowning. I'm embarrassed to be writing this at this late stage, already five shows into the run. I guess I was obsessed over my clowning and forgot that Feste is a human with human motivations. ... There has to be a deep humanity behind the clowning and the philosophy. Withdrawn, perhaps, masked at many moments, but present. Otherwise he is indeed "a dry fool."

As planned, I laid back during the Fabian moments, content to let Sir Toby take the lead. When Toby and I were alone I was more human, less clown. I could go with that even more next time and be cleaner with the transitions. I am now in the process of reviewing

every moment in the play for a more compelling intention than I have heretofore given myself, and a way to accomplish it with less pure presentational clowning. Perhaps in some instances where I've been doing a little lazzo straight out to the audience, I could direct it more directly at the person I'm talking to. I could continue to write about this now in these pages, but I'm eager to get to the script and really look at it from a whole new angle. I'm suddenly really excited after feeling at an impasse with the role. I don't think I've ever been in this position before, where I was in mid-run and suddenly had a revelation (with some help from my friends) about a whole new vein to mine. ...

Tuesday, May 11

I have taken a long break from my journaling. I guess I've gotten a little tired of it, though I had been riding a great wave of commitment to it. I spent time in the days leading up to Kate's visit writing in my Subject Journal, which, though it required more brainpower, was every bit the valuable exercise I thought it would be. The journaling here and the subject journal are clearly things I would be wise to do for every role, though I wonder if I'll ever have the discipline to do it without the pitchfork of having to hand it in for a thesis. But I think at this point I will journal less frequently to give myself (and anyone reading this) a break.

Josine came to see the show again the Friday night before the show Kate would see, with an eye to any last minute adjustments I could make as well as assess my progress since her viewing the first week. She liked the adjustments I made toward less mugging, and felt I could even do less. She liked the more natural (less pale) shade of base makeup. She liked my incorporating her idea of imagining the noose to be a halo when I place it over

Olivia's head. In general she likes and understands where I am with the piece and where I'd like to go with it, so it's great to have her be able to see several shows spaced out over the run.

Having Kate come see the show raised my adrenaline more than did opening night. I actually like adrenaline and knowing who will be in the audience. I like going through the play and imagining how my performance will be seen through the eyes of a particular friend. It usually helps me focus my performance. Naturally, for the show Kate attended, I made sure to have a thorough physical and vocal warm up. I am pleased in general with my approach to the vocal warm up before the show. I have found a corridor in the backstage area which people pass only occasionally, and it has a big echo, so it's fun to let loose and really give my voice a work out. I basically go through as much of the script as I feel up to, repeating certain parts using different vocal qualities. This serves the triple purpose of running lines, going through moments of the play mentally, and warming up my voice and articulation. I do hardly any pure exercises. A few zoo-wo's and Ki-rees, and some "helicopters", some deep breathing and letting the breath out on a big "haaaa". I am still quite resistant to the pure vocal exercises and find using the lines themselves for vocal exploration makes it more enjoyable and feels more obviously practical. If this way gets me to spend the time, then I feel it's a good thing. Since I also have songs in the show, I go through them as well. I've come a long way in just this rehearsal process in losing my self-consciousness about being overheard doing this. I'm also the only one in the cast doing anything more than a few moments of vocal warm up (most do none at all), so it feels good that I am being such a good boy (or professional) in that regard. I also go through some

yoga stretches, including a few sun salutations, to limber my old joints and get the blood circulating. I ritually spend a few minutes on the stage before the house opens, to run through any blocking that needs attention, and to feel at home in the dimensions of the set. I have also been doing total body workouts at the gym regularly, which is essential when I have such a physical role.

In spite of feeling fantastic vocally, physically and emotionally before the show Kate saw, it wound up being rough going. I had just come off a terrific show the night before, in which the audience was very vocal and seemed with me in particular. Whatever the case may be, this particular audience was not so responsive in general and to me in particular. Still, I felt pretty good about what I was doing, and tried to keep positive.

When I take my bow, perhaps just because I'm second to last, the volume of the applause usually goes up. But this time it didn't. I even forgot one the routine that gets the biggest laugh near the climax, skipping my three starts of reading Malvolio's letter in different insane voices. I was disappointed that Kate didn't see one of my better performances, one where the audience seems to "get" me from the beginning and that helps my confidence going forward. I realize that this is perhaps for the best in that this way Kate can really see the issues with the show and my performance, and as there is still more than half the run left, I get to benefit from her advice at this stage as I work toward improving the rest of the run.

I do feel I arrived at a more rounded performance in time for Kate's viewing: less constant clowning and more intention. I need to keep exploring that balance and deepening the through line. I am making small discoveries every day about ways I can use

the subtle details of how I exit or enter a scene to give shape to Feste's perspective on the action. For instance, I am happy to have discovered the trick of entering the two of the scenes in Act V (the one where Orsino first arrives at Olivia's and later when I enter when all has been revealed) as if I have been listening in. Hopefully, that will supply some of that sense that Feste is Illyria's stage manager that has been lost in the cuts and the staging....

Tuesday, May 18

I confess to falling into a bit of a depression this week. Although I know every performance is important and this is a work in progress, Kate's visit was an important point that my efforts were building toward. That the results of my work were less than I was hoping they would be, plus the fact that the event came and went, led to a feeling of failure and drop of energy. Not total failure, to be sure, but I remember the times when preparation, execution and reception are firing on all cylinders (which isn't often, admittedly) and this seems to be one of those roles where, despite the research, thought and time I've put into it, it's still a long way from my goal (or fantasy) of what it could be. I do know that every minute I put into further on-my-feet rehearsal of specific moments does pay off, and I though I've done more of that between shows than I would normally do, it hasn't been nearly enough. I have done a great deal of blaming of the circumstances of the production ... this is, though real, only a part of the problem, and ...I must take more responsibility ...

I emailed Kate to ask for her thoughts on my performance and what I could do to improve over the rest of the run. She kindly replied with some helpful comments that somewhat assuaged my insecurity about my work. I saw that Kate was on the same page

with me in seeing the potential of Feste as “Illyria’s stage manager” and that realization of this potential were greatly prevented by directorial choices and edits. I will address her comments here and as I go forward.

I am relieved that Kate seems to think my work was basically sound and singled out positive elements of my performance: my observing, my physicality, my antics, my amount of facial “reacting.” I’m glad that Kate found my voice on the later songs to be strong, but remarked that I was too “hesitant”, “shy”, and “held back vocally” in the first song. I realize this. Once again, I blame both the circumstances and myself.... But I realize that it is my responsibility to make it work

So I have addressed it in a few ways. I realized that my choreography had to be tighter and more specific and funnier. I was too messy and vague for a lot of it, and that was throwing me too and preventing me from entering that “confidence zone”. I worked out better where to drum and where not to drum. I made the story line (my beckoning out to my lover to come to me and live in the moment) clearer. I added a few clearer sight and sound gags after each verse. And when done I sharpened the routine of bowing and coaxing applause out of the audience. These adjustments have helped me with my overall confidence and comfort which has allowed me to be able to stay in more control of all the elements and hear the music (still a challenge) and sing with more confidence (if still not too loudly). I continue to work to improve this song every night and I continue to feel like I’ve been asked to walk the plank with it *and* continue to feel like I’m to blame for not having made the most of it. But it does improve.

Kate enjoyed my imitation of Malvolio's voice at the end of the play and suggested that I might do more such "touches of that apery/mimicry". Interesting, and I agree in principle. I'm not sure what I will do about that. I do believe I am already speaking in many voices throughout the play, but Malvolio is the only character that I directly imitate. I hope I am responding to the various characters in different ways that indirectly send up their personalities. I mock Olivia's piety with an exaggerated display of piety in the first scene. When I have my first scene with Orsino, I counter his pomposity with a mock servility that allows me to insult him to his face. But I will consider this idea of directly imitating more characters. Right now I'm at a loss for where I should do this. Perhaps, at a minimum, I could make my mocking of the characters more defined.

Kate's other main piece of advice seems very wise and I trust will be revealed to be more so as I try it out: "keep observing and enjoying human frailty... and when in doubt, just get even more curious about these people!!" This seems a variation on the importance of "listening" tailor-made for Feste. Kate noted that I am already doing lots of listening and observing, and I have often had the thought, which she shares, to do more of it. I have tried to remember this advice already (it's not always easy to remember to listen and observe) and I love it as an action....so different from so much of the rest of the palette of more active actions. It gives me license to just "be" while onstage, yet thoroughly invested in an appropriate action for Feste. And I feel it is helping me unlock more of the mystery of the play (there is so much to observe). It seems to me that, though Feste is the most "knowing" character in Illyria, he shares with Olivia and Viola a sense of awe at the unfolding of

events. He is eager to be a catalyst to that unfolding and the more the audience sees me “seeing”, the more they will see me (and I see myself) as such a catalyst.

The Artistic Director and Executive Producer of Connecticut Free Shakespeare came down to see the show last night, along three other company members. The show went quite well. The fight choreographer for CFS, who’s also talented director in his own right (he directed me before), appreciated how I handled being both a character in the play and the interlocutor with the audience. Ellen loved the show and my performance. There are some shows I’ve been where I get lots of gushing compliments from people who have seen it, even people who have never met me and I can sense the praise is genuine. This is not one of those shows. So I am extra grateful for any intelligent praise I get from key people whose opinion I respect.

As I go into the final week at Ten Ten (we have a one show “tour” Memorial Day Weekend to Hunter, NY) my goals remain the same as always. For all my fancy thought on the role, it’s humbling to be perpetually reminded how simple execution of my physical actions holds much of the solution to success. Lingering issues, such as how to exit a certain scene without crossing in front of a fellow actor (which in turn makes me come off better), how to drum and sing and swing at the same time during the finale, how to put the coins Viola gives me into my codpiece smoothly, how to leap up onto the bench and pretend I’m a statue without falling (and have the audience get what I’m doing), all benefit from any time I devote to rehearsing them. It seems the more confidently I execute these physical tasks, the more I’m liberated to give these moments their right intention and color,

the more seamless my performance seems and the more confidence the audience has in me.

I am more aware than ever of the infinite moments within moments that exist for me to discover. May I continue to discover them! I have been continually working on my last line of the play and the physicality that goes with it. As the Malvolio plot has been revealed and Maria has confessed her role in it, Feste comes forward to confess his role and to take a few last jabs at Malvolio. On the surface, Feste's last speech can seem purely malicious:

Why, some are born great; some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrown upon them. I was one, Sir, in this interlude, one Sir Topas, Sir, but that's all one, Sir. 'By the Lord, Fool, I am not mad.' And do you remember, Sir: 'Madam, why laugh you at such a barren rascal? And you smile not at him, he is gagged.' And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges (349-354).

Malvolio's response is: "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you," and he exits.

I have tried to weave a through line to Feste's involvement in the Malvolio jest that goes with my through line for Feste in general. Many critics see Feste as somewhat cruel and motivated by revenge. I agree that revenge and a certain degree of cruelty are part of his modus operandi, but only in the service of his art/medicine, whose goal is ultimately to heal. He wants Olivia to enjoy life and uses slightly cruel mockery of her mourning to open her eyes to her folly. Similarly, I have strived to have Feste's involvement in the Malvolio jest to be ultimately motivated by the goal of the Vice figure he's based on: to serve as a necessary medicine to the "devil": to either purge this devil from the society or the devil from the possessed person. I'm working to make it clear that Feste worries the jest will go too far (using Fabian's line "why we shall make him mad indeed" as a warning note) and it

is he that ends it after applying the final doses of medicine in the dark room scene. In the final moment between Feste and Malvolio, I have been trying to use the speech, not only to mock Malvolio, but also to give him a chance to relent and move beyond his injury. A difficult and dichotomous task, to be sure, but I think one that is essential to Shakespeare's conception of Feste and the dual nature of the world of Twelfth Night. I will continue to explore this final moment, as so many strands of meaning, for Feste and the play, come to fruition in it.

Wednesday, May 26

As I predicted, the final week took the production to a higher level. Sir Toby ... found confidence and nuance and more energy. Sir Andrew perfected his "shtick" and was getting lots of laughs and found his through line. Viola [used] her musical theater skills to find the right notes in her speeches (vocally) and through line. The story became clearer and by the final act, the audience was right there with every twist and turn, which made it very exciting to play.

I continued to have my ups and downs. Some shows, I got hardly a laugh, and other shows the audience "got" me throughout. But consistently, I'd feel I'd won the audience over by the end and would get a gratifying ovation. I've never been so attuned to the applause I get at the end of a show. I've never been in a show where it was such an issue of whether or not the audience "gets" me, and so the curtain call for me has become a verdict as never before.

I continue to make small adjustments throughout and it has been amusing to note that sometimes less is more and sometimes more is more! For example, when Toby reads

Andrew's "challenge" letter and I have five comments on it, it has gone much better when I underplay those comments as it serves as a humorous contrast to the inflated and confused bombast of the letter. But when I do the sight gag of getting my hand caught under Malvolio's bottom as he reads the forged letter, it took me until this final week to get it back to where I now realize it was the very first time I improvised it in rehearsal: BIG. The more frantic and energetic my efforts to get my hand out from under his bottom get the more absurd it all becomes and therefore the funnier. Comedy 101.

It's always gratifying when, in spite of various impediments ... the gestalt of a play starts to gel and take on life. It is especially gratifying when it happens with Shakespeare, as the infinite resonances are there, just waiting to be sounded. And a rising tide lifts all ships. The more convincing the other characters and the story is to the audience, the more the audience seems to understand and appreciate what Feste's up to. The final moment between Feste and Malvolio is now more successful at bringing the catharsis I had hoped for: that bittersweet note before the final celebration.

Sunday, June 6 – Monday, June 7

I have been having a hard time getting myself to make the final journal entry. I've never been so emotionally invested in a role or had such ambitions for the results of my efforts for one. I've never put so much effort into a role and yet, I am acutely aware of how much more effort I could've made all along, and how much more growth there could be. I am trying to come to some level of satisfaction with my efforts. I am sad that Kate didn't get to see one of the better performances from my first weeks and didn't get to see how it

improved. I hope what I've written in these few last journal entries will give a sense of that improvement.

The show had its official "closing" on Sunday, May 23. It was the last show of Theater Ten Ten at the Park Avenue Christian Church after a run of 55 years. There was a bittersweet energy that matched the nature of the celebration at the end of Twelfth Night ... Although Shakespeare intended Feste to sing the last song alone onstage, in this case it was only right that the whole cast sang the last lines together: "but that's all one, our play is done, and we'll strive to please you every day."

Our actual last show came on Saturday, May 30. We took the show to the Doctorow Arts Center in Hunter, NY, about three hours from New York in the Catskill Mountains. All the actors stayed in one house and the crew in another. We went up Friday night and rehearsed Saturday afternoon. The stage was much smaller, so the set had to be scrunched up. We had the swing, benches and shrubs but no stairs, and two entries instead of six. The house had more seats, but was raked and felt more intimate. All these changes made for a more intimate performance, both between the actors, and between the cast and the audience. The audience was our most appreciative to date, and our show had ripened, so it was our best performance by a good measure. The audience seemed to hang on every word and to get much more of it than had previous audiences.

For me, the whole last weekend was a godsend. I had felt a lack of closure with the role, the cast and my experience with Ten Ten and this weekend helped change that. The cast went from a group that got together after their day jobs to one that lived together (though briefly). I even initiated a jest in which all the men in the cast came to the

rehearsal wearing Hawaiian shirts (I managed to borrow four Hawaiian shirts for those who didn't have) as our Viola had mentioned it was a fashion she detests (taking off from Olivia's abhorrence of yellow stockings). This was good bonding and was a positive move for me to overcome my feeling of being alienated from half of the cast. I feel we more than ever came together as a group. This was one situation where I approve of all night drinking (both nights, though I did get some sleep). I got to cement my friendship with Judith and David

I was hungering to arrive at a new place with Feste, even if it was just one last show. It was my last opportunity to live in the role and I wanted to do Feste and myself proud. I mainly credit all the bonding, the new level we'd reached as a group, the appreciative audience, the intimate stage and theater for how well the show and my own performance went. But I did stay focused as never before and had moments where I felt I was really living in the role. Not that I forgot I was Andrew acting in a play... but that what was going on took on a real, breathing life and I was acting and reacting organically in the moment. In the last scene, I finally had the breakthroughs I'd been working toward. When I read Malvolio's letter, I dropped the imitation entirely on the last phrase: "and speak out of my injury, the Madly Used Malvolio". I had been trying this out before, but this last show I truly went for it. My idea was to drop the mocking suddenly and become truly effected by Malvolio's "injury" and feel guilt for his being "used" and to let that note hang in the air as I go off to fetch him. It worked splendidly.

In my final speech to Malvolio, when not imitating him, I completely dropped any comedy from my voice, and in the most plain tones confessed: "I was one, Sir, in this

interlude, one Sir Topas, Sir,” and asked forgiveness with “but that’s all one, Sir.” The last line, “and thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges” became, in addition to final taunt, a sad lament and peace offer. Malvolio gave, for the first time, a slight pause before he came out with “I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you,” which, since I had never discussed my hopes for this scene with him, I viewed as an indication of how effective I finally was in this last interchange. The next moments also gained more nuance than ever. Olivia watched Malvolio go off and scolded Feste and Maria with “he has been notoriously abused.” This line had come as pretty much a throwaway heretofore. But in this final show, all the subtle notes were struck: Olivia and I were left hanging a moment, looking upstage after Malvolio; then we simultaneously turned toward each other shamefacedly, whereupon she delivered her scold; then there was the right moment of uncomfortable bittersweet reflection on what had just transpired as Orsino sends the priest to entreat Malvolio to a peace while I look downcast and reflect on the irony of Malvoilo’s being abused (thinking: he was abused, he was given every chance, he deserved it, he had to be purged in order for the sake of that’s coming) and the whole cast transitions in a few seconds from discomfort and ruefulness to elation, with Feste holding those two dual states in balance as he starts his song.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Less than a month after my last performance as Feste, I began rehearsals as Malvolio for the CFS production of Twelfth Night. I already knew from the many stage directions and notes in Artistic Director Ellen Lieberman’s “adaptation” that she had great ideas for making a Twelfth Night that would be fun for family audiences and that a highly meta-theatrical Feste was at the center of her conception. In Eric Nyquist, her music director and long-time member of her troupe, Ellen had a Feste who was up to the task and their wonderful collaborative relationship was in evidence every step of the way.

Eric is an excellent guitar-player and singer who composes songs as well. Like Feste, he is ready with a song in any style at the drop of a hat. He sang appropriate snatches of songs between and accompanying scenes, some original, some anachronistically familiar and led the audience in song during intermission. His Feste was onstage most of the play, watching the action quasi-omnisciently (but in a justified, non-supernatural way) even in scenes where Feste doesn’t appear in the text. He was every bit Illyria’s stage-manager, muse and Lord of Misrule. Eric and Ellen worked head to head to achieve this concept.

I didn’t have to play Malvolio to appreciate all this, but it was an uncanny experience to be on the receiving end of Feste’s attacks, which were more aggressive and slapstick than mine had been. Eric’s Feste had no melancholy about him, but as he sang all kinds of songs, his Feste had plenty of soul and emotional empathy with the other characters. Some of my execution of specific moments may have been subtler, or more successful in bringing

out Shakespeare's meaning, but Eric had to successfully play to huge audiences with lots of children and had to go for broad strokes and sure-fire laughs.

Eric seemed to intuitively understand Feste's inherited mantle as Lord of Misrule and meta-theatrical possibilities without writing a thesis on the matter, though Ellen had done copious research on the play and its performance history. Eric did solicit my experience in playing the role in early rehearsals. I affirmed him as an excellent Feste and for playing the meta-theatrical function so fully.

Eric asked how I handled the final moment with Malvolio, which, as I've discussed, was a work in progress for me right up until the last show. I told Eric how I spun around on "whirligig of time" with outstretched arms, offering Malvolio neutrally the chance to leave in anger or stay in forgiveness. Eric loved the idea and asked if he could borrow it. He made the offer of forgiveness unambiguous: he spun around and offered me his hand to shake, further defining Malvolio's exit as a rejection of forgiveness. Then, in dress rehearsals, thanks to Eric's choreographing of the finale, we collectively came up with an ending worth describing here.

Feste's final song accompanied a wedding celebration with the entire cast singing along, dancing and taking their curtain call bows as part of the choreography. Near the end of the dance, Sir Toby and Maria go offstage and drag me back, imploring forgiveness (unheard over the music). They bring me downstage and Feste stops his song right before the repeated refrain that the audience by now knows well. Sir Toby and Maria back away from me, leaving me uncomfortably in the spotlight. There is a long pause in the music as the audience applauds both my performance and for Malvolio to relent. I stare out

unsmiling and unforgiving, but finally break out into a deadpan Charleston step, singing the refrain, “And the rain it raineth everyday” an octave below. The audience would cheer this redemption as the cast joined together for the last verse. This ending does alter the melancholy tone Shakespeare achieves in having Feste sing his song alone on stage. However, Orsino does say “Pursue him, and entreat him to a peace” (5.1.357), so this version could be justified as a probable moment after. When Malvolio leaves Feste has driven the spirit of Ill-will from the community; but when Malvolio returns, he has also driven the ill will from Malvolio.

Reliving Twelfth Night for another seven weeks while watching a wonderful Feste perform the role in the greatly expanded, meta-theatrical function I argue for certainly helped me process my own experience with and thinking about the role. It confirmed my belief that such an expanded role for Feste, that makes his role as inheritor of the Lord of Misrule mantle more explicit than in the text, aided by some meta-theatrical moments, makes Feste’s role as catalyst both clearer and more effective. I also saw clearly that there is no one way to achieve this: Trevor Nunn’s film achieved this with Ben Kingsley’s brooding and introverted (though eventually festive) Feste and Ellen Lieberman achieved this with a wildly happy and extroverted Feste who led several musical extravaganzas.

The most melancholy thing about the CFS production was that it left me sadly wondering what I could’ve done better under the circumstances at Ten Ten. What could I have done more or differently to make Feste effective as Illyria’s Lord of Misrule, Vice, stage-manager and catalyst for transformation when the director is not highlighting Feste’s meta-theatrical function? To be fair to myself, it makes the job harder. In retrospect, that

might have been a better inquiry question for my thesis. I should have foreseen the problem of applying my theories to the role when the director didn't share them. If I had posed that challenge to myself more explicitly, I might not have fought circumstances so frustratingly and heeded more readily my own call to myself to keep the focus on my own efforts. In conclusion, the actor playing Feste, whether supported by the director's vision of the role or not, must accept the responsibility that comes with inheriting Feste's motley mantle, find out what it means to him or her to be Illyria's Lord of Misrule, and be it.

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