

SHAKESPEARE'S TWELFTH NIGHT

Duke Orsino

A powerful nobleman in the country of Illyria. Orsino is lovesick for the beautiful Lady Olivia, and becomes a vehicle through which the play explores the absurdity of love. This speech opens the play, and remains one of the most famous speeches in theatre.

If music be the food of love, play on;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.
That strain again! it had a dying fall:
O, it came o'er my ear like the sweet sound,
That breathes upon a bank of violets,
Stealing and giving odour! Enough; no more:
'Tis not so sweet now as it was before.
O spirit of love! how quick and fresh art thou,
That, notwithstanding thy capacity
Receiveth as the sea, nought enters there,
Of what validity and pitch so e'er,
But falls into abatement and low price,
Even in a minute: so full of shapes is fancy
That it alone is high fantastical.