

Interview with Oliver Dimsdale and Ferdy Roberts
Bath Theatre Royal, The Egg Cafe, 17th June 2010



DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA
Thornlea
New North Road
Exeter
EX4 4LA

16 June 2010

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I started my research in February 2009 and am expecting to complete it in February 2012. During that time I will be conducting research into the work of theatre practitioners engaged in creating small, touring interpretations and adaptations of Shakespeare's plays in Britain

As part of this research, I will need to conduct interviews with theatre practitioners who may be able to provide information that will help to inform my understanding of the development process of their production and the factors that affected it.

The interviews will be recorded on audio tape. Material from the audio recording may be used in publications directly associated with the PhD. This may include quotations within the thesis itself, a transcription of the interview included in the appendix of the thesis, and use of quotations in conference papers, articles submitted to academic journals and any future publication of the thesis in book form which would be available to the general public.

I will make every effort to inform those who have contributed interviews of any publication details. I am bound by the code of ethics for researchers established by the University, and overseen by its Ethics Committee.

Upon completion of the interview I will undertake a transcription of it and send this to you to enable you to check that I have produced an accurate copy of your answers. Once the transcription has been agreed by you and signed to this effect, I undertake that any quotations used for the purposes laid out above will be accurately quoted from this transcription.

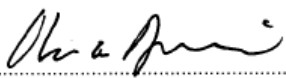
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I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for your contribution.

Sarah McCourt
Tel: 07915 666276
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Supervisor: Professor Mick Mangan

I confirm that I wish to participate in the interview process for the research as explained above.

I assign copyright over the audio recording of the interview to Sarah McCourt for the purposes laid out above.

Signed: 

Date: 17/06/10

Name: OLIVER DIMSDALE (please print)



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Name: Ferdy Roberts (please print)

SM Filter's become known for its groundbreaking use of sound.

How did the stylistic focus develop?

FR We were all at Guildhall together, Tim [Phillips] who runs the company with Ollie and myself and Tom [Haines] who co-composed with Ross Hughes the music and sound design for this. When we were at college we started playing around with the idea because the two courses, the music and the drama never really came together to work together, they do now, but they didn't when we were there, and we thought it was a bit of a waste really. So we decided that we wanted to work with musicians and wanted music and sound to be as important in the creation of a story as much as the spoken word is and the physical relationships of the actors, and we also wanted the musicians to be visible and the sound to be visible. We didn't want the idea, we didn't enjoy the idea that music and sound more often than not is just triggered by the stage manager in the box behind the audience and we wanted to expose that a little bit and that's how it started and it's just sort of developed from there really and the good thing about working with those guys is that they weren't writing...their courses didn't concentrate on theatre at all. Tom was a percussionist and then he went into electronic music and they work in various different fields, so they're not just theatre people and so they bring a very different approach to theatre and a very different to our approach, to the more traditional classical training of an actor and so working with them is actually really refreshing because they don't have, this sounds terrible, but they don't necessarily have a bank of

previous history of productions that they've seen or been in or whatever. So they come and bring something very fresh and new to it and that releases the actors to be as stupid and as creative as they possibly can and over the years that tight group has become very tight and we know each other, trust each other, so the rehearsal room is one where we embrace anarchy and failure. To make a fool of yourself is acceptable and is absolutely fine and nobody's going to judge you whereas normally if you're working with a director in a rehearsal room you more often than not you want to get it right and the actor may not necessarily know what they're trying to get right because they're not part of the creative process if you like of a director and a designer coming up with a concept.

OD We've definitely worked in rehearsal rooms where you feel that there is a grand design, that the director is eking out his or her vision, and that's brilliant, all well and good, there are some theatrical geniuses but the process has so much potential to flourish when you harness the brilliance that you have inside the room instead of necessarily wanting to build it all yourself. You can use others to do it for you.

FR Yeah

OD I mean yeah sometimes the process is a bit haphazard and fraught with difficulties and we argue. There's a healthy antagonism that exists inside the room but more or less we feel that when we come down to a show, when we come to performing a show night after night every single one of the people who is inside that, be it sound

designer, be it actor, be it stage manager, feels like they own the show and that's quite exciting for an audience to see, to see everyone's eyes kind of alive and everyone's on fire, rather than just all being cogs in the part of someone else's grand design.

FR We didn't set out to work on text or on classical text, we set out as a devising company really and so the process when we're devising has influenced the way we approach the text work as well so as Ollie says there's a healthy antagonism in the room when we're devising because we are fighting our own corners a little bit and certainly when you're devising and writing your own character or whatever and so that has influenced brilliantly the way we approach the text as well. So there's a healthy sort of irreverence to working with Shakespeare or Brecht or Chekhov, you know, whereas more often than not you see productions where they hold them in such high esteem. We wanted to sort of get rid of that and go, "Actually no he was..." certainly Shakespeare, and Chekhov as well I think, was a bit of a punk, you know, he loved to press people's buttons. And also what you [Ollie] were saying yesterday in the Q & A that we were answering here, you forget that they weren't writing for directors they were writing for actors and they had a healthy relationship with companies and more often than not they probably fell out left, right and centre but all of that helps.

OD Particularly Chekhov disliked a view of Stanislavsky's productions didn't he?

FR Yeah he famously walked out of three of his productions of the *Three Sisters*.

SM So with your devising background what drew you to staging Twelfth Night? How did the idea originate? Who did it?

FR There are two different camps of thought here but we were doing a workshop at the National Studio, a three week workshop and I'd worked with Sean Holmes outside of Filter, I'd worked with Sean Holmes before. Tim and I met Sean for a beer in town somewhere just after he'd finished working with the RSC, and Sean, I've never seen Sean so lost. He'd had a nightmare basically at the RSC...

OD He felt part of factory didn't he?

FR Absolutely and he felt that he couldn't be as creative as he wanted to be. So we invited him to come and do the workshop with us at the studio which was about...it was called *Body Stories* which we've shelved for the time being but might go back to it, but that was a piece that we were devising and we did a showing of it on the Thursday of the third week I think it was wasn't it? And the two Nicks from the National came to see it, Nick Hytner and Nick Starr and we showed our work to them and they loved what we were doing, they loved the process but the material hadn't been fleshed out properly, you know, it was three weeks of work and Nick Hytner said that he would love to see whether we could apply the way we work as a devising company with the sound and music, could we apply it to a text? On the Friday Sean says that he went home on the Thursday

night and just randomly picked two plays off his shelf which just so happened to be *Twelfth Night* and *The Three Sisters* and he came in the next day and he said, "I've got these two plays, I'm not going to tell you what they are but we're just going to mess about with them," which was great wasn't it? We spent an hour messing about with *Twelfth Night* and because there was no pressure on us to do anything we just sort of messed about with it really and it inspired.

OD One thing that wasn't an accident definitely was that several years after working with Sean for the first time we've done three plays from three of the greatest ever playwrights and I know that Sean had a design or an intention to do that and in fact we also had a design because being classically trained actors as well we are introduced to great writing and want to be able to serve it and re-imagine it and reinterpret it. I mean *Twelfth Night's* definitely Shakespeare's most, we've come to discover, his most lyrical play and I think it was a fantastic bit of game playing that Sean was just going, "Listen use the Filter process and look here's a Shakespeare and here's a Chekhov, see what you can do with that," because the brilliant thing that he was doing was effectively going, "I've spent my training being a bit shit scared of classical texts and feeling as if I have to do it in a particular way, I don't want to be hamstrung by textual analysis now so don't let's ponder too much about whether it's First Folio or Second Folio. Let's chuck it into the room, we have the sound designers here and we have brilliant actors and we have me, let's just see what comes out of it. Let's see what comes out of the process," and sure enough

sometimes when you're not using so much of that ((indicates head)) but you're using the gut and you're using the heart and you're going for it and being as inspired as you possibly can be some great irreverent, interesting and dynamic things come out of it instead of approaching it from, right I'm going to design the show with a particular concept in mind and I want people to come to the theatre and think about it. You want people to come to the theatre and feel as well.

FR Working with the text was sort of an accident at the time because even though Ollie and I had worked separately on various productions elsewhere, I think we'd always said that we'd love to, at some point in the future, look at an existing text. So it was sort of by accident that it came along so early and as I said earlier the two processes, the devising and approaching a classical text, have really sort of gone hand in hand together. We then got invited to go and be part of the RSC's Complete Works after we'd performed *Caucasian Chalk Circle* for the National, and they offered us a full rehearsal period didn't they?

OD Mm.

FR Which we declined at the time and said, "We'd like to try and approach *Twelfth Night* in ten days if we can."

OD It sounds like suicide doesn't it?

FR But again, because there was no pressure on us, we were only going to do three performances up in Stratford for their Complete Works Festival and it was a tiny little footnote in the big, grand programme of the RSC and that lack of pressure allowed us to rid ourselves of the shackles of the RSC really. And then suddenly it turned into this sort of mad, cult show that keeps coming back.

OD Yeah, yeah.

SM So how long between the original idea and then doing that ten day rehearsal period?

FR I think there was a year maybe?

OD We literally just read the play and decided to do a cut version of it or a pre-cut version of the text. We had it in front of us and we read it and literally day after day we'd just come up with a bank of ideas.

FR We decided that we didn't want to go into the rehearsal room with any ideas as such about how we were going to do it. We knew that we had the musicians with us and we knew roughly what sort of instruments we had.

OD There were one or two tasks that materialised in the process.

FR We asked people to look at the text a little bit.

OD And we asked people to think about the character as well what song would be playing inside their head, what song represented them in their own world...

FR When they're in their room, in private.

OD So Malvolio the puritanical, malevolent some would say, person is desperate to break free from his chains and wants to be a rock star and Belch is a would-be country and western crooner. So one or two tasks were given in the rehearsal process, but not a lot. It was more suck it and see wasn't it?

FR Yeah and as Sean says he feels that because we only had ten days and we didn't sit around the table and work out what this meant, or what's the theme, and we didn't do any actioning, we just had to respond to what the play is and what we think the play is about. As Sean said after the first showing up in Stratford, he felt that only after seeing it that he understood what his role was as the director in the room was. And he suddenly realised that when he tries to direct it, it doesn't work. When he let's us go with it and create it and be as mad as we want to be and then we show it, perform it, then he can respond to that and tweak it. And he's brilliant at doing that with us because we now have a relationship hopefully where we can go, "Sean, no stop now, you are trying to direct this too much so you've got to stop, just leave it, let us get on with it and leave us to it and then we'll show you and you can respond." And he believes that through that process he's got closer to Shakespeare and to the spirit of Shakespeare than he had done in all his time at the RSC which is great.

SM So you said you went in with a pre-cut script?

FR Yes, by Steve Gooch.

FR We just had to chop it down again because we only had six actors, no originally we had five. And then we called Gemma in after a couple of days and said we need somebody to come and do Maria and the Fool, so we ended up with six actors and the two musicians.

OD What Steve Gooch did so well was managed to cut out a lot of the lines, shall we say, that might be extraneous to a streamlined telling of the story. One or two lines that he cut were reintroduced but mostly it's his version with a few lines here and there reintroduced. And what you realise is that in fact that there are many lines that are unbelievably indecipherable to a modern audience now, you have to get the Shakespeare glossary out to understand three or four of the words within one line sometimes and you're going, "Oh my God, how the hell do we get that across to an audience?" So it really helped to start off with a pre-cut script and it gave us a licence not to be too textually obsessed and just to get on with telling the story in an interesting way.

SM So you said you started off with five actors. What constraints informed that decision? How did you go about casting it and making those decisions?

FR Financial constraints really.

OD Yeah, financial constraints. It turns out that a couple of the suggested doublings from Sean were actually brilliant. The Fool and

Maria both have huge vendettas against Malvolio and have good reasons to want to exact a revenge so at the point at which you see the Fool putting the nose on Malvolio at the end there are echoes of Maria's revenge as well in laying the letter down, and Andrew Aguecheek and Orsino are both in love with the same woman, so there were many echoes which was the point.

FR And the Viola/Sebastian which obviously is very tricky, it's a tricky double, but I love it. I know other people don't and I know some people say, "Oh I'm getting confused now," but actually the play is confusing at the end anyway, and we've embraced that confusion. And also I think it adds a really lovely ambiguity and sexual innuendo, a sexual ménage à trois going on with all these people that are chasing one person.

SM It works really well because she has the two physical embodiments.

OD Yeah.

FR But again a lot of the decisions came out of necessity. You have to put Sebastian in, of course you do, but we hadn't got enough people to play Sebastian, so you go "ah, right Poppy you're going to have to play both parts." So we stumbled across it really because we didn't have a preconceived idea about how we were going to do it.

OD We tried so many different ways of doing it and arrived at a very simple solution with the music. We'd pre-recorded her singing ...

FR Yeah it is Poppy singing the ((hums))

OD ...as Viola and Poppy singing as Sebastian, so the higher one and the lower one, and both of them are in a kind of simple two-line fugue so while she's doing the conversation you hear the two tones, the brother and sister.

FR I would say the other thing is I think a lot of people here, actually more probably than in London I think, but a lot of people here have said, "it feels very improvised. Is it Shakespeare? Are you using Shakespeare's language?" and of course we are. Yes it does feel very improvised but that's because we're trying to tell this story afresh every time and because there's a healthy irreverence to it, it has that improvised feel that we're seeing this afresh. In all the plays that we've done, the textual plays, the classics, we've always wanted to approach it as if the play was only written yesterday and that's informed all the decisions that are in *Twelfth Night*, they're not just flippanant decisions, they've been really thought through intricately.

OD Picking up the improvisation thread. Brilliant stand up comedians can look as if they're pulling a thread from here and pulling a thread from there, they're feeding something in, but they have a very set, learnt sort of script virtually inside their head but they make it look as if it's spur of the moment, and it's that being in the moment that should be at the heart of all fantastic drama because of course you know most of the lines, but you want to give the impression that they're being newly minted and they're being said for the first time. More often

than not you go to the theatre and you see something where you're going, "They're doing their bit now and they're saying their lines and they're going off and I'm bored because there's no life, there's no life in it." And rock bands as well, are incredibly tight some of them, they've rehearsed and rehearsed but yet at a good concert it feels like they're on fire and they're all riffing with each other and looking at each other, and so that's hopefully what the production elicits in us and therefore the audience.

SM **There are some very specific elements, for example getting the timing right on that with the radio, that are so tight that they're obviously very rehearsed and yet they do look improvised, so how much rehearsal did you then put in after that ten days and the performance at Stratford before you began to tour it?**

FR Not much.

OD Most of the time we just thought that the worst thing to do would be to overly rehearse it, rather we'd do little moments. We'd do rehearsal that needed moulding into the technicalities, like as you say the radio and so most of the time it was the sound moments. We rehearsed the music and the sound, but when it came to the scenes themselves, when it came to Belch confronting Malvolio there was always a sense of something in that he didn't know what I was going to do, and I didn't know what he was going to do, and that's the thing that's sort of left open and improvisatory I suppose is the not quite

knowing how the delivery is going to be. Not just changing it for the sake of changing it, but just being inside the moment with each other.

FR Sean was also great at just every now and again dropping in a little note or a little or something, you know. But things like the blocking for example does change night to night, but I think that's because we're such a tight unit and we've known each other for a long time that there's a level of trust there between all of us and we know that nobody's trying to steal somebody else's thunder, nobody's upstaging somebody. I mean we gave Ollie the freedom to go and do whatever he likes and there are times in the performance when you do there and go, "Oh what's Ollie going to do now? Where's he going to come from this time?" So all of that changes and it's great because it does keep you on your toes, it keeps us on our toes.

OD But you have a shared responsibility not to go off and do your own thing because essentially you're all telling the story together and it's not "this is my moment and this is my moment and that's my moment," you hope that it all keeps moving in the same shared direction.

FR In terms of rehearsing for example Victoria who played Olivia this time round had three days rehearsal before we started at the Tricycle.

OD She'd learnt it before.

FR Yeah but that's a tall order for any actor to do, but again because we knew her and we'd worked with Victoria before, she knew she was

going to be able to come into a room with a bunch of people who know it really well and bounce off us.

OD And suddenly she's in an 800 seater.

FR And sometimes when you work with companies you spend two weeks sniffing around each other, you know, because you don't know them and then you're all trying to work out who's the tricky actor here, you know, all of that stuff and we just want to get rid of all that and so when you come into a rehearsal room with us it's about what we're doing in the room and then outside of that you can do what you like.

OD There are hierarchies in most rehearsal rooms up and down the country and we're not saying that there isn't a sense that Ferdy and I want to have a bit of a say in the direction of how something goes, but it's so important to make actors and sound designers realise that it's about their creativity and not just the director's and somehow since directors came to the fore it's been about if you're the youngest member of the company you have to shut up and let the others do what they do, especially if you're a smaller part as well. But there are a couple actors who have been in smaller parts in shows that we have done who have been just as integral to the process as people who have the most lines or people that have the biggest parts and that's a lovely thing to foster. That's a really lovely thing to get back to instead of the hierarchies.

SM Just to focus in on the Malvolio gulling sequence, how did that moment come about?

FR That came about through the game that we've played on various occasions in shows that we've done, or certainly in rehearsals, which is that if Tom or Ross or anybody came up with a microphone and put it to my head what would be going on? What would the song be playing? And I said I think it would be something like Iggy Pop. The idea was that Ollie and myself wouldn't necessarily be playing the parts that we're playing in a more conventional production, we wouldn't get the opportunity at this age to play Malvolio or Belch.

OD Yeah definitely not.

FR So because we are doing it at our age and I don't want to play old, I just want to go with what's written, and weirdly in that there is in Malvolio this burning, passionate desire to be released which is about love isn't it? I mean he's in love, or he thinks he is, and he thinks she's in love with him. So if he were to explode what would happen? If he was in his bedroom on his own knowing that there's nobody around, what does Malvolio do in his bedroom? And I was saying I think he listens to Iggy Pop.

OD Yeah definitely.

FR And in his most private moments Malvolio imagines himself in front of 60,000 people and they adore him and he adores them. We've always had this thing which we call the Smirnov moments in our plays where, you know, at a certain point in the play every character has a Smirnov moment so the bottle goes past you and just for a split second we see a totally different side. We didn't want to do it as a

shock, we wanted it to be as truthful as possible and if you push the boundaries a little bit further than you normally would you can go wherever you like really and so it has evolved. I remember the first time we did it in Stratford I didn't strip off fully, I think I just had a pair of long yellow shorts on and a t-shirt. And then we did it in Edinburgh and I decided, and I didn't tell anybody that I was going to go full pelt for it and it stuck and the air guitar moments and that just came out of actually Ferdy going, "I love this, this is fucking great," there's a band behind me and I can play air guitar and bang the drums in my own head, it's brilliant. I would say that all the characters in the play and all the actors in it are showing some side of themselves a little bit, you know, there is probably quite a large part of me that wishes I could be at Wembley, and be the Stones or Floyd or Led Zeppelin, and there is a side of Ollie, not as much as my side, but there is a side of Ollie that is slightly anarchic and wants to put his finger in the electric socket and see what happens.

OD A bit of a drunk idiot.

FR And there is in Johnny a bit of the clown when he's playing Aguecheek. So all of them, all the characters and the decisions have come through from who we actually are ourselves.

SM Just going into your design because you're doing it in jeans but Ollie you are in full Elizabethan costume, how were those decisions made?

- OD There are a few interpretations about that. It came out of the first time I did it, I didn't tell everyone what costume I was going to be getting into.
- FR We'd done the show the night before. And Ollie was in jeans and t-shirt.
- OD I was sitting around the stage the whole time in jeans and t-shirt and it just didn't seem to work for me personally and it also didn't seem to work with Belch being this anarchic whirlwind who is constantly piling through Olivia's household causing mayhem. So I took myself off, I got dressed in the clichéd Elizabethan dress and the ruff.
- FR Nobody else knew about this, nobody else on stage knew what Ollie was going to do.
- OD Made sure he had a can of Special Brew and there was food hidden everywhere and basically I came and went whenever I wanted to during the scenes, just so long as I was there or thereabouts when I had to come in for the scenes, but at first I was really, really, destructive wasn't I?
- FR Yeah, it was great because I remember sitting having a chat Ollie, I didn't know what he was going to be wearing but I do remember telling him it would be great because in The Cube at the RSC it was built over the main house so it was a 100 seat, 120 seat cube theatre and the first night we'd had the safety curtain in behind us and we

said, "No when we do it tomorrow we're going to get rid of the safety curtain, we're going to get rid of the lighting state.."

OD and banish Belch to offstage.

FR And lock you [Ollie] in the toilet and you're not allowed on until you come on. And we lifted the safety curtain which meant that we had the whole depth of the main house stage behind us and so we just chucked all our kit there and opened that up.

OD I remember now I wasn't even allowed onto the stage itself I had to stay in the peripheries, so later we came to realise that the really interesting thing about the experiment was that not only was it demonstrating the destructive element in Belch with Olivia's household but also the notion of there being the remnants of this 400 year old text that we're speaking and that this is the way that it was done originally but with a bit of a twist because he's got a can of Special Brew and he's genuinely hammered.

FR We talked about him being very lost, didn't we? And that he's a dark, dark dark, soul.

OD Oh yeah a really dark force.

FR Because he's lost his brother and Olivia's mourning and he's going, "Come on that's enough now we've had enough of this and we've got to get on with our lives," and yet he's the one who's killing himself because he's an alcoholic. And we wanted, to get away from the, no disrespect to Simon Callow, but the Simon Callow sort of tankard in

hand, brahh broooh Belch. We wanted him to be real, as real as possible by having a young Sir Toby Belch dressed in doublet and hose searching for alcohol, eating cold curry that has been left somewhere or a MacDonald's or whatever it is, to embrace what this guy's about which is that he's desperately looking for the next fix as it were, whatever that might well be. It sounds really weird, but a lot of the decisions or a lot of the characters have developed by accident a little bit. We didn't intend when we did it for the first time for Ollie to be dressed in doublet and hose or anything like that it just so happened that Ollie, with Ollie's anarchic, creative mind, went to their wardrobe and just got it and came back and went, "There we go, that's what I'll do," and then started spouting Hamlet.

OD It felt extraordinary and there was a sort of 'tache and beard.

FR It was Guy Fawkes' Night as well remember? And everybody thought you'd come on as Guy Fawkes.

SM ((laughs))

OD And some people thought it was Shakespeare as well.

SM ((laughs))

FR So what we've ended up doing is justifying it after the actual creation, do you know what I mean which is a great way of doing it I think.

SM Excellent. Obviously the spaces that you work in when you're touring vary enormously. I know you have a fairly empty stage

but you still have to deal with very different kinds of auditoriums, how does that effect the production and did you plan for that or has it had any shaping influence?

FR We did plan for it really. After we'd done it originally at The Cube we didn't think we were going to do it again and then the next time that we did it was up at the British Council for the British Council Showcase and we were in some horrible sort of cellar somewhere so there was a much cosier jazz room feel to it. Because of the kit and the musicians and all the stuff that we've got it can fit onto a massive stage or a small stage. It's the audience that makes it actually different I think. Playing it here at the Theatre Royal Bath it's been quite tricky because we've been so used to the Tricycle and coming here has been quite tricky, even though it's been enjoyable, but because it's so huge, you can't see what it feels like.

OD We didn't necessarily make the show for a very big audience and yet we're finding here that some elements like the Malvolio song or the *What is Love* song it's a little bit like being in a gig, a big rock gig and it's great we can use the sound system but I'm thinking that it could really be set up anywhere that has a sound system. It could be set up anywhere within reason, maybe not Wembley Arena maybe it would be swallowed up at Wembley Arena, but I think there's something freeing. It's played a lot of schools as well, we've been setting up at 9:00 a.m. and wanting to do anything but do a workshop and then do the show but you find once you're into it then it can be anywhere. It's

a little bit like travelling players in Shakespeare's time, you roll up, you set up the kit and then you get on with it.

FR When we performed it at The Cube in Stratford we had always said that we wanted our Illyria to be wherever we were so that Illyria was The Cube in Stratford.

OD It's not a painted set behind you, it's that night, it's that afternoon, it's wherever we are.

FR Illyria is a massive open space at the Theatre Royal, Bath with our kit on it, Illyria is wherever we end up setting up and it's that night, you know.

SM Since the Cube performance you've developed it and you've added the game with the balls and the Tequila moment, which seem to be aimed at getting everyone involved no matter what their age. How much effect does the audience have on the individual performances and was that a conscious choice?

FR I would say huge. I've certainly noticed it more here because it's very difficult. It's strange because we pointed out yesterday didn't we that they've got it wrong here for this sort of show with the seating prices because at the top are the cheap seats and right down here are the 30 quid seats.

OD I'd sort of rather have it the other way round.

FR We'd rather have those lot come down here because those lot are going to go, "Brilliant, all right, I'll have a pizza, I'll chuck a ball." So I would say we've noticed it more here that in the stalls, you do get the feeling that they are sitting there going, "Hang about this isn't Shakespeare, " you know, "Where's the set, where are the costumes?" and then after about ten minutes they go, "Oh right." And they get into it but it was something one local critic said, rather brilliantly the other day about it which was, "This has obviously been created for kids who've been bored out of their tiny little minds by set textbook analysis," and it wasn't actually.

OD We didn't create it with a single child in mind. It all came out of our love of text and our puerile sense of humour and our desire to bring out the story and do it in a different, irreverent way and it just so happens that when you're having a late night party you do maybe call up for pizza, you do get pissed.

FR You do chuck balls at each other's heads.

OD Yeah. So it might come across as getting down with the kids, like someone else said about us at some stage, but we think it's all coming out of the text.

FR Actually I think it just does go to show you that Shakespeare brilliantly embraced everyone, you know, he had jokes in there for kids and for adults and for pissed people and the brilliance of it is that people from the ages of eight to 80 can get some sort of enjoyment and they get

swept up with the excitement and enjoyment and they forget they're in a theatre in a weird way which is great.

SM Do you find you're going into the audience a bit more now than when you first did it?

OD Well here there's a bit of a gap between the stage and the audience in terms of the height and in terms of the seats not being sold so we do feel much further away and so we feel as if we have to draw them in. But at the Tricycle and elsewhere we've always been entering and exiting through the audience and involving the audience, but just here it seems like a bit of a bigger bridge to get across. So we feel like we have to whip them up into a bit of a frenzy.

SM When I got to the theatre today I overheard two people discussing the production and one commented, "Oh it says Filter's *Twelfth Night* not Shakespeare's, so is it not Shakespeare's?" What interests me is where for you is the line between interpretation and adaptation when you approach a Shakespeare play?

OD *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare related by Filter, maybe there is a Filter's *Twelfth Night* somewhere.

FR I don't know where that is.

OD Is there something on...

FR Maybe it's out there. We didn't put that.

OD So give me the question again.

SM So where's the line between interpretation and adaptation for you?

FR I don't even know if there is one to be honest. Is there?

OD We like to think that we sort of elucidate text and we reinvigorate text and we re-imagine it and not reinvent but we imagine it the way we want to imagine it and probably I think, because everyone knows that *Twelfth Night* is written by Shakespeare and, as Ferdy was saying yesterday it's *Twelfth Night* or *What You Will* and we're a little bit of both really, we're *Twelfth Night* and we're the *What You Will*, but on some nights we're more *What You Will* and that's more the Filter version of *Twelfth Night*.

FR We've been and we are hugely respectful of the text.

OD Absolutely.

FR And probably more so, well yeah definitely more so than maybe a lot of people might think and it was the same with *Three Sisters* but that suddenly became Filter's *Three Sisters*, and we haven't attached Filter's *Twelfth Night* it's just that people have called it Filter's *Twelfth Night*, you know, in the same way as people go talk about Trevor Nunn's *Twelfth Night* by William Shakespeare, in tiny letters, and you go, "Well come on," but somehow that's acceptable and you wonder what's the difference. But each time we've approached the text we've been hugely, hugely respectful of it.

- OD At first we wrote, 'Inspired by,' didn't we?
- FR No it was a response. A response to *Twelfth Night* was the official wording.
- OD The first version was a response to *Twelfth Night* so in many ways that's what it is still but we are actually incredibly faithful to the linear structure that Shakespeare's written so there's a little bit of interpretation and there's a little bit of adaption there.
- FR An interpretation, an adaptation, we haven't adapted it, we've probably more interpreted it. Responded to it.
- OD A little bit of both.
- FR But everything has come from the text. I mean obviously of course there are no pizzas in the play but there is this character that is trying to stir up a storm within this world and trying to shake Malvolio's grip. He's trying to rid Malvolio of the grip over Olivia and so you can argue that this drunkard with his pal has ridden havoc throughout this house and that's how that came about. The Malvolio thing, the gulling, that's all as is written, we haven't adapted that at all.