

2022-2023 Season Project Proposal

Play/Project Title: **Illyria** (a musical version of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*)

Genre: Musical

Playwright/Book/Music/Lyrics: Peter Mills and Cara Reichel

Synopsis/Project/Production Description:

This musical re-telling of *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare's greatest comedy, captures both the rollicking energy of the play's hilarious hijinks and its deeply felt emotions of loss and unrequited love.

Casting Breakdown:

3 female and 7 male featured roles, with optional additional roles

VIOLA (20's; bright mix soprano to a high F and strong belt in lower range to G below middle C: twin sister to Sebastian Believable boyish, a good "straight man" to the comics in the show, an active listener. Attractive, but not a classic beauty. Spunky, rough and tumble, passionate, and quietly internal by turns.

OLIVIA (late 20's – 30's: legit soprano, with ability for a strong jazzy low belt): a noblewoman of Illyria. Stunningly beautiful, elegant, poised, but willing to cut loose and be sexy and silly as well. The lady of her domain, in control yet vulnerable.

MARIA (late 20's–40's, depending on Toby's age; strong belt voice to C): Lady Olivia's maid and confidante. Sexy, clever, in charge, able to be "one of the boys", a sparkplug. Has a long, on-going affair with Sir Toby, with whom she is in love and shares a real chemistry and penchant for mischief.

SEBASTIAN (20's; tenor, needs to belt to an A): obviously, should be a strong physical match for Viola, but with his own, very masculine energy. Has a certain innocent, naïve, optimism; extremely honorable; with emotional depth to his sorrow upon losing Viola.

ORSINO (late 20's–30's; strong, lyric hi-baritone): the ruler of Illyria, in love with Lady Olivia. Handsome, oozes charisma—a Prince Charming! Deeply passionate, self-indulgent, in love with love. Ultimately, vulnerable on an emotional level, but capable of high-status, commanding presence.

SIR TOBY (30's – 40's; legit hi baritone (to G), able to deal with lots of patter singing): Lazy but clever—an overgrown "frat boy". Olivia's uncle, he lives in her household and relies on her patronage. Toby has a huge ego, and should have a large physique to match, yet be limber and able to move well. A drunkard, always up for a good time... he is in love with Maria, should have great chemistry with her—they are the "dueling wits."

SIR ANDREW (late 20's–30's; high baritone/bari-tenor): a suitor to the Lady Olivia and a stooge for Toby and Maria's amusement. Should be naturally funny (whatever that means!), and have an air of the bumbling aristocrat about him. Naïve, lonely, forever well-intentioned, dopey, desperate to be liked.

FESTE (30's–40's tenor, capable of patter): the wise fool, in Olivia's service. A clown and trickster, extremely smart and adept with wordplay and sleight of hand, able to read the subtext of any situation. Endearing. Should have the depth of having been through the trials of love once, himself.

MALVOLIO (40's–50's; high Baritone. sings to a full voice G): the steward of Olivia's household. Full of himself and the importance of his position, self-righteous and overly-serious about everything, yet charmingly goofy in his self-delusion.

ANTONIO (30's–40's; bari-bass.): the seafarer who rescues Sebastian. May or may not be a legitimate pirate. A fatherly or "older brother" type, very protective of Sebastian, with a physically imposing/tough look.

Optional 2 GUARDS/COURTIERS(baritones): in the service of Duke Orsino, who see to his every whim and protect his dukedom. (FESTE and MALVOLIO can double in these roles.)

2 LADIES IN WAITING: to Olivia, in her household and under the instruction of Maria.

Proposed number of understudies: 4 – but the understudies could be the 2 Guards and 2 Ladies in Waiting.

Design/Technical Parameters:

Scenic: Unit set and furniture that conveys various locations around the island of Illyria

Number of Locations: 5-6

Lights: Musical comedy lighting, spot lights necessary

Costumes:

Number of Costume Changes: Two – One costume for each of the main characters, but some transformation from Malvolio as his yellow stockings costume gets more and more tattered and soiled during his imprisonment. Viola also appears washed up on the shores of Illyria at the top of the show, and then quick changes to her TWIN clothing with Sebastian and stays in this throughout. Other small costume accessories for Feste.

Time Passage: About a week.

Props: Basic

Sound/Music:

7 Musicians

Piano/Vocal

Reed 1 (Flute, Clarinet, Tenor Saxophone)

Reed 2 (Clarinet, Alto Saxophone)

Violin

Cello

Bass (Upright)

Drums/Percussion (Bells, Drums, Triangle, Wood Block, Cymbal, Crash Cymbal, Toys, Splash, Mark Tree, Temple Blocks, Castanets)

Other: N/A

Additional Production Personnel Considerations: Music Director, Choreographer, and Intimacy Coordinator

Vocal and Physical Considerations: *Vocal ranges are listed above in the casting breakdown*

A Note on CHOREOGRAPHY: The dancing requirements in the show are minimal and basic and can be achieved by anyone who would be considered for the roles.

Intimacy/Violence Choreography Considerations: Yes – Stage combat and intimacy are both required for the production.

Subject Matter and Language Considerations: Gender identity, Sexual Orientation, Cross-dressing, sexual innuendo, pun,

A note on the language: Although a musical adaptation of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night, the dialogue (while still retaining a certain stereotypical formality of Shakespearean characters) has been modernized and is not Shakespeare's language – just his story.

Access Related Considerations: None

Proposed Performance Venue: Hartung Theatre

How does the proposed production challenge and/or enrich the student experience and training educationally and artistically?

- Illyria is a very brilliant musical theatre retelling of Twelfth Night and has a score that is both easily learned and sung, and yet has some fun challenges for certain characters who are asked to do patter, and some witty and tongue-twisty lyrics. The characters and story are still Shakespeare's.
- The orchestration is lush, and supportive of the story and singers, without being so large that it become cumbersome to achieve the beautiful sound intended by the composer. The songs in the show have a little something of every kind of song/music you would like to see in a musical: Ballad, Character story songs, patter, large ensemble moments, and an especially gorgeous love-triangle trio that ends act one.
- Our students – both Theatre and Music – need a musical theatre experience as part of their training, and I think that Illyria is a terrific way to ease us back into the regular offering of musicals. Not too big, but not small either – and yet enriching for all involved.

How does the proposed production challenge and/or enrich the U of I and Moscow, ID communities?

- As theatre makers, I think we are always on the lookout for how to make important classic plays and texts vital, vibrant, and seem new once again; making them relevant and relatable to a broader audience. I believe that Illyria does just that – it takes one of Shakespeare's greatest romance/comedy plays and makes it completely accessible - and moreover enjoyable – for a largely student audience that might see "Shakespeare" in the marketing and not give it a chance.
- Moscow and UI deserve musical theatre options as part of what our department offers

How does the proposed production achieve and promote the UI Department of Theatre Arts' commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?

- I believe it does. While most of the gender assignments need to be adhered to, due to the basic plot and comedic devices (disguise/mistake identity/deception/etc.) in the required and unrequited, intertwining love stories – there are absolutely no restrictions that I can think of in terms of racial, ethnic, LGBTQA+, persons with disabilities, etc. in the casting of the production.
- I would also propose that the roles of Feste and Antonio could be played by any gender.

Does the proposed production consider specific inclusions and/or requirements that are representative of Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQ+, or Gender issues in casting or other considerations?

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Proposal Submitted by:

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