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I, Malvolio

Rebeca Wallin

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Play Review

Title: I, Malvolio

Anthology: I, Shakespeare

Author: Tim Crouch

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Publisher: Oberon Books

Publication Year: 2011

Number of Pages: 24

Production Requirements: A few set dressings and one costume change.

Estimated Run Time: 40 min

Number of Acts: 1

Number of Characters: 1

Cast Requirements: 1 Man

Time Period: 1500's

Reading/Interest Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Review

In this riff on one of Shakespeare's famous secondary characters, we find Malvolio from Twelfth Night immediately after the events of the play. Having been cruelly used in a practical joke, he relives in memory the events of the play from his perspective and then tries to recover from the horrible situation he was placed in. His primary coping technique being revenge, he plots it on everyone including the audience in the theater. The one-man show relies heavily on audience interaction; Malvolio goes as far as ordering audience members around and bringing them up on stage. Familiarity with Twelfth Night will make viewing this show a more rewarding experience.

Usually performed by the playwright himself, this production calls for an accomplished and experienced actor. Audiences should be prepared to be berated and belittled as Malvolio calls for introspection and examining consciences. Mirroring the events of the play, he calls the audience's attention (specifically a young audience,) to how quickly little -seemingly harmless- sins can get out of hand. Malvolio has been so abused that at one point he calls audience members to the stage to assist him in hanging himself. Some may find the attempted hanging scene quite disturbing though without question disturbing is the playwright's aim. In his own unique way, by the end of the play Malvolio finds a way to exact revenge on the audience.