



Twelfth Night at Home

Reviewed by Stephen Bowler May 2016

'If music be the food of love, play on.' Is there a better-known opening than this? Surely not. We all know the line but want nothing more than to hear it again. How refreshing, then, when expectancy is seized-upon and turned to advantage, as in Filter Theatre's new production, which started as it meant to go on by punctuating, amplifying and enlivening Shakespeare's text - from start to end - with a riot of wildly eclectic musicality.

With brio and fine timing the stripped-down cast pack a big musical punch into a one-act

performance that is as comic as it is innovative. Onstage an array of electronic instruments and gadgets constitute the set, and players are as likely to be in the stalls as the wings. Fidelity to the text is fairly loose, but delivery is excellent. Where the production really shines, though, is in the comic roustabout, verging on shameless pantomime.

One could cavil at the collapsing of theatrical magic, especially when it involves the conjoining of 'audience' and 'participation', but one must concede a clever elaboration of plot in the process. Having Malvolio sternly reprimand not only the drunken Sir Toby Belch and his gang – 'Is there no respect of place, persons, nor time in you?' – but also a whole bunch of audience members who, almost despite themselves, have become embroiled in the Bacchanalian revel on stage, marks the man and the moment with wit and force. Of course, Malvolio will fall a long way indeed, and the harshness of his treatment is a difficult, almost sadistic, theme, but here the gulling is delightfully done.

